

Washington FAMILY

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JULY 2020



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Hello, Summer

**STANDING
AGAINST
RACISM**

ONENESS-FAMILY SCHOOL
STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING



Yes, you can support the fight for racial justice without attending a protest. **Pg. 13**



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Oneness Family School

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Please note we reserve the right to edit or refrain from publishing comments we deem inappropriate.

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**WE WANT
YOUR
FEEDBACK**

OUR FUTURE LEADERS WILL COME FROM MONTESSORI

If the COVID-19 crisis has taught us anything, it is that we are part of an interdependent, fragile world. It has also taught us the vital importance of scientific thinking. Finally, it has taught us that problems of this magnitude and complexity require adaptive leaders who can work with others to create effective strategies around which all segments of society can coalesce.

Fostering an interdependent mindset, scientific thinking and adaptive leadership skills has been foundational to the Montessori approach to education since Maria Montessori launched her first school in 1907. These outcomes are natural by-products of the way Montessori classrooms function: teachers introduce concepts in a big-picture perspective, allowing students to move about freely and work in small groups, experimenting and engaging in self-directed projects. This structure provides many opportunities for students to practice leading teams and working together to accomplish a goal.



Sometimes parents ask, "How will my child be prepared for the real world?" Our answer is that Montessori principles are the very things our children need to learn to not only be successful in the world, but to improve the world. Montessori principles such as self-motivation, initiative, creative thinking, scientific theory, emotional intelligence, ethics, communication and leadership will be integral if we want to see a world that can better address the next global crisis.

At Oneness-Family Montessori High School, the only Montessori high school in the Washington area, we are building a 21st Century Leadership program founded upon Maria Montessori's vision. We've gathered a team of exceptional thought leaders to create a program that incorporates essential leadership skill sets and will have students joining together for a real-world capstone project in their community each year. The program will launch in September 2020.

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PJ Feinstein
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A Historic Moment

When lockdown started back in March, I spent night after night tuned into cable news coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, it was hard to focus on anything else. But after several weeks of sitting in front of the TV, watching in horror as the number of cases steadily increased, the bad news was almost too much to bear. I quit my late night TV habit cold turkey.

I went nearly two months without indulging in cable news before bed. Then protests began popping up across the country in response to the police killing of George Floyd, and I found myself glued to the television yet again.

The more news coverage I consumed, the guiltier I felt about not being there in person, holding up a protest sign and marching down 16th Street in D.C., where Mayor Muriel Bowser had “Black Lives Matter” painted in yellow. But COVID-19 was still spreading. Cable news might’ve cut down its reporting on the pandemic, but I still didn’t feel comfortable attending mass gatherings.

In this month’s digital issue, we have a special section on race and diversity. Joy Saha, a University

of Maryland student who’s interning with us this summer, interviewed Karsonya Wise Whitehead about the ways families can get involved in the fight for racial justice without attending a protest. Something she told Joy has helped to alleviate my guilt: “Activism has more than one lane.” I hope you’ll find her advice helpful, too.

Also in this issue, we speak to parents and students about their expectations for the fall, and we explore new language around disabilities. Jacqueline Renfrow reminisces about the chaotic mornings of her pre-coronavirus life, while Lindsay Ponta teaches us how to make a beach-themed fairy garden.

And for your July 4th celebrations, we have a recipe for homemade red, white and blue ice pops and a list of children’s books about America and its people—people of all races, ages and genders.

Have fun, and stay safe! ■

PJ Feinstein

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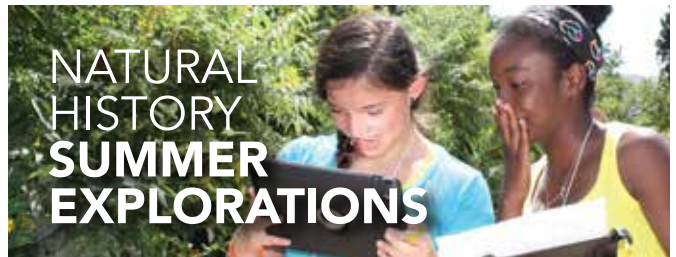
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- **August 3–7:** Coming Soon

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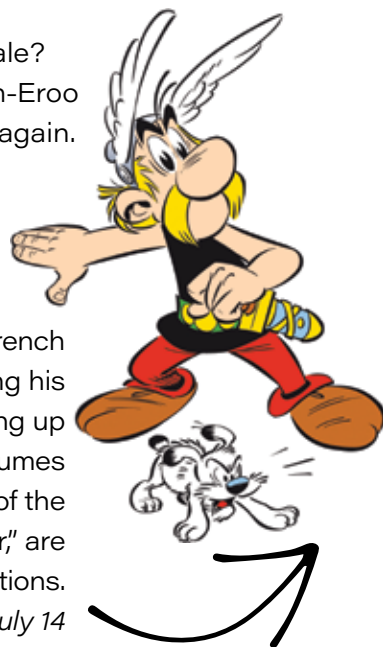
By PJ Feinstein



Is your stash of art supplies starting to feel stale? With their magical color-changing tips, Switch-Eroo markers make doodling and drawing exciting again. \$10; ooly.com

Meet Asterix! Sixty years after he first appeared in French comics, the underdog hero of ancient Gaul is making his American debut. Comic book fans can start catching up on Asterix's adventures this month; two omnibus volumes with three stories each and a stand-alone edition of the most recent title, "Asterix and the Chieftain's Daughter," are being published with brand new translations.

