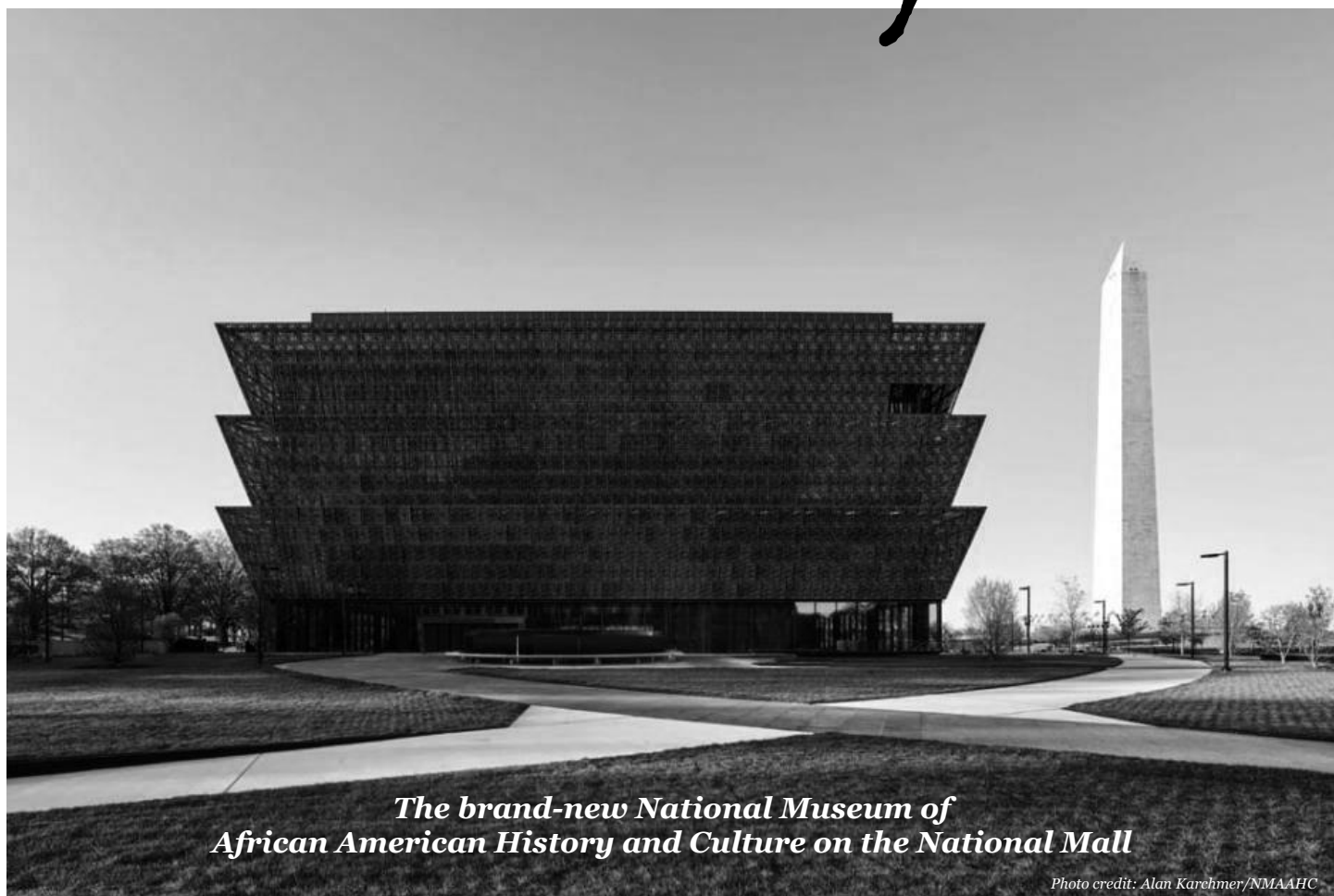


September/October 2016
Vol. 5, Issue III

free minds Connect

THIS MONTH'S THEME:

History



*The brand-new National Museum of
African American History and Culture on the National Mall*

Photo credit: Alan Karchmer/NMAAHC

IN THIS ISSUE...

**The Founding Father
Without a Father: The
Craze of the Broadway
Show *Hamilton* (page 11)**

**Changing My
Family's History
of Incarceration
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**Lynching Memorial:
Confronting
Racial Injustice
(page 7)**



Free Minds Connect

TALKBACK WITH TARA

Is brought to you by...

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We are ALWAYS looking
for new contributors.
Write or draw something
for our next issue and
send it to us! (Pieces not
published in the Connect
will appear on our
writing Blog, and at a
Write Night event!)

Free Minds Book Club
2201 P Street NW
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Next Issue's Theme:

Empathy

Happy Fall Free Minders!

There is excitement in the air here in DC, along with that crisp fall scent. Thousands are flocking to DC for the opening of the long-awaited National Museum of African American History and Culture. In this issue you'll read all about the incredible story of how it came about and the inspiring artifacts inside. We at Free Minds have a special connection to the museum. You should be very proud of your Free Minds brothers who have been directly involved in this historic moment. They have worked in several capacities: on the construction crew hanging drywall, on the valet team parking celebrities' cars for the grand opening, and on the cleaning crew taking care of the valuable collection inside!

That collection includes such powerful artifacts as Emmett Till's coffin, iron slave shackles, and election posters showing Barack Obama's presidential win. Museum-goers will learn about the Tulsa Massacre in 1921 when African Americans were killed by whites in a horrific race riot. This was hidden from history books until 2001. In Free Minds member JG's column, he references "Black Wall Street," the wealthy black community in Tulsa, Oklahoma that was destroyed in the 1921 massacre. Write to us if you want us to send you a book about the Tulsa Massacre or other historical events.

As Museum Curator Lonnie Bunch says about why so many people donated thousands of artifacts, "everybody knows how big a deal this is."

The museum also has an exhibit about the over 3,000 documented lynchings in this country (the number is higher but because records are missing we will never know exact number). Kelli interviews one of our all-time favorite authors (*Just Mercy*) and human rights defender Bryan Stevenson to hear about his planned memorial to mark all the known lynchings in this country. He says, "We have to acknowledge that we have a terrible history of racial injustice in this country...To begin the recovery process, we have to confront this legacy more honestly."

A Broadway musical is making American history hip. *Hamilton* is breaking all kinds of boundaries and winning every award (Grammy, Pulitzer, you name it). Actors of color play white historical figures and use hip hop to retell the story of the American Revolution. Read Julia's fascinating review and find out what "reclaiming the narrative" means. FM member TB reclaims his own narrative by recognizing the powerful hold his family had on his path to the streets, and how he wants to change his family's history of incarceration after spending time locked up with his brother.

