



Inclusive Literature Lists

The Billings Public Library supports and values and celebrates diversity and inclusion. We strive to curate a collection of resources that represents all demographics in our community's tapestry. We believe an inclusive and welcoming community is a stronger community.

This list of inclusive and diverse literature that the youth of our community can see themselves in as well as use as a conduit to build compassion for others is brought to you on behalf of collaboration between the Human Relations Commission of the City of Billings, the Billings Public Library, and a children's literature assistant professor from Montana State University Billings.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and any recommendations for this list. We will take these into consideration as we continue to develop these lists.

February 2021: Black History Month



Follow Your Dreams, Little One

By [Harrison, Vashti](#)

2020-09 - LB Kids

9780316475150 [Check Our Catalog](#)

New York Times bestselling author-illustrator Vashti Harrison shines a bold, joyous light on black men through history in this board book edition of *Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History*.

This beautifully illustrated board book highlights true stories of black men in history. The exceptional men featured include artist Aaron Douglas, civil [...More](#)



My Hair

By [Cox, Danielle Murrell](#)

Illustrator [Cox, Danielle Murrell](#)

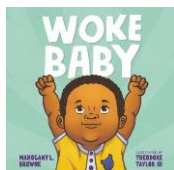
2020-06 - HarperFestival

9780062897657 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A fresh and fun celebration of natural hair for babies and toddlers

My Hair is the perfect introduction to an array of beautiful hairstyles for tiny naturalistas-in-training

Known for her popular *Black Queens* and *Black Kings* coloring books for adults, Danielle Murrell Cox creates a colorful and bouncy board book to pair with favorites [...More](#)



Woke Baby

By [III, Theodore Taylor](#)

Illustrator [Taylor, Theodore](#)

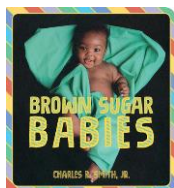
2018-12 - Roaring Brook Press

9781250308986 [Check Our Catalog](#)

For all the littlest progressives, waking up to seize a new day of justice and activism.

Woke babies are up early. Woke babies raise their fists in the air. Woke babies cry out for justice. Woke babies grow up to change the world.

This lyrical and empowering book is both a celebration of what it means to be a baby and what it means to be woke. With bright playful art, *Woke* [...More](#)



Brown Sugar Babies

By [Smith, Charles R., Jr.](#)

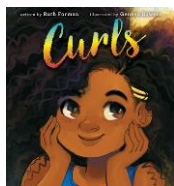
Illustrator [Smith, Charles R.](#)

2020-05 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

9781368050296 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Bubbling brown sugarbubbles Baby's belly. Syrupy sweet sticky centershakes like a bowl of jelly.

Oooh, baby This board book is sweet enough to eat. Infants, toddlers, and their older siblings will drool as they rejoice in the beauty of brown babies. Here, carob cherubs show all their true colors--everything from peanut butter to honey to cinnamon [...More](#)



Curls

By [Forman, Ruth](#)

Illustrator [Bowers, Geneva](#)

2020-12 - Little Simon

9781534446311 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A joyfully poetic board book that delivers an ode to African American girls and the beauty of their curls.

Me

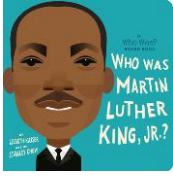
Morning

Mirror Smile

Shine big

hair love

This simple, playful, and beautiful board book stars four friends who celebrate the joy of their hairstyles from bouncing curls to swinging braids. [...More](#)



Who Was Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Who Was? Board Book

By [Kaiser, Lisbeth](#)

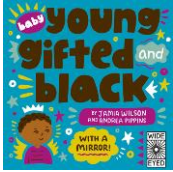
Author [Who Hq](#)

Illustrator [Chow, Stanley](#)

2020-12 - Rise X Penguin Workshop

9780593222737 [Check Our Catalog](#)

[...More](#)



Young, Gifted, and Black Baby Edition: With a Mirror at the Back!

By [Wilson, Jamia](#)

Illustrator [Pippins, Andrea](#)

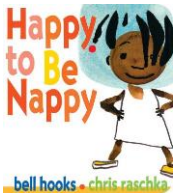
2021-01 - Wide Eyed Editions

9780711261419 [Check Our Catalog](#)

"There are so many things I am and can be... There's a whole world waiting for me."