Recommended for kids ages 9-14. \$10-\$23; out July 14



With flavors like Birthday Cake, Key Lime Pie and new Strawberry Shortcake, Safe + Fair's Drizzled Popcorn is a treat for the taste buds. Plus, all of the flavors are non-GMO, vegan and free of gluten, tree nuts, peanuts and other common allergens. We love snacking options that everyone can eat! \$5, safeandfair.com

Shopping for adaptive and inclusive clothing and accessories has never been easier. You can find everything from feeding tube backpacks and shoulder-snap T-shirts to cranial band decals and hearing aid charms at PattiandRicky.com, an online shop featuring more than 90 brands.



"Crabby but cute"—maybe your little one's just jealous that they don't get to dine on blue crabs, too! Made from bamboo fiber, this five-piece dinnerware set is sustainable, biodegradable and dishwasher safe. \$30; bamboozlehome.com

What do you get when you cross a fanny pack with a diaper bag? The answer is Kibou, a hybrid fashion accessory featuring a built-in detachable diaper pad, a waterproof pocket and a hook for keys or a pacifier. \$89; maisonette.com



Take your backyard BBQ to the next level with the new Molly Hatch x Coterie paper partyware collection. Inspired by 18th century European fina china and porcelain, Hatch's designs put a modern spin on old-world elegance. Paper plates never looked so pretty! \$46 for *Always Paper Party Set* (10 guests); mollyhatch.com



This set of 100 conversation starters by Hello! Lucky will inspire some interesting dinnertime discussions. Find them at Boon Supply, where 40 percent of the purchase price goes to the fundraiser of your choice. \$26; boonsupply.com

Red, White and Berry

Celebrate the 4th of July with patriotic ice pops

By PJ Feinstein



The best thing about ice pops—aside from how refreshing they are on a hot, sticky summer day—is how easy they are to make at home.

“Popsicles are such a fun vehicle for creativity. They’re bright in color, they’re delicious in flavor [and] you can do different textures with them,” says Becca Katz. She likes theming them to a holiday or occasion, like summer. “You can do a popsicle that’s watermelon flavored but also looks like a watermelon,” she says.

Katz is the co-founder of COOK KITZ (cookkitz.com), a new service delivering weekly kid-friendly cooking projects throughout the summer. A graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education in New York City, Katz cooked up the idea (pun intended) for COOK KITZ with her sister, Valerie Zweig of Prescription Chicken in D.C., when Katz moved back to Maryland at the start of the pandemic.

At first Katz thought she could be a culinary “camp counselor” over the summer and teach people how to cook in their own homes. After brainstorming a bit, the sisters decided they could give families everything they need to master easy-but-delicious recipes on their own.

From mid-June through mid-July, COOK KITZ is offering eight weekly kits with free delivery across the DMV. Inside each kit, which costs \$54.99, is a base recipe plus instructions for three variations of the recipe and pre-measured ingredients for four servings. There’s also an education packet with suggestions for parents on how to assist kids of different ages in the kitchen and access to online “how-to” videos.

“While we want to teach really great skills, we don’t want to make the recipes really difficult so that people can’t figure out how to do them. We want them to be fun and educational and a really great way to pass the time when you’re looking for something to do,” says Katz.

As a special treat for Washington FAMILY readers, Katz and Zweig are sharing the July 4th-themed ice pop recipe featured in the COOK KITZ “Popsicle Party” kit. These

patriotic ice pops are a festive and tasty upgrade from the homemade pops you’ve been making by freezing store-bought fruit juice in a plastic mold.

Red, White and Berry: A COOK KITZ July 4th Popsicle

Yields about 6 ice pops

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups strawberries, hulled
- 2 bananas, thinly sliced and frozen (about 1 1/2 cups total)
- 1 cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1 1/2 cups blueberries and/or blackberries

Steps:

1. Blend strawberries and 1/2 cup frozen bananas until smooth.
2. Pour strawberry-banana mixture 1/3 of the way up the popsicle mold. Tap molds to evenly distribute and freeze for 15 minutes.
3. Rinse out blender, add yogurt and 1/2 cup frozen bananas and blend until smooth.
4. Remove popsicle mold from freezer and pour yogurt mixture an additional 1/3 of the way up the mold.
5. Place back in the freezer for another 15 minutes.
6. Rinse out blender again and puree blueberries (and/or blackberries) with the remaining 1/2 cup frozen bananas until smooth.
7. After the second layer hardens slightly, fill mold to the top with berry mix.
8. Carefully place popsicle stick in mold and return to freezer. Freeze popsicles until completely frozen, at least 4 hours.
9. Enjoy!