An excerpt from one of your Free Minds brother's poems:

*"Now in college I can study history
But behind bars my people are a mystery"*

We at Free Minds are passionately driven to make that second line false by providing as much knowledge as possible, so send us your history book requests!

One of my history professors in college always started every class with the opening line, "who's making history today?" and he would have us all look up what happened on that day in history. It's something I still do today. It's a reminder that we can all literally "make history" with our actions.

I'll end with a little **Free Minds History Quiz**. Write to us with your answers!

- What year was Free Minds officially founded?

FREE MINDS HQ



By Seana

AUGUST APPRENTICESHIP

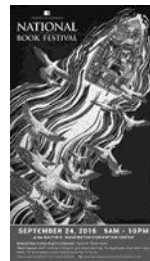
On August 29th, 12 of your Free Minds brothers graduated from the Job Readiness and Personal Skill Building Apprenticeship—our biggest class ever! This class also had the biggest range in ages, with our youngest apprentice only 16 years old and our oldest having just turned 62. It worked out well, with the older guys mentoring the younger ones. A highlight of the month was a behind the scenes tour of the US Capitol—a first for all of our apprentices!

FREE MINDS IN NYC

On September 22nd, Seana, Tara and Free Minds member Robert traveled to the Big Apple (New York's longstanding nickname) for a Write Lunch event at Google's Manhattan office. You might remember that we visited their DC office back in June and were thrilled to receive the invitation to their New York City location. More than 60 guests were in attendance who were learning about Free Minds (and reading your poetry) for the first time and we had a great time. I wonder where your poetry will travel next?!

NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

On September 24th, Free Minds staff and Poet Ambassadors (your Free Minds brothers) participated in the 16th annual Library of Congress National Book Festival at the Washington Convention Center. We shared your poetry and voices with visitors from all over the country who flew in to attend the event which featured guest authors Stephen King, Kareem Abdul-Jabaar and Andrew Aydin and Congressman John Lewis, who were there talking about March!



- What was the first book read by the first FM book club group?
- How many Free Minds members have joined the book club?
- How many books have FM members read?
- How many poems have FM members written?

Until next time
May the long time sun shine upon you
All love surround you
And the pure light within guide your way on



Give us a call when you get out: 202-758-0829

COVER ARTICLE: AFRICAN AMERICAN SMITHSONIAN

By Rachel

Hi all! My name is Rachel and I'm a new intern with Free Minds. I'm originally from Long Beach, CA but I'm visiting DC for the next four months to take some classes and work with Free Minds. I wanted to let you know about a really exciting museum that opened on September 24, 2016. It's the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). The creation of this museum was a long time coming, dating back to 1915, when black Civil War veterans—their contributions to winning their freedom ignored—pushed for a memorial to honor their service. In recent years, Congressman John Lewis introduced 13 different bills in support of the museum and the day has finally arrived. The city is abuzz with excitement and tickets for the museum's opening weekend (all 28,500 of them!!) sold out in an hour!

The museum is an amazing site to see, with a total of 10 stories, five above ground and five below. It houses 36,000 artifacts, and has 10 galleries. These galleries fall into three categories: history, culture, and community. The museum details the full history of African American history and culture in America, starting with the global slave trade. The building itself was designed to reflect the past, present, and future of the African American experience through the architecture. The museum has a base level that opens into a three-tiered crown. This was inspired by crowns used in Yoruban art from West Africa.

The main entrance of the building was designed to reflect a porch which has architectural roots tying it to Africa and in the American South. The entire building is wrapped in a bronze colored lattice that reflects the intricate ironwork crafted by enslaved African Americans in the American South and elsewhere in the world. This lattice consists of 3,600 cast-aluminum panels that weigh 230 tons (460,000 pounds)!

The architect, David Adjaye, said this in an interview with the magazine *American Voices*: "Windows in the museum show the Washington Monument, the Capitol building, etc., so you're brought back to D.C. The idea is for you to understand that the story of African-Americans has always been intimately connected to the decisions that are made in Washington."

Some notable artifacts in the museum are an early log cabin that belonged to freed slaves in Poolesville, Maryland in 1875, a dress sewn by Rosa Parks, a segregation-era railway car, the contents of one of President Obama's 2008 campaign offices, and a hymn book carried by Harriet Tubman. President Obama himself participated in the opening ceremony. He said, "This national museum helps to tell a richer and fuller story of who we are. By knowing this other story we better understand ourselves and each other. It binds us together. It reaffirms that all of us are America, that African-American history is not somehow separate from our larger American story. It is central to the American story."

What the New Museum Means to Me

"Every time I think about the National Museum of African American History & Culture, I get emotional. These feelings surprised me at first, because I haven't even been inside yet. It's like something you have to feel to understand; it's hard to put into words, but what I can audibly express is absolute pride. Proud to have a place here in our nation's capital that honors the significant contributions that African Americans have made since the inception of this great nation. Proud to be able to boast that there is a platform that highlights all the amazing accomplishments implemented by amazing people which coincides with amazing efforts from people of different races, classes and nationalities. It feels awesome!" - *Keela*

"The museum was an amazing experience for me as a black person in America. When I arrived there was a long line (of mostly black people) to get into the museum. Almost everyone was impeccably dressed and every single person was so excited and thrilled to be at this place that was so long in the making. When I entered the museum, I was in awe. To see all that black people have endured in this country—slavery, lynchings and segregation—but yet see all of our accomplishments in one place was so incredible. The displays about sports and music make it clear that African Americans completely dominate those fields. You can see and read about tennis, football, golf, baseball, basketball, track and field, boxing—everything. The music was wonderful: a whole room that is essentially a juke box where you can pick from a music genre (jazz, soul, blues, hip hop) and hear black artists' contributions. You can't help but leave feeling special and proud." - *Free Minds friend Vida*

"I'm very excited to have the opportunity to be able to work in such surroundings and to be able to learn more about my people." - *FM member MS on his new job as part of the cleaning crew for the National Museum of African American History and Culture*

WORDS OF WISDOM

By JG, FM Member

his-to-ry 'hist(ə)rē/ noun - a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events.

I've heard people openly question why history is important. They feel like what happened 20, 50, or 100 years ago has nothing to do with what's happening now in the world. Perspectives such as this usually come from those who have not had educational opportunities or been exposed to historical teachings. Conversations with these individuals never fail to validate for me the significance of knowing and understanding your history.

