



eNewsletter

Issue #214 — May 27, 2014

Black Literature is for Everyone



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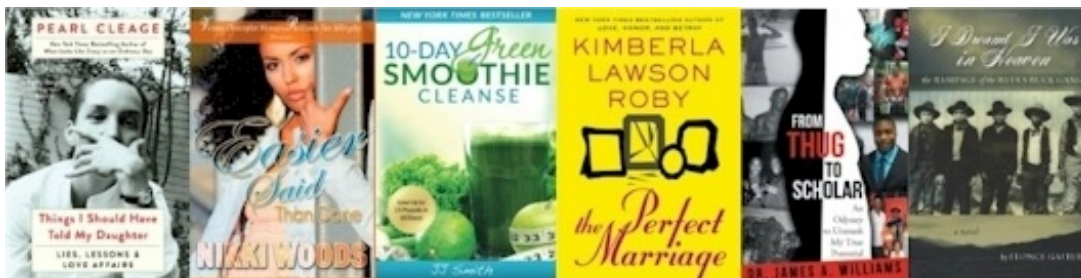
Naleighna Kai



Naleighna Kai is the bestselling author of *Every Woman Needs a Wife*, *The Pleasure's All Mine* and *Open Door Marriage*. She is also a contributing author to the New York Times Best-selling book, *Caramel Flava*.

Open Door Marriage (Brown Girls Publishing, Jan 2014) centers around three people caught up in an all too familiar triangle. Alicia Mitchell, the love of Dallas Avery's life disappeared, and resurfaced years later at the most inopportune time. Oh, he still loves Alicia, an older woman who captured his heart, but it's unfortunate that he's now engaged to a woman he learns—is her niece. When his fiancée, Tori, lays a proposition on the table, it seems that everyone will get a little of what they want, but maybe a whole lot of what they don't. The stage is set for them to learn one valuable lesson: There's no right way to do a wrong thing. Visit www.naleighnakai.com for more information.

AALBC.com's Best-Selling Books March/April 2014



Our best-selling books lists combine both physical and electronic book formats. Ebooks represented 53% of all sales this period. Nikki Woods' new novel, *Easier Said Than Done*, was the strongest seller overall.

Authors You Should Know



AALBC.com mourns the passing of Sam Greenlee (May 19, 2014)

Greenlee was born in Chicago on July 13, 1930. He earned a BS in political science from the University of Wisconsin. Greenlee also attended the University of Chicago and the University of Thessaloniki in Greece.

In 1969 Greenlee published his first, and most famous, novel *The Spook Who Sat By the Door*. Other works by Greenlee include; *Baghdad Blues*; a 1971 collection of poems, *Blues for an African Princess*; and a 1971 collection of poems, *Ammunition* (poetry, 1975). In 1990 Greenlee was the Illinois poet laureate.



Tonya Bolden

Tonya Bolden, a Princeton University magna cum laude baccalaureate with a master's degree from Columbia University, is an award-winning author of more than twenty books for children and young adults. They include *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl*, a Coretta Scott King honor book and James Madison Book Award winner. Bolden's *MLK: Journey of a King* received the National Council of Teachers of English's 2008 Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children. High praise for her *George Washington Carver* include a Virginia Library

Association Jefferson Cup and a Cleveland Public Library Sugarman Award.

When Bolden isn't writing she can be found gardening (if it's not too hot or too cold) or watching period dramas (if it is) or laughing and learning with family or friends or with both.



George S. Schuyler

Schuyler (February 25, 1895 — August 31, 1977) was a journalist and cultural critic whose writings appeared in such diverse publications as *Crisis*, *Nation*, *Negro Digest*, *American Mercury*, and *National Review*. Schuyler was a prolific writer and an outspoken commentator during his fifty-four-year career.