Note: If using frozen fruit, you may need to add a bit of liquid (water or milk) to help with blending. Use caution, as you want the mix to be pourable but thick. Additionally, you can add honey or agave for a sweeter ice pop. ■



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Due to disruptions caused by Covid-19 the July 2020 issue of Washington Family will not be available on newsstands. Our digital magazine will be available on our website at <http://digital.washingtonfamily.com/issues/July-2020/index.html>. Additional content will be available on washingtonfamily.com.

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SUPPLIES:

White acrylic paint
Foam brush, damp rag or paintbrush
Plastic grocery bags or newspaper (optional)
Aluminum foil (optional)
Hot glue gun
Glue stick



DIY Beach Fairy Garden

Make a whimsical summertime scene to cure your family's not-going-to-the-beach blues

Social distancing restrictions are easing at popular vacation destinations, but not everyone is comfortable traveling yet. If your kids are bummed about not spending time at the shore this summer, a DIY beach fairy garden is a cute way to bring the sand and the ocean to them.

I used coastal accessories to decorate my beach fairy garden, but you could add LEGO minifigures, tiny dinosaurs or other unexpected elements to let little imaginations run wild.

INSTRUCTIONS



1 If you're using a terra cotta planter like I did, you can whitewash it for a more beachy look. Mix an equal amount of white acrylic paint and water into a dish, then paint the outside and inner lip of the planter using a foam brush, damp rag or paintbrush. Let it dry completely and paint a second coat, if necessary.

2 If your planter is deeper than one inch, you may want to fill the extra space with crumpled up plastic grocery bags or newspaper. This way, you won't need to use as much sand and it won't be as heavy.

3 *Note: You can skip this step if you didn't fill your planter with bags or newspaper.*

Cut a piece of aluminum foil about 1/4 inch larger in diameter than the opening of the planter. Tuck it over the crumpled bags or newspaper and use a hot glue gun to attach the edges all the way around the inside lip of the planter. Gluing the foil to the pot will prevent the sand from falling beneath it.

4 Fill the planter to the top with sand.



5 Use a spoon to scoop out a hollow spot on one side. This is where we're going to add the "water." Make it a gradual incline, just like a real shoreline at the beach.



6 Pour your glass granules or beads into the hollow spot. Don't worry about making the shoreline too perfect. A real beach doesn't have straight lines!



7 Cut a piece of miniature fence to fit across the back of the planter. Nestle it down really well into the sand, leaving room behind it to add plants later.

Tip: You can find the fencing in the miniatures section of your local craft store. They might even have a specific section for fairy gardens!

8 Add your miniature props, and be creative! I used a little lawn chair, a beach sign, some real seashells and a flamingo. Other ideas include mini sandcastles and buckets, tiny drink bottles, beach towels and pool floats.

9 Tuck your plants into the little dune behind your fencing. You can also use real plants, but you may need to alter the project a little bit to make sure they have the right growing conditions. ■

Lindsay Ponta created the DIY and lifestyle website [Shrimp Salad Circus](http://ShrimpSaladCircus.com) in 2009 to inspire busy women to live perfectly-imperfect creative lives. She lives in Silver Spring, MD. Find easy DIYs and recipes at shrimpsaladcircus.com.

All Gas, No Brakes

Raising a daughter challenges one mom's idea of femininity

BY KRYSTINA WALES

It's almost bedtime. I can tell not by the time on the clock, but by the behavior of my 2 1/2-year-old. She gets "loopy" when she's tired. After demanding her daddy lay in our bed with her, while his defenses are down, she climbs on top of his head, giggling from deep in her belly as he tickles her and flops her down on the mattress, where she quickly scurries back up for more.

They play-fight for five minutes—she dishes it out as well as she takes it. When I announce it's time for pajamas, she half-allows me to wrestle her into them before promptly ignoring my request to sit down quietly for books, instead running into the office to drag Daddy into her room so they can shoot hoops before bed.

He obliges, taking the bright orange plastic ball and pretending to go for a layup before she sticks a tiny hand out to smack it away. Blocking his shot, she squeals with glee and pride. She offers me the ball, quickly reconsiders and decides to go for her own dunk, after which she bends her knees and lets out a guttural tiger growl, flexing to expose her muscles.

She is my wild girl.

When I found out I was having a girl, I panicked. I don't know how to apply make-up. The only thing I know about the Kardashians is that their dad was an Olympic track athlete. Heels frighten me. The idea of going shopping makes my heart palpitate. I have difficulty relating to common gripes women tend to commiserate around.

But what didn't cross my mind initially—and should have—was that I was prescribing my own societally-ingrained views of womanhood and femininity to a person I didn't even know yet. The fact that I am a woman and have these feelings and affinities didn't seem to factor into my notion that my daughter may, or may not, innately enjoy the things girls "traditionally" gravitate to.

She was four months old when we

discovered she loved cars. Having inherited an aversion to naps from her mother, she needed some coaxing to rest. By happenstance, my stay-at-home husband played the movie "Cars 3," hoping it would calm her down. To his surprise, she watched almost the entire thing.