Introduce your baby to Black excellence with this lyrical board-book edition of *Young, Gifted and Black*. Includes a mirror at the back so young dreamers can see themselves next to their heroes.

Meet icons of color from past and present in this **baby board book** [...More](#)



Happy to Be Nappy

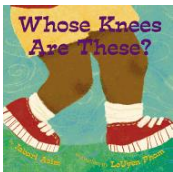
By [Hooks, Bell](#)

Illustrator [Raschka, Chris](#)

2017-01 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

9781484788417 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Acclaimed African-American author and poet Bell Hooks joins forces with illustrator Chris Raschka to celebrate the joy and beauty of "nappy hair" in an exuberant, rhythmic, read-aloud book. Color illustrations throughout. [...More](#)



Whose Knees Are These?

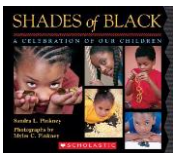
By [Asim, Jabari](#)

Illustrator [Pham, Leuyen](#)

2006-03 - LB Kids

9780316735766 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Celebrate baby's sweet knees with this multicultural board book. A peek-a-booguessing game features illustrations of adorable babies and engaging, rhymingverse. [...More](#)



Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children

By [Pinkney, Sandra L.](#)

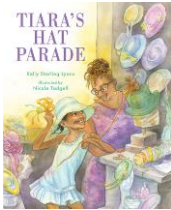
Illustrator [Pinkney, Myles](#)

Illustrator [Pinkney, Myles C.](#)

2006-01 - Cartwheel Books

9780439802512 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Using poetic language and stunning photographs, the Pinkneys create a remarkable affirmation of the beauty and diversity of African-American children in this board book edition of their bestselling picture book. Full color. [...More](#)



Tiara's Hat Parade

By [Lyons, Kelly Starling](#)

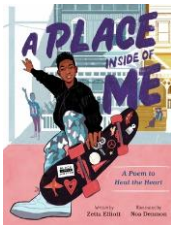
Illustrator [Tadgell, Nicole](#)

2020-04 - Albert Whitman & Company

9780807579459 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Tiara has a gift for storytelling; her momma has a gift for making hats. When a new store opens that sells cheaper hats, Momma has to set her dreams aside, but Tiara has an idea for helping Momma's dreams come true again.

[...More](#)



A Place Inside of Me

By [Elliott, Zetta](#)

Illustrator [Denmon, Noa](#)

2020-07 - Farrar, Straus and Giroux (Byr)

9780374307417 [Check Our Catalog](#)

In this powerful, affirming poem by award-winning author Zetta Elliott, a Black child explores his shifting emotions throughout the year.

There is a place inside of me

a space deep down inside of me

where all my feelings hide.

Summertime is filled with **joy**--skateboarding and playing basketball--until his community is [...More](#)



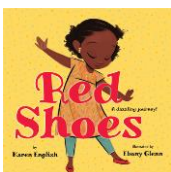
Your Name Is a Song

By [Thompkins-Bigelow, Jamilah](#)

2020-07 - Innovation Press

9781943147724 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her beautiful name, a little girl tells her mother she never wants to come back to school. In response, the girl's mother teaches her about the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx, and Middle Eastern names on their lyrical walk home through the city. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the young girl is ready [...More](#)



Red Shoes

By [English, Karen](#)

Illustrator [Glenn, Ebony](#)

2020-09 - Scholastic Inc.

9781338114607 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Red shoes glowing--

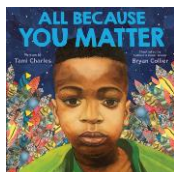
Perched on a pedestal in the shop window

as if on a throne.

I want those, Nana, Malika says, as they pass the shop.

We'll see, Nana says with a wink. Looks like you could use a new pair.

Malika is delighted when Nana surprises her with a beautiful new pair of red shoes [...More](#)



All Because You Matter

By [Charles, Tami](#)

Illustrator [Collier, Bryan](#)

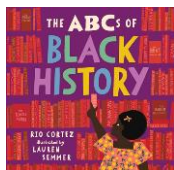
2020-10 - Orchard Books

9781338574852 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A lyrical, heart-lifting love letter to Black and brown children everywhere: reminding them how much they matter, that they have always mattered, and they always will, from powerhouse rising star author Tami Charles and esteemed, award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier.