It would be a shame if I knew nothing about Black Wall Street, the domestic terror attacks perpetrated against citizens in 1921. Or if I knew nothing about the Tuskegee Experiment that took place over a 40-year period, between 1932 and 1972, when "black men were subjects of a study to examine the progression of untreated syphilis. The men were told that they were receiving free health care." To not know things like this is to be like a docile herd of sheep completely unaware of the fact that slaughter may be imminent. On the same note it would be a great injustice if I knew nothing about Imhotep, whom many consider the Egyptian God of Medicine, Prince of Peace and the first Christ. Greece used to send their students to Egypt to be educated, thus, 200 years later Hippocrates emerges as the father of medicine. Imhotep, however, was the originator. It would be a great injustice if I knew

(Continued on page 6)



THE WRITE WAY

Psychic Distance

By Julia

You know how sometimes in movies the camera is really far away, showing the big picture, and then it zooms in on the main character's face? Or the opposite? We can do something like that in writing too--let's call it **psychic distance**. A piece of writing that is close to the character would be zoomed in on what's going on inside his/her head (like a psychic who can read minds). A piece of writing that's far away, would be from the outside looking in on the character, and wouldn't say what he/she was thinking or feeling.

Example A:

She didn't know what to do. There was a lump in her throat and she felt sick to her stomach with nerves.

Example B:

Her shoulders were slumped, and she kept twisting her fingers and biting her lip.

The situation is the same, and both examples convey the same information (I hope!): she is nervous and scared. The difference is that the first example is zoomed in on her emotions, and the second example is looking at her with a little bit of distance. Both of these techniques can be useful. Try it out in your next poem or story!

A Book That Changed My Life...

We're asking people in the DC community to support our Books Across the Miles (BAM) so we can keep sending books, postcards, letters, and of course the Connect. In order to do that though, we need a little help from you to show why this program matters, and to show that **books really can change lives**.

Send us a poem or a letter about a book that changed your life. Here are some prompts to get you started:

Do you have a favorite book or a book that you liked? Which one(s)?

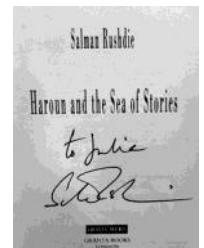
What did you like about the book? Are there particular parts that stuck with you?

Is there a character from a book who you could relate to, or who you wished you could be?

Is there a book that you read in solitary, or one that helped you with a difficult situation?

Describe the role of reading in your life before you met Free Minds and now. Do you like it more?

A Book That Changed My Life: Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie. It's a story about a boy (Haroun) whose father is a writer, but loses his ability to write after Haroun's mother leaves. Haroun has to go on a mystical journey to save his father. This book changed my life because it made me want to be a writer and opened my mind to what was possible with the arts. – Julia



I got to meet the author and he signed my book!

FREE MINDS MAILBAG

We love getting mail from our Free Minds Family. Write us, and let us know what you thought of this issue!

I love this month's theme about history and our future. We should all learn each other's culture and history because if we know where we come from we will know where we are going. If we know about our people and the great things they have accomplished, maybe a lot of us wouldn't feel so hopeless or helpless because we would have strong leaders to look up to and a sense of direction. – AF

I have been brainstorming on the newsletter's next theme: History. The first thing that always comes to my mind when I ponder on history is our impact on it. How will we millennials be remembered? It is the job of every subsequent generation to build off the triumphs and learn from the failures of the previous ones. In this practice, we can continue to build and advance our civilization in a direction that is conducive to love, life and liberty for all. – LC

If I could go back in history, I would love to be able to go back and talk with the incomparable Frederick Douglass. Here's a man who exemplified self-determination by willing himself to rise above, against all odds. I would ask him what would be his assessment of the Black man's condition in American if he could be present in our time. Frederick Douglass taught me that once a person becomes self-aware, he or she must become morally conscious and choose principles and purposes to live by. – QS



FAMILY TIES

The column where FM family and loved ones weigh in.

A Little Brother's Perspective

By TB

Six years ago, TB was a juvenile charged as an adult in Washington, DC alongside his older brother. TB is now home and sat down to talk with us about his experience and his relationship with his brother, who is still incarcerated.

I come from a family of seven children and have three sisters and three brothers. My older brother is older than me by four years and we were always close growing up. My best memory that involves my brother was the day I graduated elementary school. He was the only one there from my family to show his support and I'll never forget it. Before we were locked up together we would see each other every day, even though we weren't living together at that time. The sad thing is, other than my elementary school graduation, I can't think of a single positive thing my older brother and I ever did together. Isn't that crazy? And I've done a lot of good stuff in my life. When I was younger I definitely looked up to him, even though now I know he was behaving recklessly and that's what led to me being in the street life. I know I have to take responsibility for decisions I made, of course, but I see now that by him being in the streets that influenced me to do the same.

The last time I saw my brother was about a month before I came home, when we ended up in solitary confinement together at the same prison. Before that, I hadn't seen him since we were sentenced in 2011. At first, I wasn't sure how to feel after not seeing him for so long, but we got to talking through the cell doors (we weren't in a cell together) and I was definitely happy to see him and know that he was okay. Our father passed away while we were incarcerated and neither of us were allowed to go to the funeral and never really got to talk about it. I know my brother blames himself for me getting caught up in the street life, even though he won't talk about it.

I have completely changed my mindset and am proud to say that I am on a positive path. I know I'm lucky to be back home when I'm young and don't plan to ever go back to prison. I don't know if my brother has changed his mindset yet; I think he might have one foot in and one foot out of that life. In some ways I'm glad we weren't incarcerated at the same facility together the entire time because I think I had the chance to think and really find myself and figure out what is important to me, and it's not that street life. If I'm being honest, I think if we were incarcerated together he would have been a negative influence on me.

I have been home for a few months now but he still has about three years to go. I have talked to him on the phone a few times since I've been home, which has been nice. I don't think it will be hard to reconnect with him when he gets home because we are older now and understand each other as men. I plan to keep in touch with him when he gets home because we are family and he has kids that I plan to stay in contact with and help out with while he's away. When he comes home, I'll definitely try to help him do right but I am not going to be pulled back into the street life. My siblings all think of me as the older brother, just because of how I act and how much I have changed. I take that responsibility seriously and want to talk to them about what I did and show them how lucky I am to be here today and hope it keeps them from the streets. I know by me being home and doing well, it motivates my younger brothers to do the right thing and I hope it will do the same for my older brother.