Schuyler's life and political views were, however, controversial. By the 1950s, he had become an ardent supporter of U.S. Sen. Joseph P. McCarthy and touted himself as an American patriot, believing that communism was a threat to African Americans. In the 1960s, Schuyler was one of the few African Americans who openly characterized the civil rights movement as a communist-inspired plot to destroy America. His wife, Josephine Cogdell Schuyler, was profiled in Carla Kaplan's recent book, *Miss Anne in Harlem: The White Women of the Black Renaissance*.



Kiese Laymon

Kiese Laymon is a black southern writer, born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. Laymon attended Millsaps College and Jackson State University before graduating from Oberlin College. He earned an MFA from Indiana University and is the author of the novel, *Long Division* and a collection of essays, *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*. Laymon is a contributing editor at gawker.com.

Long Division was named one of the Best of 2013 by a number of publications, including *Salon*, *Guernica*, *Mosaic Magazine*, *Chicago Tribune* and the *Crunk Feminist Collective*. Laymon is currently at work on a new novel and funky memoir called *309*. He is an Associate Professor of English at Vassar College.



Maryse Condé

Maryse Condé, was born in Guadeloupe, on February 11, 1937. In 1953, her parents sent her to study at Lycée Fénelon and Sorbonne in Paris, where she majored in English. After graduating, she taught in Guinea, Ghana and Senegal.

The critically acclaimed, award-winning author penned several historical novels including *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*; *Victoire: My Mother's Mother*; and *Who Slashed Celanire's Throat?* Condé's "blending of memoir and imagination, detective work and storytelling artistry, is a literary gem that readers won't soon forget."

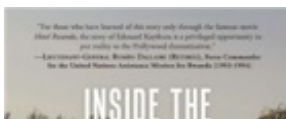


Professor Griff

Professor Griff is an internationally renowned educator, writer, producer, musician, platinum recording/spoken word artist, lecturer and founding member and Minister of Information of the pioneering hip hop group Public Enemy.

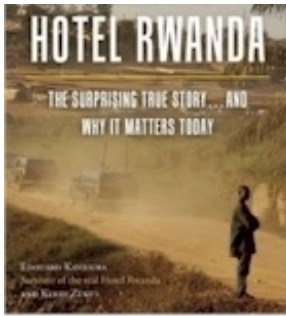
Griff is a thought provoking and engaging lecturer. He has written several books including *Analytix: 20 Years of Conversation and Enter-Views with Public Enemy's Professor Griff*, *Acapella Revolution: The Alchemical Transformation of Reconstructing the Oral Tradition* and *The Psychological Covert War on Hip Hop: The Illuminati's takeover of Hip Hop*.

Book Reviews



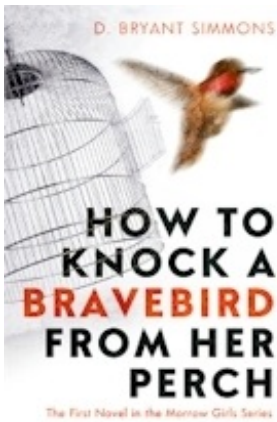
Inside the Hotel Rwanda: The Surprising True Story... and Why It Matters Today

In 2004, the film *Hotel Rwanda* received widespread acclaim for its



heartrending account of how one man had singlehandedly shielded over a thousand Tutsi refugees from certain death during the Rwandan Genocide by hiding them in the hotel he managed. Don Cheadle earned an Academy Award nomination for his powerful portrayal of Paul Rusesabagina, an apparent modern-day saint suddenly mentioned in the same breath as Oskar Schindler, the German factory owner who had saved so many Jews from the Holocaust during World War II.

What a difference a decade makes! Over the intervening years, telltale cracks gradually appeared in the image Rusesabagina had so carefully cultivated with the help of Hollywood and the human rights community. Those swirling rumors came out into the open when Rwandan President Kagame referred to the supposed paragon of virtue as a total fraud.