That was the catalyst that sparked purchasing a car-shaped Batgirl walker, "Cars 3" paraphernalia, toy cars she could push down on and send across our hardwood floors, a remote-control car and an activity toy for the stroller shaped like a dashboard. Every time we revved the engine, her face lit up. We watched Formula One daily, and my husband pulled out a steering wheel from one of his old video games so she could drive along, spinning the wheel and shifting gears without our instruction.

I knew having a kid would change my life, but I didn't account for how much having a daughter would change me.

No one believed it until they saw it. My old-school grandmother assumed, because I was not drawn to traditionally feminine things, that I was pushing her into it. Which couldn't have been further from the truth. The fact is, I have a wild girl.

She loves going fast, taking chances, testing her limits and her boundaries. She loves to see how high she can jump, how long she can hold her balance, how fast she can run, how loud she can scream. My husband calls it "all gas, no brakes."

She is also incredibly meticulous and purposeful. She puts all her toys and books away before she goes to bed. She is the cleanest toddler I have ever seen eat. She gets upset with me when I pick out socks



that don't match. And when she gets upset, she closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

I don't call her my wild girl because she is unhinged or uncontrollable. I call her wild because she is fierce and untamed. She plays by her own rules.

I remember what it was like to be a teenage girl, being objectified by men. Having to work twice as hard to be taken seriously. I had no desire to figure out how to navigate the treacherous wilderness that is being a woman from the other side of the equation. I had barely survived myself, was barely surviving. My concept of being a strong woman was to be nothing like other women.

I was fully ensconced in the misogynistic notion that the world was designed for white men, and in order to survive, I had to penetrate stealthily. I couldn't charge through like a bull, demanding my presence be represented and respected. I had to chameleon my way in, putting on a disguise that was more palatable.

Not my girl. Physically and mentally, my wild girl is a bull, making her presence known and not being apologetic about it.

Before my daughter was born, I only focused on the ways in which I assumed she would be different from me, on the ways in which we would clash. The inevitability of her rebellion was a fact, not a question for me. I alienated a female community. I saw other women as competition or weak. I aimed at perfectionism and "doing it all" because maybe you couldn't, but I definitely could. I had spent so much time lovingly crafting this person who didn't take any shit, who had it all together.

What I didn't expect was to feel a close connection to her, an us-against-them, a powerful bond that gave me the confidence to change how I viewed femininity.

I knew having a kid would change my life, but I didn't account for how much having a daughter would change me. She is different from me, but in a way much different than I thought. She is different because she teaches me by example to own my version of being a woman, not to run away from it.

After exhausting her basketball moves, she finally comes to sit on my lap. Her baby

sister lies by my side. She insists on turning the pages of the Daniel Tiger book as I read. Halfway through, she gets up and walks over to her ball pit, chooses a yellow ball and hands it to her sister. The baby is fussy, and she wants her to have something to play with so I'm not distracted while reading.

All the books are put away, her blanket fanned just how she likes atop her crib, like a tent, her two favorite stuffed animals tucked safely underneath, waiting for her head to nestle into them softly. We do our ritual. First, Daddy's Handshake: two high-fives, two fist bumps and two thumbs-up with thumbs touching. Next, Mommy's Bedtime Goodnight: touching heads on the right side, then on the left, nose rubs and a kiss.

I tell her I love her, I'll see her in the morning and have a good night's sleep. She might say she doesn't want to go to sleep yet, but within minutes of the door shutting she is under her "tent" and fast asleep.

For now, my wild girl is tamed. Who knows what she will want to be when she wakes up? ■

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BY JOY SAHA

BLACK LIVES MATTER

WITHOUT ATTENDING A PROTEST

Attending local protests may not be feasible for all families right now, especially in the midst of an ongoing pandemic. Health and safety risks are still present and so are social-distancing protocols.

Although rallies and marches against racism and police brutality have garnered a substantial amount of media coverage over the past month, there are still ways for parents and children to get involved in the Black Lives Matter movement without protesting.

“Activism has more than one lane,” says Karsonya (Kaye) Wise Whitehead, associate professor at Loyola University Maryland. She’s also the author of “RaceBrave: New and Selected Works,” a book about her experience raising two black sons in “post-racial America.”

Here, Whitehead shares some easy but meaningful ways that families can take a stand against racism from home.

Here's how families can take a stand against racism at home

MAKE PROTEST SIGNS

One way that kids can demonstrate their support for the movement is by making protest signs.

Not only does the activity allow them to tap into their creativity, but it also serves as a conversation starter for parents who want to explain the greater purpose and importance of the current news and the Black Lives Matter Movement, says Whitehead.

Using art supplies you have at home, such as poster board, paint and markers, kids can create posters that say “Black Lives Matter” or “Justice for George Floyd.” They can also come up with their own messages of support.

Hang their protest signs in a window or display them outside on your front door or in the yard.