If I could talk to my older brother right now I would tell him, "it's not about waiting for the storm to clear, it's about learning to dance with the rain," which is my favorite quote. In other words, keep your head held high and stay strong. I know he can make it too and I'll be here waiting for him when he gets home. Hopefully by then I'll have my own place.

ASK HF: ADVICE FROM THE INSIDE

Dear HF,

They say that history has a way of repeating itself. Well, that's true. I know because my father was locked up for most of my life. He's still behind bars, and now look at his son. Me! I'm sitting in a cell, just like my dad (and my uncles for that matter). What can I do to make sure that my son and my son's sons don't repeat history and make the same mistakes? Do you believe in fate? Do you think we can change the course of history?

***Sincerely,
CP***

Dear CP,

You cannot change history, your father, your son, the cycle of incarceration in your family, nor anything else, until you change yourself. The only thing that I believe in regards to fate and destiny is that we all get what we put out. I would have never been in this position to write an *ASK HF* column had I not made the decision in Lorton prison at the age of 18 in the year of 1999 to change myself. From there, constantly changing/improving myself, have I been able to change/improve others. "Be the change that you want to see in the world." (Mahatma Gandhi)

***Sincerely,
HF***

THE LEGAL PAD

by Seana



Greetings all you "Legal Eagles" (a reference to a 1986 American legal comedy film, if you've ever wondered where that saying came from)! This month we thought we would share some recent DNA-related headlines that have been featured in the DNA Newsletter published by our friends at the Legal Aid Society. Here are some noteworthy issues that have come up in the past few months that we thought might be of interest to some of you:

- The Senate has approved the Rapid DNA Act of 2016, which would allow local police to collect DNA samples from suspects and analyze them with Rapid DNA instruments during an arrest. While current regulations mandate that DNA samples must be sent to accredited laboratories—which could take several weeks or even months—the new bill would allow law enforcement agents to analyze the samples and search the CODIS database for matches within two hours.

The Rapid DNA Act has yet to pass in the House of Representatives, but many are concerned about future implications to individual privacy. A February article from New Republic notes, "Many privacy lawyers and forensic experts are concerned that the DNA samples indefinitely stored in the FBI's

(Continued on page 8)



POEMS BY FREE MINDS MEMBERS

This is Who You Are to Me

By BS

In my ocean, you are a whale
The biggest thing in the sea
Because nowadays you're the only thing
That matters to me
In my grassy field, you are a rose
Because you're so beautiful
And always smell so good
In my galaxy, you are the sun
Because in the darkest days you bring light
In my body, you are my heart and lungs
Because without you there is no air
Or reason to live
You keep me alive

My Ultimate Sun

By RE

Your light shines to the ends of the universe
Far beyond what anyone can see
N.A.S.A. has classified you phenomenal
In all that you embrace with energy and love
To all existence, always persistent
Yet so far and distant
Light years away, but still able to display
Your power, strength and cordiality
You are amazing
What can one do without you?
I'd imagine become weak and bitter
Shiver and wither, from the lack of T.L.C.
Your tender love and care is what I mean
Plus everything in between happiness and elation
You inspire me, Beauty
Awesome Beauty
Inspired me to write this poem

Black Sheep

By AK

All my life I been labeled the family black sheep
'Cause I chose to smoke, drink and run the streets
'Cause my father neglected me
You don't know how much anger
And pain it brought me
I used to wish I was a part
Of my friend's family
The life I lived had my mama stressing
The fact that I'm still alive is a blessing
She always told me to choose my friends wisely
Man, I wish I had listened

What Real Love Can Do

By AM

It can lift you up when life has beaten you down
It can give you the courage to face life again
It can give you strength and willpower to handle the
many challenges that come with living
It can help you see that life is worth living after all
It can keep you strong in the midst of your troubles
It can teach you to love and care about family, friends
and others
It can make you feel motivated to improve your life
It can make you see where you went wrong and help
you find your way
It can make you change from your negative ways to
become an honest, genuine, loving person
It can empower you to love God, yourself and family
It can keep you thinking positively, even when you're
at your lowest
It can help you make realistic plans for a better life
to live
It can make you strong when you're facing something
real and serious
It can keep you moving ahead when the road gets rough
It can give you the faith and power to endure whatever
life throws at you
That's what real love can do

(Continued from page 3)

nothing about Mulai Ismael, whom I believe to be the most extraordinary ruler of the 18th century. A man of great honor, principle and courage, he ruled Morocco for 55 years.

How could I know my own potential, how great I could be, if I didn't know about men such as the ones mentioned above? As Elijah Muhammad said, "Anyone who does not have knowledge of self is considered a victim of either amnesia or unconsciousness and is not very competent." A correct knowledge of history is so important because we are today what our forefathers were yesterday without doubt or contradiction. But what happens when a people do not have knowledge of self, when they are completely unaware of who their forefathers are? They are left to mimic the ways of their oppressor, and/or fall victim to the stigma that is continuously impressed upon their subconscious from birth, making and shaping the path of their lives.

So viewed from this perspective it is of the utmost importance to know your history. Knowledge of Self is the order of the day.

Peace!



PAYING IT FORWARD

Change-maker Bryan Stevenson Pushes America to Confront Its History of Racial Injustice

By Kelli

Earlier this year, most of you received and read our BAM! selection, Just Mercy, by Bryan Stevenson. As if writing this best-selling memoir, saving the lives of poor clients on death row, and working to end the practice of sentencing juveniles to life-without-parole were not enough, Stevenson is now spear-heading a new project in Alabama to commemorate the nearly 4,000 lynchings that took place in the South. *The Memorial for Peace and Justice* and the related museum, *From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration*, will challenge Americans to acknowledge the history of racial injustice in this country.

The memorial will contain the names of over 4,000 lynching victims engraved on concrete columns representing each county in the United States where racial terror lynchings took place. Most of these killings were committed by white mobs, often in county courthouse squares, where no one was ever held accountable. The memorial and museum are designed to embrace truth and encourage reflection and change in this country. In addition to a slave warehouse, it will include exhibits on lynching, racial segregation and mass incarceration.



Photo credit: Annie Leibovitz/Vanity Fair



*Artist's rendering of the proposed memorial
(courtesy of Equal Justice Initiative)*

I emailed Bryan Stevenson and told him that the incarcerated members of Free Minds had read his book, and asked him to tell you why he is driven to build this memorial. Here is his response:

We have to acknowledge that we have a terrible history of racial injustice in this country. We need to be appropriately sober and thoughtful about the tragic violence and shameful abuse to which people of color have been subjected in America. The genocide involving Native Americans, the enslavement of black people, the racial terrorism that fostered lynching, the codification and legalization of racial hierarchy and white supremacy that sustained Jim Crow have created shadows in American society we have yet to overcome. To begin the recovery process, we have to confront this legacy more honestly.