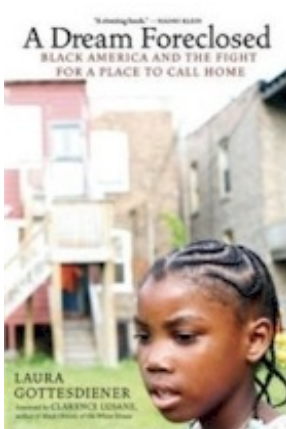


How To Knock A Bravebird From Her Perch

Inspired by family and friends who have been victims of abuse, D. Bryant Simmons, an advocate of female empowerment and children's rights, wrote *How To Knock A Bravebird From Her Perch* to encourage victims of domestic violence and dedicated it to "all women who doubt their abilities. Especially my mother."

A naturally gifted storyteller, Simmons, has put her heart and soul into this cautionary tale of perseverance, hope and strength. I could understand how we sometimes end up in places we'd never imagined and don't know how to get out of. How we don't know how strong we can be until being strong is our only option. This is the story of how Pecan [the novel's protagonist] finally finds her strength, and when she does it will make you want to

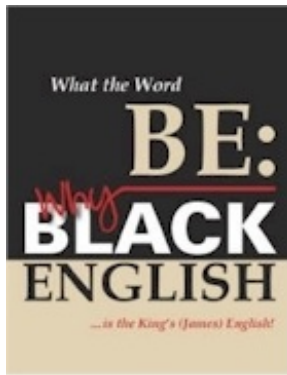
cheer.



A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home

The author, Laura Gottesdiener powerfully investigates the ongoing real estate crisis in *A Dream Foreclosed: Black America and the Fight for a Place to Call Home*. In her heartbreaking book, the author intimately illustrates examples of what is really a mass-scale tragedy in scope by zeroing in on the fates of four families facing and fighting eviction.

A debt of gratitude is owed to this eye-opening opus for providing proof positive that, even in the Age of Obama, the American Dream remains elusive for the vast majority of black people.



What the Word Be: Why Black English... Is the King's (James) English

When most people talk about the “King’s English,” they’re referring to a very proper, aristocratic way of speaking in terms of grammar and syntax. That style is far afield from the uniquely African-American phraseology also known as Ebonics.

For, according to its author, Diane Proctor Reeder, the roots of Ebonics can readily be found in the King James Bible, the text employed by most slave masters to teach Africans English. To prove her point, Ms. Reeder simply quotes from scripture, such as “Surely the people is grass,” which is found

in Isaiah 40:7.

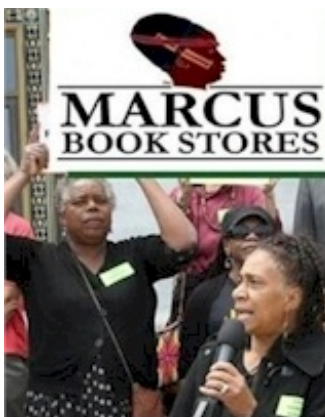
Related Articles



Report: Dramatic Drop in Reading Among Teens

Common Sense Media recently announced the release of *Children, Teens, and Reading*, a research brief that offers a unique, big-picture perspective on children’s reading habits in the United States and how they may have changed during the technological revolution of recent decades. The report brings together many disparate studies on children’s reading rates and achievement for the first time, summarizing key findings and highlighting where research is scarce, incomplete, or outdated, as well as offering suggestions for new areas of study.

Though the report finds that reading is still a big part of many children’s lives—and reading scores among young children have improved steadily—achievement among older teens has stagnated, and many children don’t read well or often.



Marcus Books of San Francisco Evicted—Should We Care?

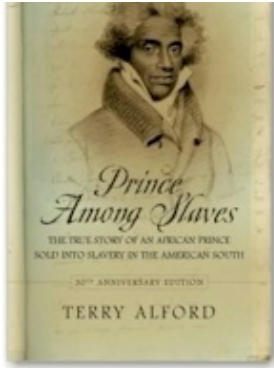
Where do you buy the books that you read?

While Marcus Books situation is sad and unfortunate, the closure of bookstores is being repeated at an increasingly alarming rate across the country. From my perspective, the fight is not just about saving one store, it is about saving all the stores—and websites too, including this one.