STAGE AN AT-HOME PROTEST

Instead of just displaying their signs, kids can stand outside and physically hold them up, as if they were actually marching in a protest.

“There are some parents who don’t want to take their child out to be around other people,” says Whitehead. An individual protest, “gives them that feeling of being actively involved,” she says.

DONATE TO THE CAUSE

If you’re feeling overwhelmed by the countless organizations and bail funds accepting donations, Whitehead advises families to first brainstorm and organize a small list of causes—ideally two or three—that they would like to support.

These causes can be national and focus on the larger Black Lives Matter movement or on the victims of racially charged police brutality incidents. Or they can be local and provide support for community-based services, programs and initiatives.

Focusing on a set list of organizations helps children understand where their money is going and encourages them to choose causes they’d like to continue learning about, says Whitehead.

STAY INFORMED

One of the best things that parents can do right now, according to Whitehead, is to help their children actively inform themselves about the current movement and the recent news. Non-Black parents should make sure their kids and teens have “as much information possible to understand what is happening in this moment,” she says.

Whitehead recommends using the Black Lives Matter at School (blacklivesmatteratschool.com) teaching materials, which covers the 13 principles of the movement for all grade levels. Another resource is the National Museum of African American History and Culture’s “Talking About Race” web portal. Its videos, role-playing exercises and targeted questions were designed to help inform and guide discussions.

“We want the next-generation police officers, politicians and teachers to not practice anti-Blackness,” says Whitehead. ■



"I didn't want my children to miss this historic moment"

Why one Maryland mom decided to bring her kids to a Black Lives Matter protest

By Lauren Harris

TALKING about racism is not new in my family.

Colorism and self-hatred were prominent in my family growing up, and I always wanted my children to be proud of being Black. Ever since their births, I've told my son (9) and my daughter (6) that they are smart, handsome, beautiful and blessed and could accomplish anything with determination and hard work.

I purchase children's books with Black protagonists and that center around Black experiences. I make sure to teach them the contributions of Black people to the U.S. and to the world. As a minister and Sunday school teacher, I make sure to point out the African presence in the Bible so my children and students know that they, too, are made in God's image.

But I also tell my son, who is a highly functioning autistic, that if he doesn't learn to control his behavior in school, the teachers at his elementary school could call the police on him. I show him the stories of Black children in schools who've been violently manhandled, handcuffed and abused by police.

He knows being a Black boy means he'll be treated differently by society.

The first opportunity I received to protest with my ministerial colleagues, I turned it down. I thought about the excessive violence police used against the protestors and the risk of COVID-19. I saw the graphic images of rubber bullets embedded in protestors' heads. The sister of one of my ministerial colleagues was maimed by a rubber bullet during a peaceful protest in D.C. I didn't want to put myself in harm's way.

However, I have not shielded my children from the protests happening all over the world against police brutality and racism. Without inciting too much fear, I have explained to them that Black people still have to fight for equality and justice, especially when it comes to how we are treated by the police. I let them know that the March on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not end racism and injustice despite what the public school system teaches. So when I learned that Mayor Muriel Bowser had "Black Lives

Matter" painted on 16th Street in D.C., I knew I had to take my children to see it for themselves.

We went as a family to protest in Washington on Saturday, June 6. We wore our masks and walked towards the White House. I showed my children the National Guard blocking off several streets, and I showed them the men I presumed to be snipers on top of the White House. They didn't get to see it in totality, but they saw the yellow letters of the "Black Lives Matter" street art.

I also showed them all of the people standing in solidarity with Black people. I pointed out every encouraging sign and T-shirt. I was pleasantly surprised to see that other parents brought their babies and children to the overall peaceful protest.





DAVID STUCK

It encouraged me to know that we weren't the only parents who wanted our children to witness so many people from all walks of life standing in solidarity against racism.

We stayed for just 30 minutes because I didn't want to prolong our possible exposure to COVID-19. During that time, I only feared for our safety once. I felt there were some people walking too close to my children, so as my husband led us, I stood closely behind to prevent anyone from touching them.

Overall, the protest was a good experience, and I'm glad that I brought my children. When they're adults and people talk about the protests of 2020, I want them to be able to say that they participated, too.

I also wanted to show them that despite racism and the evil in the world, there are

still more people for them than against them. My hope as they grow and mature is that the experience helps them to be politically aware and involved so they can stand against injustice. ■

*Rev. Lauren Harris (Twitter: @revlaurelj) is an itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. She serves at New Life Laurel, a church plant of Reid Temple A.M.E. Church in Laurel, MD. She works for the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is the proud mother of two children, one on the autism spectrum. She blogs about her life as wife, mother and minister at throwupandtheology.com and has been published in *Sojourners* magazine, *Gospel Today* magazine, *The A.M.E. Church's Christian Recorder*, and *Modern Loss*.*

The police killing of George Floyd and the resulting protests have inspired a much-needed national dialogue about race and diversity. But if you're not sure how to initiate conversations about anti-Black racism, police violence and the right to peaceful protest with your kids, books are a great way to break the ice.