Instant *New York Times* bestseller

The #1 Amazon Best [...More](#)



A Black History ABC

By [Cortez, Rio](#)

Illustrator [Semmer, Lauren](#)

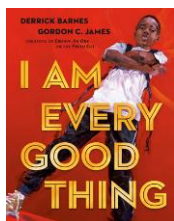
2020-12 - Workman Publishing

9781523507498 [Check Our Catalog](#)

B is for Beautiful, Brave, and Bright And for a Book that takes a Bold journey through the alphabet of Black history and culture.

Letter by letter, *The ABCs of Black History* celebrates a story that spans continents and centuries, triumph and heartbreak, creativity and joy.

It's a story of big ideas--P is for Power, S is for Science and Soul. Of significant [...More](#)



I Am Every Good Thing

By [Barnes, Derrick](#)

Illustrator [James, Gordon C.](#)

2020-09 - Nancy Paulsen Books

9780525518778 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Winner of the NCTE Charlotte Huck Award

An upbeat, empowering, important picture book from the team that created the award-winning *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*

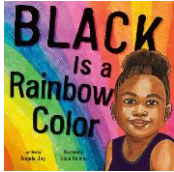
I am

a nonstop ball of energy.

Powerful and full of light.

I am a go-getter. A difference maker. A leader.

The confident Black narrator of this [...More](#)



Black Is a Rainbow Color

By [Joy, Angela](#)

Illustrator [Holmes, Ekua](#)

2020-01 - Roaring Brook Press

9781626726314 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A child reflects on the meaning of being Black in this moving and powerful anthem about a people, a culture, a history, and a legacy that lives on.

Red is a rainbow color.

Green sits next to blue.

Yellow, orange, violet, indigo,

They are rainbow colors, too, but

My color is black . . .

And there's no BLACK in [...More](#)



Respect: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul

By [Weatherford, Carole Boston](#)

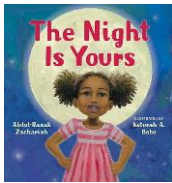
Illustrator [Morrison, Frank](#)

2020-08 - Atheneum Books for Young Readers

9781534452282 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From a *New York Times* bestselling author and an acclaimed illustrator comes this vibrant portrait of Aretha Franklin that pays her the R-E-S-P-E-C-T this Queen of Soul deserves.

Aretha Franklin was born to sing. The daughter of a pastor and a gospel singer, her musical talent was clear from her earliest days in her father's Detroit church where her soaring voice spanned more than [...More](#)



The Night Is Yours

By [Zachariah, Abdul-Razak](#)

Illustrator [Bobo, Keturah A.](#)

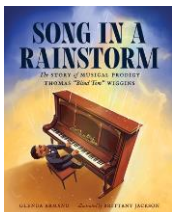
2019-07 - Dial Books

9780525552710 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From the *New York Times* bestselling illustrator of *I Am Enough*, this glowing, empowering picture book about a nighttime hide-and-seek game celebrates blackness and self-confidence.

Little one, so calm and so happy, the darkness of the night is yours like the darkness of your skin.

This lyrical text, narrated to a young girl named Amani by her father, follows her [...More](#)



Song in a Rainstorm: The Story of Musical Prodigy Thomas "blind Tom" Wiggins

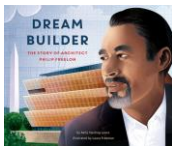
By [Armand, Glenda](#)

Illustrator [Jackson, Brittany](#)

2021-01 - Albert Whitman & Company

9780807509418 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Born blind into a life of slavery, Thomas Wiggins was dismissed as a "useless burden." But through the loving protection of his family, he went on to become one of the greatest musicians of his time. From Tom's childhood on a plantation to his performances in the concert halls of Europe, Glenda Armand shares the beautiful and at times heartbreaking story of a long-overlooked musical great, the [...More](#)



Dream Builder: The Story of Architect Philip Freelon

By [Lyons, Kelly Starling](#)

Illustrator [Freeman, Laura](#)

2020-01 - Lee & Low Books

9781620149553 [Check Our Catalog](#)

You've seen the building. Now meet the man whose life went into it.