Will you support independent, Black owned, bookstores and websites, or will we willingly relinquish the few that remain? Will we sit idly by while complete control over which stories and information about our community, is handed over to some corporate entity concerned with only with maximizing profit?



Prince Among Slaves by Terry Alford



In this remarkable work, Terry Alford tells the story of Abd al Rahman Ibrahima, an enslaved Muslim who, in 1807, was recognized by an Irish ship's surgeon as the son of an African king who had saved his life many years earlier. "The Prince," as he had become known to local Natchez, Mississippi residents, had been captured in war when he was 26 years old, sold to slave traders, and shipped to America.

Enslaved though he was, Ibrahima was an educated, aristocratic man, and he was made overseer of the large cotton and tobacco plantation of his master, who refused to sell him for any price.



JET Magazine Goes From Print to Digital Only

Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) announced, in a recent press release that "*JET* magazine, founded in 1951, will transition to a digital magazine app at the end of June. JPC is making the proactive decision to adapt to the changing needs of its readers as their desire to get information quickly and easily increases." While I'm glad *Jet* survives digitally, I'm disheartened the print publication is no more.

As AALBC.com's webmaster and someone who has been actively engaged with the internet since it became a commercial entity two decades ago, I do not believe the digitization of everything leaves us better off. We are reading less and less well. For many, the management of every digital asset we own from books, music, videos, and photos has become a costly technical challenge. The "digital divide" is still a reality for many in our community.

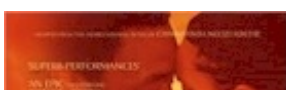


Gugu Mbatha-Raw - The "Belle" Interview

Born in Oxford, England on June 30, 1983, Gugu Mbatha-Raw trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. Her first professional role was as Celia in an open air production of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Gugu subsequently landed roles at Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre where she performed the title roles of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, the latter opposite Andrew "Spider-Man" Garfield.

Here, talks about playing the title character in *Belle*, a biopic about Dido Elizabeth Belle (1761-1804), the orphaned offspring of an African slave and a British ship captain who was raised in England by her father's rich relations.

Film Reviews



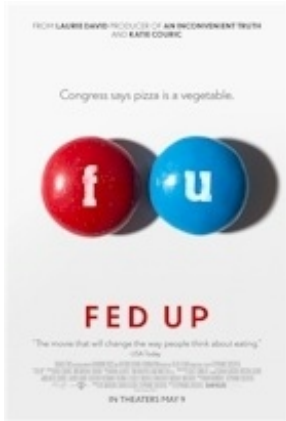
Half of a Yellow Sun

The film marks the impressive directorial debut of Biyi Bandele, who also



adapted the 543-page opus into a 113-minute saga that walks a fine line between romance drama and sprawling epic. That being said, the picture’s examination of the country’s explosive Christian-Muslim tribal tensions proves to be both timely and compelling, given how they’ve recently resurfaced during the radical group Boko Haram’s current reign of terror.

A steamy soap opera unfolding against the backdrop of a cautionary history lesson reminding us that in Nigeria, the more things change, the more they stay insane.



Fed Up

In the same fashion that corporations have been allowed to market and sell cancer causing cigarettes, resulting in countless early deaths, corporations are now allowed to sell food that is known to be unhealthy.

Today, in many communities, 30% or more of the children are obese; many tens of thousands of children in the U.S. suffer from type-2 diabetes. Type-2 diabetes in a child was unheard of until recently. Obesity on this scale is a relatively new problem. *Fed Up* describes how food companies add copious amounts of addictive sugar to our food simply to make money—at the expense of our nation’s health.



Watch AALBC.com’s videos of authors and events created for readers interested in literature written by writers across the African Diaspora.

Recommendations



Not for Everyday Use: A Memoir by Elizabeth Nunez

Nunez’s memoir was recently featured in Oprah.com’s collection of “Memoirs Too Powerful to Put Down.”