I asked Mr. Stevenson to tell you about the link he believes exists between the history of slavery and mass incarceration today. Here is what he wrote:

There is a line from slavery to racial terrorism through segregation that is evident in what we see in our criminal justice system today. I am persuaded that we really won't eliminate the problems of discrimination in the criminal justice system, in the education system, and in the employment system until we change the narrative of racial difference that we have all accepted. I believe that at the end of the 1960's when we passed the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, we should have committed to a process of truth and reconciliation, but we didn't do that.

When you go to South Africa, you are confronted with the legacy of apartheid. If you go to Rwanda, they make sure that you understand what genocide did. If you go to Germany, you can't actually go many places in Berlin without seeing the markers and the stones that have been placed at the homes of Jewish families abducted during the Holocaust. The Germans actually want you to go to Auschwitz to confront that legacy.

In the South, the landscape is littered with the iconography of the Confederacy. In Montgomery, there are 59 markers and monuments to the Confederacy. Our two largest high schools are Robert E. Lee High and Jefferson Davis High. Confederate Memorial Day is a state holiday. Jefferson Davis's birthday is a state holiday. We don't even have Martin Luther King Day—it's Martin Luther King Day/Robert E. Lee Day. We are preoccupied with the mid-19th century history, but we won't talk about slavery. And that creates a problem.

We've created a narrative that says we're not going to talk about the mistakes we make...We have a hard time collectively saying, "I'm sorry."

I continue to believe that we're not free in this country, that we're not free at birth by a history of racial injustice. ... And there are spaces that are occupied by the legacy of that history that weigh on us. We talk a lot about freedom. We talk a lot about equality. We talk a lot about justice. But we're not free. There are shadows that follow us.

Bryan Stevenson is making sure that the history that we learn and teach our children, however painful or uncomfortable, is the truth. The memorial and museum are scheduled to open in 2017.



THE LEGAL PAD

(Continued from page 5)

databases could someday be used for purposes beyond simple identification...such as warrantless searches or to reveal information about a person's health."

Another expert remarked: "There are serious questions about whose DNA is being taken by the police and when it should be searched and how," adding that he was "not particularly troubled by rapid DNA technology but, instead, by a lack of proper policies governing its use." (Source: 6/28/2016 DNA Newsletter)

- A new draft report from the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) has caused concerns about the use of modern forensic science techniques in the criminal justice system, stating: "It has become increasingly clear in recent years that lack of rigor in the assessment of the scientific validity of forensic evidence is not just a hypothetical problem but a real and significant weakness in the judicial system. The PCAST report also addressed the need for empirical standards in pattern-based forensic science methods, such as bite mark analysis, fingerprint matching, firearm/ballistic matching and shoe tread analysis: "In the case of bite-mark evidence, the report is especially critical. 'PCAST finds that bite mark analysis does not meet the scientific standards for foundational validity, and is far from meeting such standards,' it reads. 'To the contrary, available scientific evidence strongly suggests that examiners cannot consistently agree on whether an injury is from a human bite mark and cannot identify the source of [a] bite mark with reasonable accuracy.' (Source: 9/13/2016 DNA Newsletter)

QUOTE-I-VATOR

"What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice." – Carter Woodson (pictured right)

"If you think you have it tough, read history books." – Bill Maher

"Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it." – Edmund Burke

"The more you know of your history, the more liberated you are." – Maya Angelou

"That's the problem with history, we like to think it's a book—that we can turn the page and move on. But history isn't the paper it's printed on. It's memory, and memory is time, emotions, and song. History is the things that stay with you." – The Sellout by Paul Beatty



DC PHOTOS OF THE MONTH



We love this **mural** at the corner of 15th St and Benning Road NE, right next to Hechinger Mall!

Hubbard Place is one of the largest apartment buildings in the city, located on 14th Street just minutes from downtown Columbia Heights.

Have a request for next issue's DC Photo of the month? Write us at 2201 P St NW Washington, DC 20037 and let us know what you'd like to see!



Give us a call when you get out: 202-758-0829

IN THE NEWS

By Free Minds Friend John

WORLD

Repeated air strikes have greatly diminished the capacity of the Islamic State (ISIS), the terrorist regime that occupies territory in both Iraq and Syria. But Syria continues to plunge into one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern times. The country has descended into a well-armed turf war. Different militias funded by different countries (including the United States) are fighting both ISIS and the Syrian government, but they're also fighting each other. This leaves civilians in the country in the path of bombings, crossfire, and the prospect of their children being recruited into battle.

On a brighter international note, the Summer Olympic Games in Brazil brought the world together at a critical time. The games featured the first-ever Refugee Olympic team, which featured several athletes from around the world, including Syria.

The lasting legacy of these games, though, will almost certainly be the track and field victories by Jamaican runner Usain Bolt. Bolt has won three consecutive gold medals in the 100 meter, 200 meter and the 100 meter relay. Bolt is without a doubt the greatest runner in history, and his infectious personality has made him a beloved athlete the world over.



Among the highlights for the U.S. delegation:

- The women's gymnastics team won the all-around gold medal, and 19-year-old Simon Biles (who spent time in foster care before being adopted by her grandparents) won the individual gold medal.
- The U.S. men's and women's basketball teams both took home gold medals. The women cruised from start to finish; the men encountered some shockingly close games early on, and then were led by Kevin Durant to the gold.
- Ashton Eaton won a second consecutive gold medal in the Decathlon, a grueling competition that involves 10 different track and field events.
- Simone Manuel became the first African-American woman to win a medal in swimming.
- Michael Phelps continued his domination of swimming and now has won 23 gold medals in his career. To put that in perspective, the next highest total by any person is NINE.

NATIONAL

It's the presidential debate season between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

There is plenty to say about this presidential race and all of the things that have happened in this country while the two have campaigned. Maybe after it's over, we will do a special News look-back on the whole thing. But for now, here are a few issues that you can expect will be discussed on the debate stage:

- Security: How to keep America safe from terrorist attacks
- Immigration: The best way to handle the millions of immigrants in American without proper documentation, and what to do about security along our border with Mexico
- Jobs: The future position of America in the world's economy, and how that relates to creating jobs in this country

Another issue that is sure to come up in the debates is law enforcement. Several recent shootings of unarmed citizens, and

citizens with lawful weapons not aimed at anyone, have prompted a fresh round of protests over the lethal use of force by police officers. Here in DC, Terrence Sterling was shot and killed by police while riding a motorcycle. The officer did not have his body camera on. Now, Mayor Bowser has announced that DC police are required to turn their cameras on before responding to a call or interacting with a citizen.