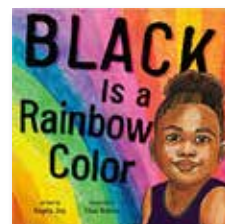
These children's books about race, selected by Jennifer Rothschild of Arlington Public Library, offer a jumping-off point for families to discuss current events.

PRESCHOOL BOOKS

'BLACK IS A RAINBOW COLOR'

by Angela Joy, illustrated by Ekua Holmes

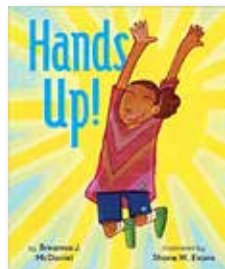
In this joyous celebration of all the ways black is beautiful, a young Black child explores the world around her as well as the history and culture of her people.



'HANDS UP'

by Breanna J. McDaniel, illustrated by Shane Evans

A Black girl shows all the ways she raises her hands—to reach a book, to worship, to answer a question in class and to join in a protest march.



'DON'T TOUCH MY HAIR'

by Sharee Miller

Aria loves her soft and bouncy hair, but so does everyone else. People are constantly reaching out to touch it, even though she doesn't want them to. How can she get them to stop?



CHILDREN'S BOOKS ABOUT RACE AND DIVERSITY

Have a book about race that you want to recommend to other parents or young readers? Send your picks to editor@washingtonfamily.com.

EARLY ELEMENTARY BOOKS

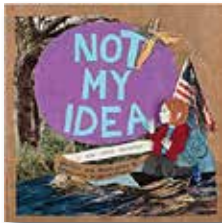
'SOMETHING HAPPENED IN OUR TOWN: A CHILD'S STORY ABOUT RACIAL INJUSTICE'

by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard, illustrated by Jennifer Zivoin
A white family and a Black family answer their child's questions after a Black man is shot by police in their town. Written by child psychologists, this book includes a note to parents and caregivers about discussing racism and traumatic events with children.



'NOT MY IDEA: A BOOK ABOUT WHITENESS'

by Anastasia Higginbotham
A white child is confused after being told by their parents that they "don't see color." After doing library research, the child asks more questions of their parents, thoughtfully exploring the ways white people can confront and dismantle racism.



'CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR?: POEMS OF RACE, MISTAKES, AND FRIENDSHIP'

by Irene Latham and Charles Waters, illustrated by Sean Qualls and Selina Alko
After being partnered together on a poetry project, a white girl and a Black boy write paired poems each offering their own take on similar experiences.



MIDDLE GRADE BOOKS

'BLENDED'

by Sharon Draper
Biracial Isabella struggles to find her place as she switches every week between her divorced parents' houses. Her questions about identity and belonging are thrown into sharper relief after a racist incident at school and a dangerous encounter with the police.



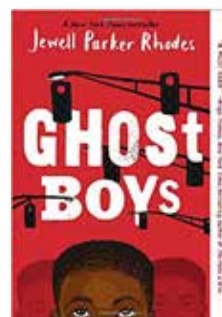
'NEW KID'

by Jerry Craft
Jordan wanted to go to art school, but instead is starting at prestigious Riverdale, where most of the students are white. It's a very different world from his diverse neighborhood, and Jordan tries to fit in in this award-winning graphic novel.



'GHOST BOYS'

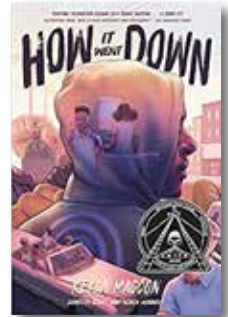
by Jewell Parker Rhodes
After being murdered by police who thought his toy gun was real, 12-year-old Jerome's ghost bears witness to the resulting grief and outrage. He also meets the ghosts of other Black boy victims, including historical figures such as Emmett Till.



YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

'HOW IT WENT DOWN'

by Kekla Magoon
After a white man shoots a Black teenager, no one can agree on what happened. Told from multiple perspectives and voices, Magoon explores the competing narratives and lets readers draw their own conclusions.



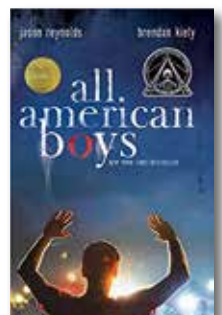
'THIS BOOK IS ANTI-RACIST: 20 LESSONS ON HOW TO WAKE UP, TAKE ACTION, AND THE DO THE WORK'

by Tiffany Jewell, illustrated by Aurélia Durand
This introduction to racism gives teens and tweens the knowledge and language to discuss and confront the injustice they experience or witness. Featuring a strong visual design, calls to action and journal prompts, this book helps explain and relate racism's complexities.



'ALL AMERICAN BOYS'

by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Keily
When white teenager Quinn witnesses his mentor, a policeman, brutally beat Rashad, a Black classmate, he can't believe it. After security footage is released, the event becomes national news and divides the school and community, something both boys grapple with in this award-winning dual. ■






The fate of **FALL**

Many students wonder
about the next school year

by Megan Gregoire



For many students in our region and across the country, the fate of their fall semester remains up in the air, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly every local school system has a team in place to evaluate options for fall instruction, but many administrators agree that it's too early to know yet whether learning will be in person or not.