Philip Freelon's grandfather was an acclaimed painter of the Harlem Renaissance. His father was a successful businessman who attended the 1963 March on Washington. When Phil decided to attend architecture school, he created his own focus on African American and Islamic designers. He later chose not to build casinos or [...More](#)



Big Papa and the Time Machine

By [Bernstrom, Daniel](#)

Illustrator [Evans, Shane W.](#)

2020-01 - HarperCollins

9780062463319 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A beautiful journey into African American history: Discover the true meaning of being brave in this tender and whimsical picture book from Daniel Bernstrom (*One Day in the Eucalyptus, Eucalyptus Tree*; *Gator, Gator, Gator*) and Shane Evans (*Chocolate Me*) that follows a grandfather and grandson traveling through time and discovering their own African American [...More](#)



Jump at the Sun: The True Life Tale of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston

By [Williams, Alicia D.](#)

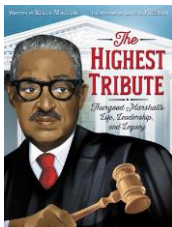
Illustrator [Alcántara, Jacqueline](#)

2021-01 - Atheneum Books

9781534419131 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From the Newbery Honor-winning author of *Genesis Begins Again* comes a shimmering picture book that shines the light on Zora Neale Hurston, the extraordinary writer and storycatcher extraordinaire who changed the face of American literature.

Zora was a girl who hankered for tales like bees for honey. Now, her mama always told her that if she wanted something, "to jump at de sun", [...More](#)



The Highest Tribute: Thurgood Marshall's Life, Leadership, and Legacy

By [Magoon, Kekla](#)

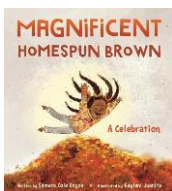
Illustrator [Freeman, Laura](#)

2021-01 - Quill Tree Books

9780062912510 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A brilliant picture book biography about Thurgood Marshall, who fought for equality during the Civil Rights Movement and served as the first Black justice on the Supreme Court, from Coretta Scott King Honor winners Kekla Magoon and Laura Freeman.

Growing up in Baltimore, Thurgood Marshall could see that things weren't fair. The laws said that Black and white people [...More](#)



Magnificent Homespun Brown: A Celebration

By [Doyon, Samara Cole](#)

Illustrator [Juanita, Kaylani](#)

2020-01 - Tilbury House Publishers

9780884487975 [Check Our Catalog](#)

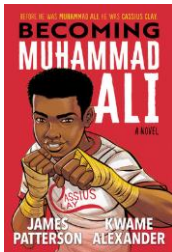
Kirkus Starred Review

PW Starred Review

School Library Journal Starred Review

"The definition of brown joy. THESE are the normalizations in stories that we need, unadulterated Black and Brown joy full of self-esteem and confidence..."
the tiny activist

Told by a succession of exuberant young narrators, [...More](#)



Becoming Muhammad Ali

By [Patterson, James](#)

Author [Alexander, Kwame](#)

Illustrator [Anyabwile, Dawud](#)

2020-10 - Jimmy Patterson

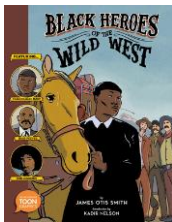
9780316498166 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From two heavy-hitters in children's literature comes a critically acclaimed biographical novel of cultural icon Muhammad Ali.

"This utterly delightful story about Ali's childhood is a smash hit." --School Library Journal (starred review)

Five starred reviews

Before he was a household name, Cassius Clay was a kid [...More](#)



Black Heroes of the Wild West

By [Smith, James Otis](#)

Introduction by [Nelson, Kadir](#)

2020-09 - Toon Graphics

9781943145515 [Check Our Catalog](#)

NYPL'S TOP 10 BOOKS FOR KIDS

Exploring American history and finding diversity at its roots

This graphic novel by **JAMES OTIS SMITH** celebrates the extraordinary true tales of three black heroes who took control of their destinies and stood up for their communities in the Old West. Born into slavery in Tennessee, Mary Fields became famous as [...More](#)



Black Brother, Black Brother

By [Rhodes, Jewell Parker](#)

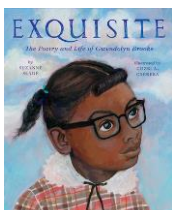
2020-03 - Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

9780316493802 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From award-winning and bestselling author, Jewell Parker Rhodes comes a powerful coming-of-age story about two brothers, one who presents as white, the other as black, and the complex ways in which they are forced to navigate the world, all while training for a fencing competition.