Virtually all of the high-profile, filmed shootings have involved black victims. According to *The Washington Post*, 708 people have been killed by police in 2016, and 173 are black; twice as many as population demographics would proportionally suggest.

The issue has spilled over into the world of sports. In a preseason NFL game, San Francisco 49ers Quarterback Colin Kaepernick did not stand for the national anthem and has continued to kneel during the anthem this season. Several other athletes have followed.

There is little that the federal government can do directly to address any of this, since law enforcement is generally a system managed in tandem between state police and either county, city or municipal departments. But you can bet that both candidates will be asked to share their thoughts on what has happened.

DC

After years of preparation and construction, the National Museum of African-American History and Culture opened in September. There is a waiting period of several months for free tickets to tour the museum due to extremely high demand. The museum opened with a huge celebration that featured performances by Stevie Wonder, The Roots and Public Enemy.



SPORTS

Some quick hits from around the D.C. sports scene...

Redskins: Off to a 1-2 start that really should be a 2-1 start. The squad lost a tough game to the hated Cowboys when Kirk Cousins threw a late interception in the end zone on a drive that would have won the game.

The Skins turned it around in Week 3 with a gutsy win against the Giants in New York, and face a fairly winnable slate in October: Cleveland, Baltimore, Philly, and Detroit. The Eagles have been the surprise of the league so far, though, with a 3-0 start including a shocking Week 3 destruction of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Nationals: For the third time in five seasons, the Washington Nationals will be the champions of the NL East. But at this point, there isn't a fan in or around the city who cares about that.



This season is all about breaking through in the playoffs. The Nats have made the postseason twice in their short history and have been dispatched in the first round on both occasions. They will likely face the Los Angeles Dodgers in the first round, and this season will be measured by whether they can move past that hurdle.

If they do, it is likely that they will face the best team in baseball, the Chicago Cubs, for a chance to go to the World Series.



REENTRY PROFILE: MALIK

Free Minds member Malik was not surprised to find himself at the DC Jail at the age of 16. "I knew by the choices I was making where I was going to end up," he says. "I had already been locked up in juvenile facilities 13 different times by then."

Malik says his childhood wasn't all bad. "I mean we weren't the richest in the neighborhood, but we weren't the poorest either," he says. He and his siblings played baseball in the streets. His dream was to play in the major leagues one day. Unfortunately, by the time he was 11, Malik began to emulate the behavior of older kids who were running the streets. "I was just being influenced by the wrong people," he says. He was charged with armed robbery and served four years.

Malik began attending Book Club at the DC Jail. "I knew how to read, but I never read like that before," he says now. "The first time I came to the Book Club, Tara gave me a young adult novel about sisters growing up in a neighborhood like mine. I couldn't stop reading it once I started!" But the author who changed everything for Malik was James Patterson. Every week, he'd read the book club title in one night, and then ask for a new James Patterson book. He read so many, he eventually lost count, but estimates that he has read more than 300 different books.

"Books changed me," Malik says now. "They took me to other places. When I read, I wasn't in prison anymore. I was wherever that book was taking place and I loved it."

Malik says that he is different now than when he first got locked up. "I have knowledge because I became a reader. I am smarter, I have more skills, and I have a better sense of my direction," he says.

Upon release, Malik enrolled in the Free Minds Apprenticeship to prepare himself for the working world. "I learned that just because a job is easy to get and easy to do, doesn't mean it's right for you. It's more important to find a really good fit. So instead of just doing what seemed easy, I went after a job I really wanted."

Malik got a job as an administrative assistant for a nonprofit organization serving families in DC. He loves getting paid to work with and help children. He is also taking GED classes. Next up, Malik plans to attend college to study music.

In August, Malik won the Attorney General's Right Direction Award for young people making a positive change in their community.

While he hopes to become a music producer, Malik also plans to launch his own nonprofit organization to help other young people who grew up like himself. "I want to show kids that if you want the better things in life, you've got to do the right thing. You can't get there by doing the wrong thing. You might for a while, but it's only temporary. It's never going to last."

His advice for his Free Minds brothers: "Don't be scared to go after the job you want when you get home. Go after your dreams!"

REENTRY CORNER

By Keela

Hey guys, *Do shita no?* (That's Japanese for what's up)

Trust me, I just learned that and wanted to pass along a little something new to you guys! I also want to pass some more exciting news onto you as well! A couple of awesome new program options right here in the District of Columbia!

The Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs (formally called Office of Returning Citizens) has an all new CDL program specifically for returning citizens. The only criteria to participate is to be a DC resident and a returning citizen. The program is free and you get hands-on experience driving class A & B vehicles. A couple of things to note though—in order for you to be eligible to participate you need:

- A resume
- ID
- 3-5 year clean driving record
- Department of Transportation physical (MORCA can help you obtain this)

The Mayor's Office of Returning Citizen Affairs is located at 2100 Martin Luther King Avenue, S.E. – Ste. 100. They also can be reached at 202-715-7670.

There's also the Community Hub for Opportunities in Construction Employment or CHOICE Works for short. Choice runs a construction apprenticeship program focused on getting its graduates into the construction union upon completion of the program. Here's a brief description taken from their website of what their goal is:

"In short, our unions, and our industry, are now looking for workers to enter apprenticeships. And we are placing a strong emphasis upon building bridges for minorities, women and military veterans to gain access to these opportunities that will place them on a trajectory towards a stable, secure Middle Class life."

In order to be considered for Choice one must:

- Be able to pass a drug test
- Physically able to perform the work
- Have an 8th grade math and reading score on the CASA test

Choice is located at 815 15th street NW, Washington DC 20006, they can be reached at 202-756-4660.

Okay guys, *Jikai made!* (that's Japanese for until next time)



Give us a call when you get out: 202-758-0829

HAMILTON

Reclaiming the Historical Narrative

By Julia

*A hurricane came, devastation reigned
Our man saw his future drip dripping down the drain
Put a pencil to his temple, connected it to his brain
And he wrote his first refrain, a testament to his pain*
- "Alexander Hamilton" by Lin-Manuel Miranda

Those are lyrics from *Hamilton*, a hip hop musical about the life of Alexander Hamilton, one of the founders of our country (you may know him as the guy on the ten-dollar bill). Alexander Hamilton was born in poverty on a small island in the Caribbean (see "Around the World" for more information about St. Croix, where he was from). His father left and his mother died when he was a kid, then a hurricane destroyed his town. He wrote a poem about the destruction--and people were so impressed by his poetry that they raised money to send him to America to get an education.

