

## **A List of Books that Explore and Champion Diversity Compiled by Elementary Librarian Natalie Bernstein**

For many years, the Paideia elementary library program has had a robust emphasis on diversity. We talk often about the concept of windows and mirrors: that we all need books where we see people who look like us, and we all need books where we see people who are different from ourselves. When we talk about these books together, we can talk about race, difference and justice in the United States both in the past and in the current moment.

Sharing books that show the achievements of people of color can stir any child's imagination. Picture book stories of African-American ballerinas, musicians, inventors, poets, scientists, athletes and activists are the best choices to help children form an early understanding of American history, culture and struggles. Books that speak to children's deep awareness of fairness, kindness and bravery can help parents frame conversations about what is happening right now in the world. The Paideia Elementary Library has hosted some of the most important authors and illustrators working in children's literature today. Each of these African-American authors and illustrators offers books that are rich, rewarding and essential for every child.

- E. B. Lewis, 2020
- Bryan Collier, 2017
- Gregory Christie, 2015
- Brian Pinkney 2012
- Pat Cummings, 2006
- Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, 2003
- Ruby Bridges, 2001

Other illustrators of color to explore, who have scores of books for children, include Floyd Cooper, Sean Qualls, Don Tate, Jerry Pinkney, Kadir Nelson, Faith Ringgold, Eric Velasquez Ekuia Holmes, Shane and Shane Evans.

Here is just a tiny sampling that we have shared with children in the library:

### **For children ages 4 and up:**

- Dozens illustrated by Jerry Pinkney.
- Dozens illustrated by Bryan Pinkney.
- *I Love My Hair! My Best Friend. Lily Brown's Paintings*, all illustrated by E.B. Lewis.
- *My Uncle Martin's Big Heart* by Angela Farris Watkins, illustrated by Eric Velasquez.
- *Whoosh! Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions* by Chris Barton, illustrated by Don Tate.
- *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by Bryan Collier.
- *Black Is Brown Is Tan* by Arnold Adoff, illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully.
- *Chocolate Me!* By Taye Diggs, illustrated by Shane Evans.
- *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Caroline Binch.
- *The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz.
- *All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color* by Katie Kissinger, photographs by Chris Bohnhoff.

### **For children ages 7 and up:**

- *Let the Children March* by Monica-Clark Robinson, illustrated by Frank Morrison.
- *Ruth and the Green Book* by Calvin Ramsay, illustrated by Floyd Cooper.

- *The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* by Cynthia Levinson, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton.
- *Boycott Blues: How Rosa Parks Inspired a Nation* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney.
- *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney.
- *Ron's Big Mission* by Rose Blue, illustrated by Don Tate.
- *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis.
- *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis.
- *John Lewis in the Lead* by Jim Haskins, illustrated by Benny Andrews.
- *Preaching To the Chickens: The Story of Young John Lewis* by Jabari Asim, illustrated by E.B. Lewis.
- *As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel's Amazing March Toward Freedom* by Richard Michaelson, illustrated by Raul Colon.
- *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander, illustrated by Kadir Nelson.
- *Trombone Shorty* by Troy Andrews, illustrated by Bryan Collier.
- *Life Your Light a Little Higher: The Story of Stephen Bishop, Slave Explorer* by Heather Henson, illustrated by Bryan Collier.
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles, illustrated by George Ford.
- *Riding to Washington* by Gwenyth Swain, illustrated by David Geister.
- *Hidden Figures: The Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race* by Margot Lee Shetterly, illustrated by Laura Freeman.

#### **For children ages 9 and up:**

- *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* by Cynthia Levinson.
- *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African-Americans* by Kadir Nelson.
- *Reaching for the Moon: The Autobiography of Katherine Johnson* by Katherine G. Johnson.
- *What Do You Do With a Voice Like That? The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan* by Chris Barton, illustrated by Ekua Holmes.
- *The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage* by Selina Alko, illustrated by Sean Qualls.
- *March* by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin.
- *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacquelyn Woodson.
- *Let It Shine: Stories of Black Women Freedom Fighters* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Stephen Alcorn.
- *Little Rock Girl 1957: How a Photograph Changed the Fight for Integration* by Shelley Tougas.

These are just a tiny fraction of outstanding books, including many novels, that deal with the struggle for racial justice. Visit the list of the Coretta Scott King award winners for more.