“In this swiftly moving memoir, Elizabeth Nunez returns to Trinidad after the death of her mother. While helping her sister and father arrange the burial, Nunez reflects on everything from her admiration of her parents’ loving, 65-year-long marriage (and the failure of her own) and her early, isolated years as an immigrant in New York, to the strange, unshakable grip colonialism has on her homeland today.”

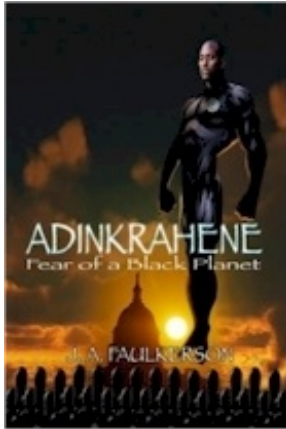


The Brown Bookshelf



The Brown Bookshelf is designed to push awareness of the myriad of African American voices writing for young readers. Their flagship initiative is, 28 Days Later, a month-long showcase of the best in picture books, middle grade and young adult novels written and illustrated by African Americans.

The founders are authors Crystal Allen, Tameka Fryer Brown, Paula Chase-Hyman, Gwendolyn Hooks, Varian Johnson, Kelly Starling Lyons, Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich, and Don Tate.

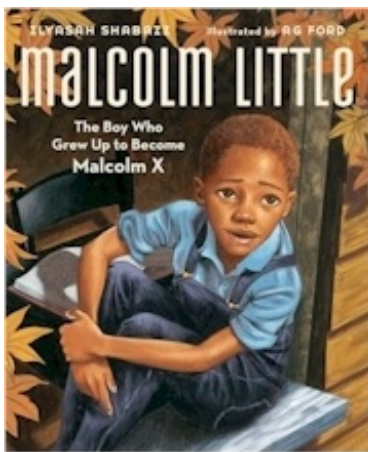


Adinkrahene: Fear of a Black Planet by J.A. Faulkerson

In a world where America has elected its first Black president, a new generation of heroes must emerge to unite a divided kingdom.

When Mississippi Senator Kyle Shuler announces his bid to unseat presidential incumbent Herbert Newsom, America's first, black president, Washington Post political reporter Jonathan Fraiser is miffed. He knows Senator Shuler's dirty, little secret—that he and two of his friends murdered an elderly, black woman as teenagers. But Jonathan isn't the only person disturbed by Shuler's announcement. His longtime friend Selina Giles, an FBI agent, was eleven years old when Shuler slit her grandmother's throat. Now, Jonathan and Selina must join forces as Adinkrahene agents to prevent a Jim Crow criminal from becoming the

leader of the free world.



Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X by Ilyasah Shabazz

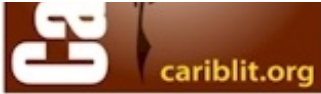
Malcolm X grew to be one of America's most influential figures. But first, he was a boy named Malcolm Little. Written by his daughter, this inspiring picture book biography celebrates a vision of freedom and justice.

Bolstered by the love and wisdom of his large, warm family, young Malcolm Little was a natural born leader. But when confronted with intolerance and a series of tragedies, Malcolm's optimism and faith were threatened. He had to learn how to be strong and how to hold on to his individuality. He had to learn self-reliance.

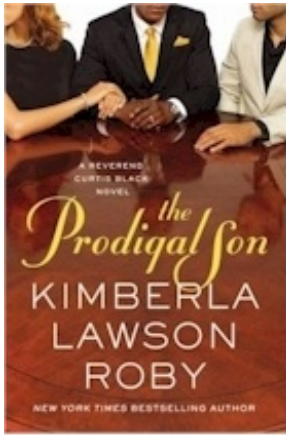


CaribLit: Caribbean Literature Action Group

The CaribLit website serves as a central resource for writers and publishers to gain information on publishing, marketing, distribution and bookselling in the Caribbean and to share their expertise and best practices. They know that many other websites exist through which writers promote their work to readers; rather than compete with those,



CaribLit will focus on providing information and resources relevant for persons within the Caribbean publishing industry.