He went on to help create the United States of America before (spoiler) he was shot and killed by then Vice President Aaron Burr. He's definitely one of the more dramatic historical figures! The show *Hamilton* uses hip hop and rap (the music of revolution) to tell the story of the American Revolution (the war for independence from England that we fought in the 1700s).

One of the really remarkable things about *Hamilton* is that the actors are primarily people of color, mostly Black and Latino/a, even though the historical figures they're playing (like George Washington) were white. The creators of the show say that they're telling the story of *America then*, played by *America now*.



Photo credit: Instagram/HamiltonMusical

Rapper Daveed Diggs standing in the White House in front of a painting of the historical figure he plays: Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd President of the United States.



Photo credit: Instagram/HamiltonMusical

Poet Okieriete Onaodowan (he's the son of Nigerian immigrants) in front of a painting of the historical figure he plays: James Madison, the 4th President of the United States.

Some people have asked what is the point of casting black actors as white people. It's about *reclaiming the narrative*—taking the story of our country that's taught in schools and textbooks, a story that until now has been almost exclusively focused on white people, and retelling it through the perspective of black and brown people. I think Daveed Diggs, one of the stars of the show, said it best in an interview when he said, "[Making *Hamilton*] is the only time that I've felt particularly American." Growing up as a young black man in America, he didn't feel included in mainstream American history.

Hamilton has also made a lot of people (myself included) interested in history in a way they weren't before. I've learned a lot of weird trivia about people like George Washington (1st President) and Thomas Jefferson (3rd President). But I've also learned about some people who aren't in the textbooks, like James Armistead Lafayette, an enslaved man who volunteered to be a spy for the Americans during the Revolution.

He spied on the British army and smuggled information to George Washington and the rebels. Without him, America might not have won the war, and we all might be living in a British colony today, instead of in an independent nation. But despite everything that he did for the Americans, it still took them 6 years to free him from slavery.

James Armistead Lafayette wasn't the only black person making history during the Revolution—far from it—but we don't read about him in school, and I never would have learned his story if I hadn't started listening to the music from *Hamilton*. The show is proof that writing can make dusty old history feel important and relevant right now.



A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE

By Free Minds Friend Cynthia

Cynthia was the summer intern at Free Minds. You might remember her article on matriarchies in the last Connect. Although she has gone back to college (she studies sociology), she offered to write this article about her family's personal history.

He was allowed to attend the funeral, handcuffed in an orange jumpsuit accompanied by several officers. My uncle cried quietly. The death of his mother came too soon.

When I was a little girl my mother worked as a GED teacher at a jail in Virginia. She brought home the books the men in her class were reading and gave them to me so I could follow along with the class as well. At only 8 years old, I was reading titles like Their Eyes Were Watching God and The Grapes of Wrath. She inspired my love for reading and writing at a young age. She would say, "We can step inside the pages and walk in the character's shoes." I didn't know what she meant at the time, but I listened and pondered, thinking my mommy was so smart. One day I saw a copy of Ernest Gaines' A Lesson Before Dying lying on the kitchen table. It is the story of a young African-American man on trial for murder in 1940s Louisiana. The novel scared me as I thought of my uncle and the time he was serving. I prayed every night he would be released and that we would see him again.

I want to tell the stories of men like my uncle through my research and life's work. Documenting and uplifting the subject of the African-American experience in the 21st Century as a sociologist in the field of non-profit social advocacy has always been something I wanted to do—but never quite knew how I would get there. While growing up I knew of no real-life, modern day examples of members in the field. I recognized that I enjoyed studying the way in which society progresses and transforms from a young age, even if I did not have the words for it quite yet. As I grew older, I saw the importance and the value of the work sociologists did. In high school, I clung to the works of Patricia Hills Collins and bell hooks, W.E.B. Du Bois and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. If black scholars passionately involved in the study of human society and human interaction only existed in books that would have been enough for me. But knowing these sociologists were *real* made sociology real in my eyes. The subjects of mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex have yet to be truly examined from a human perspective. From an emotional, family perspective.

This October, my uncle Warren will serve as Best Man at my father's wedding. He will stand by his brother in a black tux with his head held high. And I will cry because my family will be reunited again.

"YOUR IDEA FOR A COLUMN NAME GOES HERE!"

By Kelli

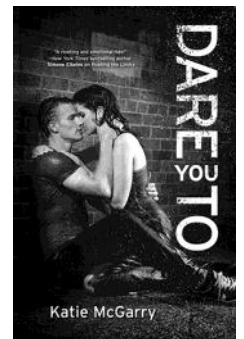
We need a new name for this column! It was called "What the Young'uns Are Reading," but I'm finding out I want to write about other things too. *Kellz' Deep Thoughts?* No??? Okay, well, send me your ideas or we're all in trouble!

So what *are* the young'uns reading, you ask? We just finished a young adult novel called Dare You To by Katie McGarry. It's about Ryan, a high school senior and baseball star who falls for Beth, the new girl. Beth's mom is addicted to heroin. She is too angry and worried about saving her mom from her abusive boyfriend to think about impressing classmates at her new school. Ryan and Beth are like water and oil, but, you guessed it, they fall in love. I'm not gonna lie. The cover of the book is pretty corny. I thought there was no way the guys would open it, much less read it. But guess what? They loved it! You cannot judge a book by its cover!

Since our theme is history, I want to tell you about the road trip I took with two childhood friends last weekend. My friend Renee, a photographer and college professor, is photographing places across the country that have been witness to the history of slavery in America. We drove to Charlottesville, Virginia so she could visit and take pictures of Thomas Jefferson's home. It's called Monticello. Have you heard of it? I learned SO much on this trip! The home has been restored to be much as it was in the late 18th century.

Jefferson, who is often credited for being against slavery (in part because he wrote those famous words in the US Constitution: "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal") owned more than 600 enslaved people. (Another interesting thing we learned is that using the word "enslaved" is now preferred to saying "slaves" since it describes their condition as humans who have been enslaved rather than "slave" which implies an identity.) While some

(Continued on page 13)



AROUND THE WORLD...