More than 120 schools comprise the Association of Independent Maryland and D.C. Schools (AIMS), and right now they are “engaged in careful, deliberative planning for the new school year,” says AIMS executive director Peter Baily.

That includes making sure local and state regulations are followed, along with best practices for public health.

“Most schools are preparing for three possible scenarios: full opening with on-site learning; a hybrid model that would involve a combination of on-site and distance learning; and full distance learning, such as we have had this past spring,” Baily says.

Some colleges, too, are holding out until they have more information.

“I’m still waiting for Johns Hopkins to declare whether next semester is going to be online, in person, or hybrid,” says Smitha Mahesh, a rising senior at Johns Hopkins University. “It’s a decision that I really want them to make as soon as possible, because it’s tricky to be signing on to a lease for the fall semester. It’s a huge financial situation.”

Towson University’s (TU) administrators decided that students will return to campus a week earlier than their planned fall opening—and that leaves rising senior Kazuri Polee with a decision to make. Polee would have preferred online classes, so she’s taking some time to consider whether to stay home and take a gap year, or go back to school.

“Honestly, I don’t feel comfortable with going back to school, and their plan for the process of returning to TU is honestly very backwards,” she says. “What sense does it make when there have been no changes, but increases in the number of cases of coronavirus? Yes, people are recovering, but so many people have already died from it.”



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Options to consider

As college students grapple with the decision to go back, local parents with younger students must decide whether to send their elementary to middle school-aged children back to school.

"So, my first option is to send them back to school. My second option is to do an online program. And my third option is to just homeschool them," says Kari Harris, a mother of two who lives in Northern Virginia.

Harris's son has asthma, placing him in the high-risk category for contracting COVID-19. With this on her mind, the decision to send her children back has been a difficult one.

"I'm concerned about keeping the kids safe and making sure he doesn't get sick, which there's really no way to completely take that risk away. So, that has me hesitant about sending him back. At least when he's at home, I can control the risk as much as possible," she says.

Falls Church resident Heather Pressler Barnett says that for her child, who is also in a high-risk category, the school district's decision to have low-risk children attend school while high-risk children participate in "tele-education" is exclusionary.

"The kids that aren't healthy enough to be at school, they have to stay at home or they should stay home. And so therefore, they aren't allowed to be at school," she says.

"And I get the pressure from my son ... 'Well, all my friends are going back to school and everyone's at school, I want to be there.' Well, no, your medical condition is going to hold you back, and we're going to have to have you at home instead," she says.

The trouble with online learning

For other parents, the struggles of schooling came when online education was introduced. Parents assumed the role of educator or co-educator in their child's schooling, a role they had to juggle with work, parenting and other responsibilities. For Potomac resident Marisa Tvardek Safa, online learning also took away her daughter's excitement and enjoyment towards school.

"And as a kindergartener, I think that asking them to sit in front of a computer on a Zoom call is probably not the best way to deal with such little children trying to learn," she says. "So, she had a lot of anxiety. She didn't want to attend. She started to not like learning."

For Barnett, there were disconnects in her son's online learning.

"We discovered, with like only two weeks left to the school year, that there's a whole section of material that we were not aware of was on [the school's website]. And so he had to try to do six weeks of material in two weeks, and that was a little stressful. It's like no one gave us a tutorial on it, the kids were kind of left to do it themselves," she says. ■

With reporting from Adora Brown, PJ Feinstein and Joy Saha

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Find Your Light Or Why I Decided to Homeschool My Kindergartner This Fall

BY APRIL FLORES

On Tuesday, March 11, I picked up my son, Danny, from preschool. Without discussing it with my wife, Jen, I decided he would not be returning due to the possible exposure to COVID-19.

Hours later, I emailed his teachers to inform them of my decision, even mentioning possible withdrawal for the remainder of the school year. I also told one of his teachers that I could not volunteer the following day for the same reason. The next day I let close family friends know that I could not continue watching their kids as I'd been doing the past two years. I was scheduled to watch them for a good portion of the remainder of the week since one parent was out of town and the other was working.

When Jen returned home from work, I let her know about all of my decisions. They weren't easy ones, and I knew the impact and inconvenience they'd have on several people that I love. I felt selfish and like I had suddenly and rashly put my foot down.

Jen, however, supported me. I wasn't sure

how long Danny would be out of school or how long it would be before I could help watch my friends' kids again. All I knew was that I wanted to keep our family safe, and that's still my goal, especially since Jen's mom and I are considered high-risk individuals.

I was born with a congenital heart disease, ventricular septal defect, and Jen's mom is in her upper 70s. We've lived with her for almost two years, so 40 percent of our household is high risk. Jen knows firsthand what can happen if her mother or I contract COVID-19. She was an adult ICU nurse at Johns Hopkins for 12 years and is now a nurse manager.