Framed. Bullied. Disliked. But I know I can still be the best.

Sometimes, [...More](#)



Exquisite: The Poetry and Life of Gwendolyn Brooks

By [Slade, Suzanne](#)

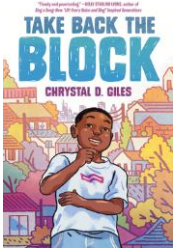
Illustrator [Cabrera, Cozbi A.](#)

2020-04 - Abrams Books for Young Readers

9781419734113 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A picture-book biography of celebrated poet Gwendolyn Brooks, the first Black person to win the Pulitzer Prize

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) is known for her poems about "real life." She wrote about love, loneliness, family, and poverty--showing readers how just about anything could become a beautiful poem. Exquisite follows Gwendolyn from early girlhood into her adult life, showcasing [...More](#)



Take Back the Block

By [Giles, Chrystal D.](#)

2021-01 - Random House Books for Young Readers

9780593175170 [Check Our Catalog](#)

This book made me want to step aside, hand over the mic, and listen to Wes. A must-read. --Mariama J. Lockington, author of *For Black Girls Like Me*

Brand-new kicks, ripped denim shorts, Supreme tee--

Wes Henderson has *the best* style in sixth grade. That--and hanging out with his crew (his best friends since little-kid days) and playing video [...More](#)



Root Magic

By [Royce, Eden](#)

2021-01 - Walden Pond Press

9780062899576 [Check Our Catalog](#)

"A poignant, necessary entry into the children's literary canon, *Root Magic* brings to life the history and culture of Gullah people while highlighting the timeless plight of Black Americans. Add in a fun, magical adventure and you get everything I want in a book"--Justina Ireland, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Dread Nation*

Debut [...More](#)



The Magic in Changing Your Stars

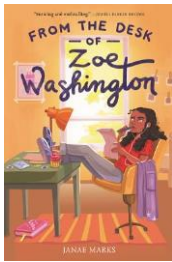
By [Henderson, Leah](#)

2020-08 - Sterling Children's Books

9781454934066 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Can you change your fate--and the fate of those you love--if you return to the past? Journey to 1939 Harlem in this time-travel adventure with an inspiring message about believing in yourself.

Eleven-year-old Ailey Benjamin Lane can *dance*--so he's certain that he'll land the role of the Scarecrow in his school's production of *The Wiz*. Unfortunately, a [...More](#)



From the Desk of Zoe Washington

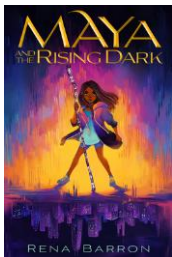
By [Marks, Janae](#)

2020-01 - Katherine Tegen Books

9780062875853 [Check Our Catalog](#)

Amazon Best Book of the Month * #1 Kids Indie Next List * *Parents Magazine* Best Book of 2020 * Chicago Public Library Best of the Best Book 2020 * SLJ Best Book of 2020 * *Kirkus* Best Book of 2020 * Junior Library Guild Selection * Four Starred Reviews

From debut [...More](#)



Maya and the Rising Dark

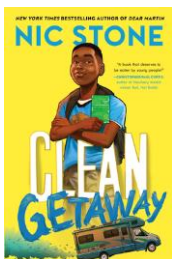
By [Barron, Rena](#)

2020-09 - Houghton Mifflin

9781328635181 [Check Our Catalog](#)

In this highly anticipated contemporary fantasy, twelve-year-old Maya's search for her missing father puts her at the center of a battle between our world, the Orishas, and the mysterious and sinister Dark world. Perfect for fans of *Aru Shah and the End of Time* and *The Serpent's Secret*.

Twelve-year-old Maya is the only one in her South Side Chicago [...More](#)



Clean Getaway

By [Stone, Nic](#)

2020-01 - Crown Books for Young Readers

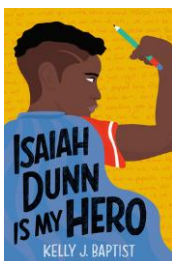
9781984892973 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From #1 *New York Times* bestselling author Nic Stone comes a timely middle-grade road-trip story through landmarks of the Civil Rights movement and the map they lay for contemporary race relations.