MahoganyBooks' Deal of the Week - Lowest Price Online!

This week's special is Power List and AALBC.com Bestselling author [Kimberla Lawson Roby's](#) new novel, *The Prodigal Son (Reverend Curtis Black Novel)*. MahoganyBooks, the official bookseller of the [Power List](#), is bringing us this new book for 30% off—\$5 less than Amazon!

The Black book ecosystem is much more complex than selling books at the lowest price. It is a battle to retain control over how our stories and history are told. MahoganyBooks, AALBC.com and [other independent booksellers](#) are driven to ensure that this happens in an uplifting and empowering way.

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Events

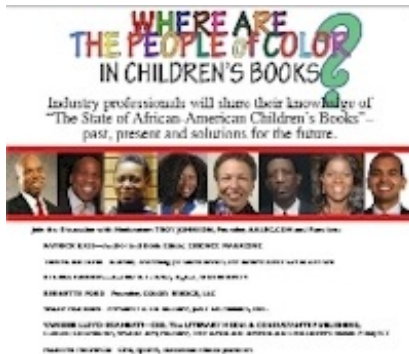


Infamous Books Launch Party - May 28, 2014 in NYC

On Wednesday, May 28th, join Akashic and Infamous Books at The Mysterious Bookshop (58 Warren Street, Manhattan, NYC) at 6:30 PM for an Infamous launch party! Join special guest Albert "Prodigy" Johnson of Mobb Deep, author of *H.N.I.C.*, in celebrating the release of Miasha's *Swing*, JaQuavis Coleman's *The White House*, and K'wan's *Black Lotus* with complimentary refreshments, including beer lovingly provided by Brooklyn Brewery.



The **Black Pack Party** is an annual gathering of publishing industry professionals, and is held during Book Expo America. The 2014 Black Pack Party is scheduled for May 29, 2014, in New York City. [Register for the 2014 celebration.](#)



Where Are the People of Color in Children's Books? - Panel Discussion May 31, 10 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Industry professionals will share their insight and knowledge of the state of African-American children's books; their past, present and solutions for the future. Join in this deep dive with; Patrik Henry Bass, author of *Zero Degree Zombie Zone* & Book Editor for Essence Magazine; **Tonya Bolden**, author of many books, including, *Searching for Sarah Rector: The Richest Black Girl in America*; **Regina Brooks**, author of *Writing Great Books for Young Adults*, and CEO of

Serendipity Literary Agency; Bernette Ford, author and CEO of Color-Bridge, LLC; **Wade Hudson**, President, *Just Us Books*; **Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati**, Founder The African American Children's Book Project, Cultural/Entertainment Contributor, WURD-AM, CEO The Literary Media and Publishing Consultants; and Harlyn Pacheco, CEO of Qlovi.

Moderator: Troy Johnson, Founder of The African American Literature Book Club (AALBC.com)



The **First Annual Sacramento Black Book Festival** takes place June 6 - 8, 2014 at the Historic Center of Oak Park. The featured authors include **Dr. Maulana Karenga**, the creator of Kwanzaa; Victoria Rowell, actress on *The Young and the Restless*; Professor **Eugene B. Redmond**, author/editor of 25 volumes of poetry, Denise Nicholas, primarily know for starring in the TV sitcom, *Room 222*; Paul Carter Harrison, Obie award-winning playwright; Carlos Moore, biographer of Fela Kuti; and William Strickland founder of the Institute of the Black world a Black think tank. There will be over 80 other authors participating as well. Visit sacramentoblackbookfair.com for more information.

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For Fiction

- * Voice: The overall narrative voice.
- * Pace: How quickly the story moves.
- * Plot: The overall story.
- * Style: How the story is written.
- * Verisimilitude: Are the details right?
- * Character: Are there interesting and multifaceted characters in conflict?



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Peace,
Troy Johnson,
Founder and Webmaster

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