

Diversity: Creating Caring Communities through Knowledge, Inclusion and Kindness

Biographies of Panelists:

Kelly J. Baptist is a Children's and Middle Grade book author. Her short story, *The Beans and Rice Chronicles of Isaiah Dunn*, won the inaugural short story contest of the We Need Diverse Books campaign and is included in the Middle Grade Anthology, *Flying Lessons and Other Stories*. Her picture book, *The Electric Slide and Kai*, won Lee and Low's 2017 New Voices Honor Award and publication is forthcoming. When she's not writing, Kelly juggles a husband in grad school, five kids, and a full time job with Benton Harbor Area Schools in Southwest, Michigan. She is available for school and library visits. Follow her on Twitter: @kellyiswrite

Sonya Bernard-Hollins learned early in life that everyone has a story to tell. As she flipped through the pages of her grandmother's Ebony and Jet magazines, she was inspired by the positive stories of African Americans in the entertainment industry and those who traveled to write about them. Those magazines inspired Sonya to become a community storyteller and travel the world. After more than 25 years as an award-winning reporter for newspaper and magazine publications, she is living her dream. She and her husband Sean own Season Press Publishing, and she is the founder of the Merze Tate Explorers youth travel writing academy, which celebrates 10 years of helping girls explore life's possibilities through media. Her Community Voices imprint has published three books that highlight fascinating unsung African American changemakers of Michigan. In addition, she is Community Advancement Specialist for Public Media Network in Kalamazoo where she creates opportunities for the community to become digital storytellers.

Katie Dersnah Mitchell is a teen advocate and the Teen Librarian at Saline District Library, where she has worked with teens for 14 years. She is the mother of three young adults, including a son with severe autism and a daughter and child who are part of the LGBTQ community. She has completed START (The Statewide Autism Resources and Training) and has implemented Special Needs programming, services, and collections at her library. She also served on the ALA Amelia Bloomer Project (Recommended list of best feminist books of the year for readers 0-18) for 5 years, including 2 years as committee chair.

Lisa Rose is a PJ Library author, teacher, and mother to a visually-impaired girl. Also, she hosts a Facebook group that discusses diverse books. It is called the Missing Voice Picture Book Discussion Group.

This summer, my chapter book series debuted at the American Library Association in New Orleans. It is called *Star Powers* and it is published by Rourke Educational Media. This six book chapter series is about a second grade girl who wants to be an astronaut and also uses a wheelchair. The books can be read in any order and are at a second grade reading level. They have many activities and non-fiction matter in the back that can be used with all reading levels.

My presentation focuses on STEM activities, such as building rockets. Also, it is about how to include children of all abilities. As adults, we always discuss how important it is

to include everyone, but rarely do we discuss how. I use my experiences as an author and mother of a visually-impaired child to help build empathy, understanding, and character skills.

Here is a video about them: <https://lisarosewrites.com/books/star-powers/> For more info: www.LisaRoseWrites.com

Claudia Whitsitt is the award-winning author of the historical fiction middle grade Kids Like You series including *Between the Lines*, *Beyond the Lines*, and *Broken Lines* which focus on diversity, tolerance, inclusion and friendship. Her commitment to kids and teaching has lasted throughout her lifetime. She is also the impetus for the *Heal the Hole* campaign, a platform which focuses on healing the world through kindness and compassion. Before becoming a full-time author, Claudia taught special education for 37 years. Claudia offers school and library visits in which she teaches kids about changing the world with kindness, the writing process, and writing as healing. You can find out more about her at www.claudiawhitsitt.com or email her at claudiawhitsitt@gmail.com for more information.

Sample Questions:

1. Libraries receive funds to purchase books that expose children (and adults) to stories that educate, inspire, and entertain. Many self-published local authors have books that are not available in ways traditional publishers can market. How can libraries promote local authors who have stories that provide messages that are valuable, however did not come through a traditional market?
2. The WNDB movement has been pushing to include more books by diverse authors. This is a good thing. But, it may have been taken to the extreme. I have heard that even some University libraries are discarding books that have been written by Caucasian authors about people of color. My question is can a person who is not part of the culture tell an effective and authentic story?
3. We all know that children are not born intolerant, and that the seeds of intolerance or unkindness are often planted by those closest to them. How can libraries counter this reality, especially when serving the very young?
4. Bringing adults and children together to have meaningful conversations about difficult issues can be tricky. What out-of-the-box ideas do you have to offer librarians which they can utilize to promote collaboration and communication?

Books with Diverse Characters:

1. *Garvey's Choice* by Nickie Grimes
2. *The Odyssey* by Garth Hinds
3. *Inspector Flytrap* by Tom Angleberger
4. *Mary's Monster* by Lita Judge

5. *Once Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia
6. *Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer* by Kelly Jones
7. *Cilla Lee Jenkins* by Susan Tan
8. *Stef Soto, Taco Queen* by Jennifer Tores
9. *You Bring the Distance Near* by Mitali Perkins
10. *Peasprout Chen, Future of Skate and Sword* by Henry Lien
11. *Piecing me Together* by Renee Watson
12. *The Hate You Give* by Angie Thomas
13. *Between the Lines* by Claudia Whitsitt
14. *Star Powers Touching the Sky* by Lisa Rose
15. *Flying Lessons and Other Stories* by Kelly J. Baptist
16. *Here I Stand: A Musical History of African Americans in Battle Creek, MI*
by Sonya Bernard-Hollins
17. *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson
18. *Junkyard Wonders* by Patricia Polacco
19. *Out of My Mind* by Sharon Draper
20. *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio
21. *The Road to Memphis, The Well, Let the Circle Be Unbroken, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor
22. *Miracle's Boys* by Jacqueline Woodson
23. *The Watsons Go To Birmingham, 1963, The Journey of Little Charlie*, by Christopher Paul Curtis
24. *Tia Isa Wants A Car, Mango, Abuela, and Me*, by Meg Medina
25. *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, by Erika Sanchez
26. *The Sun is Also A Star*, by Nicola Yoon
27. *Sparkle Boy* by Leslea Newman
28. *The Tree in the Courtyard* by Jeff Gottesfeld
29. *Four Feet Two Sandals* by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammad
30. *The Quickest Kid in Clarksville* by Pat Zietlow Miller
31. *Hello Goodbye Dog* by Maria Gianferrari
32. *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes
33. *The William Hoy Story* by Nancy Churnin
34. *Manjhi Moves a Mountain* by Nancy Churnin
35. *Emmanuel's Dream* by Laurie Thompson
36. *Red* by Michael Hall
37. *Listening with my Heart* by Gabi Garcia
38. *Dumplin'* by Julie Murphy
39. *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
40. *Seedfolks* by Judy Pedersen