How to Go on an Unplanned Road Trip with Your Grandma:

Grab a Suitcase: Prepacked from the big spring break trip that got CANCELLED.

[...More](#)



Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero

By [Baptist, Kelly J.](#)

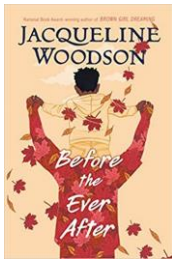
2020-08 - Crown Books for Young Readers

9780593121368 [Check Our Catalog](#)

A coming-of-age tale about a boy who discovers a love of poetry after finding his late father's journal. Adapted from a story that first appeared in *Flying Lessons & Other Stories* and perfect for fans of *The Parker Inheritance* by Varian Johnson.

Isaiah is now the big man of the house. But it's a lot harder than his dad made it look.

His [...More](#)



Before the Ever After

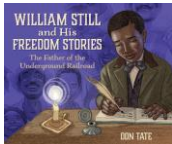
By [Woodson, Jacqueline](#)

2020-09 - Nancy Paulsen Books

9780399545436 [Check Our Catalog](#)

National Book Award winner Jacqueline Woodson's stirring novel-in-verse explores how a family moves forward when their glory days have passed and the cost of professional sports on Black bodies.

For as long as ZJ can remember, his dad has been everyone's hero. As a charming, talented pro football star, he's as beloved to the neighborhood kids he plays with as he is to his [...More](#)



William Still and His Freedom Stories: The Father of the Underground Railroad

By [Tate, Don](#)

Illustrator [Tate, Don](#)

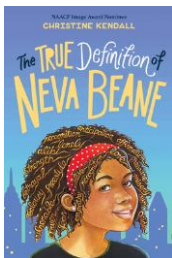
2020-11 - Peachtree Publishing Company

9781561459353 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From Ezra Jack Keats Award-winning author-illustrator Don Tate comes the highly anticipated and remarkable, little-known story of William Still, known as the Father of the Underground Railroad.

"Inspirational." —*School Library Journal*, STARRED REVIEW

"Brings deserved attention to the life of a man who dedicated himself to recording the lives of others." [...More](#)



The True Definition of Neva Beane

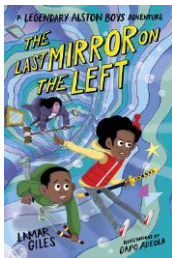
By [Kendall, Christine](#)

2020-09 - Scholastic Inc.

9781338324891 [Check Our Catalog](#)

From the author of *Riding Chance* comes the story of a girl whose dictionary is helping make sense of the world, her changing body, friendships, and a family that's struggling to stay strong amidst the turbulent backdrop of activism, across generations.

Being twelve isn't easy, especially when you're Neva Beane. Neva feels beautiful wearing her new bra, but she's [...More](#)



The Last Mirror on the Left

By [Giles, Lamar](#)

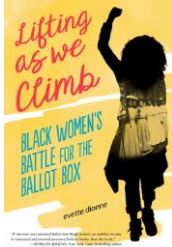
Illustrator [Adeola, Dapo](#)

2020-10 - Versify

9780358129417 [Check Our Catalog](#)

In this new Legendary Alston Boys adventure from Edgar-nominated author Lamar Giles, Otto and Sheed must embark on their most dangerous journey yet, bringing a fugitive to justice in a world that mirrors their own but has its own rules to play by.

Unlike the majority of Logan County's residents, Missus Nedraw of the Rorrim Mirror Emporium remembers the time freeze from *The Last* [...More](#)



Lifting as We Climb: Black Women's Battle for the Ballot Box

By [Dionne, Evette](#)

2020-04 - Viking Books for Young Readers

9780451481542 [Check Our Catalog](#)

For African American women, the fight for the right to vote was only *one* battle.

This National Book Award longlisted book tells the important, overlooked story of black women as a force in the suffrage movement--when fellow suffragists did not accept them as equal partners in the struggle.

Susan B. Anthony. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Alice Paul. The Women's [...More](#)