*The column where we explore places near and far on our miraculous planet.
The writer is the guide and the readers are on "vacation via imagination."*

Island Life

By Alison



Hi guys, Alison here. Since the last issue, I've left DC and Free Minds for a job at the Federal Public Defender in the U.S. Virgin Islands (U.S.V.I.). But you know I'm Free Minds family forever, so I'm back to tell you a little bit about my new home in this month's Around the World. The U.S.V.I., located 40 miles east of Puerto Rico in the Caribbean Sea, consists of St. Croix (nicknamed "Twin City" by the locals), St. Thomas ("Rock City"), St. John ("Love City") and a number of smaller outlying islands.

You might ask – who needs public defenders on an island? There is a lot more to the islands than just oceans, beaches and sunshine. Many of the same problems that we face in DC and in cities across the U.S. are major issues down here as well. Although the islands are dotted with mega mansions worth millions of dollars, there is a lot of poverty, unemployment, and gun violence, with murder rates over seven times the national average. But it's certainly not all bad!

The Virgin Islands are home to very diverse people who are intensely loyal and proud of their history and culture. And there is a lot to be proud of. With temperature highs in the 80's and lows in the 70's year round, V.I. residents can enjoy their crystal clear blue water and world famous white sandy beaches whenever they please. Thousands of people travel to the islands to celebrate Carnival every year, a huge holiday that consists of several weeks of parades, concerts, dancing, and activities to celebrate the local culture, music and traditional Caribbean food.

The economy is mainly centered around tourism. Almost 70% of jobs here are in tourism and hospitality, with many residents working at restaurants, resorts, and tourist attractions. In St. Thomas, sometimes you see as many as five cruise ships at a time docked at the main port in Charlotte Amalie, the downtown area, which gets really crowded with tourists exploring the island for the day. The Virgin Islands also produce and import much of the region's rum from the many distilleries on St. Thomas and St. Croix.

Did you know?

The United States bought the U.S.V.I. from Denmark in 1917 for \$25 Million, but the culture here is still influenced by Europe in many ways. In fact, the U.S.V.I. are the only place in the U.S. where cars drive on the left side of the road, not the right!

(Continued from page 12)

other wealthy families of the time, including President George Washington, eventually freed their enslaved people, Jefferson freed only two during his lifetime. In his will, he freed only five more, and two of those were his *own children*, born to his enslaved mistress, Sally Hemings. (I know, right? This is another story entirely!)

There is so much to learn about this ugly and painful chapter in American history. If you are interested, here are just some of the books that will help you dig deeper:

Jefferson's Children: The Story of One American Family by Shannon Lanier

Twelve Years a Slave by Solomon Northup

The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman by Ernest Gaines

The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead

The Confessions of Nat Turner by William Styron

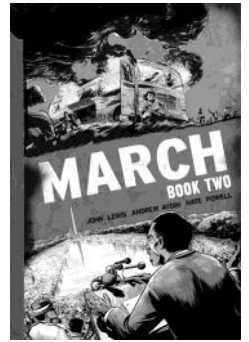
Understanding our history (our own, our family's, our country's and our world's) is vital to understanding ourselves. Keep asking questions! Do your own investigation! Read, read, and read some more ☺ Until the next time, keep your minds free.



BOOKS ACROSS THE MILES!

Free Minds long-distance book club
By Julia

You all should have received your copies of March: Book Two by now--let us know if you didn't get it! March: Book Two is the second book in the March trilogy by Congressman John Lewis, about his experiences during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Here's what you guys had to say about it:

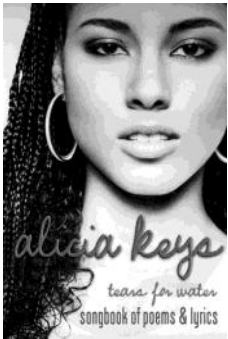


"The book March 2 gave me a deeper respect for every last person who've stood before the hideous face of oppression and adversity. For those who know that the path towards freedom has always been stalked by death but still they sacrificed everything they were for everything we have. This book helped me to better understand the courage and bravery that the members of the SNCC and other NON-VIOLENT organizations possessed. As a whole...I must say that the generation of my grandparents and leaders such as the BIG 6 was one hell of a generation. With that being said, I would like to sincerely extend my gratitude and appreciation to every last person that helped to pave the way for myself and the rest of the descendants of that era that have the privilege to experience the "Dream" of King and Lewis...Sacrifices manifested into the era of Obama...The struggle continues." - GL

"March 1 and March 2 is getting the history of the Civil Rights Movement straight from one of the original sources-- Congressman John Lewis. March 1 and March 2 fill in a lot of gaps that my parents and grandparents couldn't fill when not able to answer certain questions I had about the movement when growing up. The books' comic form provides excellent visualization through pictures and relates detailed accounts of Mr. Lewis's journey through the Civil Rights Movement in comprehensible language. A very easy read and I couldn't believe that I reached the last page so quickly." - JL

"Just like Part 1, it was very enlightening. I admire John Lewis. Him and the rest of the world who fight to make this world right. John Lewis's speech at the Lincoln Memorial was powerful. I've always heard of MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech but not the rest. How people could be so cruel (sicking attack dogs on children and fire hoses) brought a tear to my eye but the power of unity also did the same." - RE

Remember that we want to hear from you! You can write to us with your thoughts on the book or any book requests or recommendations.



Next BAM! book: Tears for Water by Alicia Keys

This book by singer/songwriter Alicia Keys contains her poetry, lyrics, and journal writing about her growth as a woman and a musician. Here are some discussion questions to think about while reading Tears for Water:

1. She writes in the beginning that all of her words come from her tears--tears of joy, of sadness, and of pain. What does she mean when she talks about "tears for water"? Where do your words come from?
2. How does reading her lyrics or poetry compare to listening to her music?
3. Can you relate to any of the poems or lyrics in Tears for Water?

NEXT ISSUE'S THEME: *Empathy*

Empathy is defined as "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another," which we thought was the perfect theme for our next issue, which will be coming to you during the Thanksgiving season. We at Free Minds are so thankful for all of the amazing members (with their different thoughts, opinions and experiences) that make up the Free Minds Family, and we believe that empathy is key to making such a big family work! Empathy is a little different from sympathy (which is the feeling that you care about and are sorry about someone else's trouble, grief or misfortune) because empathy refers to the ability to understand another person's feelings and appreciate/see where they are coming from. Can you tell us about a time when you had empathy for someone else? Or they had empathy for you? What was the outcome in that situation? Do you agree that empathy is important? Why or why not? We'd love to hear from you!

Until then, stay strong and KEEP YOUR MIND FREE!