As COVID-19 cases increased, so did Jen's workload. Not only does she report to the hospital almost daily, but she also does all of our grocery shopping and errands now, too. This is a significant change in our home since I'm a stay-at-home parent. I have not been in any other building besides our home since March 12, and no one has entered our home since then either.

Thankfully, I've been able to enjoy the outdoors; we often go for bike rides, walks or hikes. If we don't make it past our neighborhood, we at least get outside for some sunshine and fresh air. Those two things have kept me stable and hopeful.

Being outdoors also provides some sense of normalcy for our kids, even though we're all in masks, including our almost two-year-old wild child, Leah. The only time we don't wear masks outside is if we're the only people out.

Our new normal looks like this: slowly wake up, eat breakfast, do "Cosmic Kids Yoga," complete some "schoolwork," play or go on an outdoor adventure, return for

The one thing we can all agree on is that COVID-19 has disrupted our lives, but it doesn't have to destroy them.

lunch, do more schoolwork while Leah naps, play outside, eat dinner, get ready for bed.

Danny watches a lot more television than he used to, so much that I recently scaled his screen time back to one hour a day as opposed to morning and afternoon time. Prior to the lockdown, he was only allowed screens on the weekends.

Another drastic part of our new normal is that I have not kissed my wife for 72 days—72 days! We're really not taking any chances. When she returns home from the hospital, she showers in the basement (where most of her belongings are now) before joining us for dinner, and we no longer share food or drinks.

All of this might seem extreme, but it's what we think is best for our family. Despite all of the insane changes, I feel like we're doing OK. Probably because we have each other and our daily dose of fresh air and sunshine.

Actually, it's definitely because we have each other, and we want to keep it that way.

As society is daring to re-enter the world

of the living, shops, parks and restaurants are opening with many restrictions in place. People have to decide whether or not to venture out. I likely won't be in a public setting until January 2021, but I'm not going to lie: I want to try something. I want to play pickleball, even if it's just with the same four people over and over again.

In my heart, the one I'm protecting, I know I can't though. I can't take that risk. Which is probably why a couple of weeks ago, Jen told me she thinks I should homeschool Danny for kindergarten next year. I have no problem doing this, but it makes me ache for our kids, parents and the world. Parents are overwhelmed and kids are doing the exact opposite of what they've been taught their entire lives—stay away from others, don't share, don't touch anyone. We're just trying to survive another day.

None of this is easy, but like everyone else, I'm just trying to make it work somehow. If that means I have to homeschool Danny next year, I'll do it. It won't be perfect. I'm not an early childhood educator. I've been at home and have cared for infants, toddlers and little kids the past five years, but that doesn't make me an expert. I just pretend to know what I'm doing and proceed confidently, which is what I'll do in the fall.

Let's be honest though, chances are likely that schools won't even open in September.

I said it. I put it out there. I know that's not what people want to hear. Let's think about though. These are things we don't want to imagine, prepare for or do, but we're all doing our best to make things work for our families.

The one thing we can all agree on is that COVID-19 has disrupted our lives, but it doesn't have to destroy them. We can and will get through this pandemic one slow day at a time. Find your light and take it in daily. Then recharge and do it all over again. And again and again. This is what helps me.

What I have learned is that if I feel like my light is about to extinguish, I remind myself that I am not alone. You are not alone either.

We are doing things we never thought we'd have to do as parents. But we can provide light to one another even while COVID looms.

Don't be afraid to shine during this time of darkness. ■

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PEOPLE FIRST, WORDS SECOND

How we talk about disability
evolves with culture

by Megan Gregoire

WE LIVE IN A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING WORLD. OUR SOCIETY IS ONE THAT FEEDS OFF THE BLENDING OF CULTURES, THE CHANGING OF RULES AND PEOPLE STEPPING UP AND DICTATING NEW WAYS OF LIFE.

Language has become a big part of this change, giving smaller and larger communities a way to articulate their opinions and voice how they want to be identified and seen. In communities of people with disabilities, this shift in language continues to happen, advancing to better suit the people within the community.

According to Ande Kolp, executive director of The Arc Maryland, the phrase “special needs” creates a feeling of generalization, making a person feel lumped into a group, and, in effect, not allowing the person to promote their individuality.

It’s also a euphemism. “Like when you say, ‘I didn’t fire my employee, I let them go,’ that is softening what you did,” Kolp says. “So, people think, ‘Oh, if we call it special needs, then people will think that it is a good thing.’ But, it amounts to a pat on the head. People with disabilities don’t want that.”

Now it is a term the community is looking to move away from, paving a new form of language and way of being identified.

PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

Laws such as Rosa’s Law, enacted by former President Barack Obama in 2010, are pushing offensive terminology into the past. Named after Maryland resident Rosa Marcellino, Rosa’s Law removed outdated words such as “retarded” from health and education code. According to Kolp, this has allowed people with disabilities to find their voice and demand a change in disability etiquette.

“(Language) is evolving because people with disabilities are being heard and are showing people a different way,” Kolp says.

With this evolution comes person-first language, a form of speaking that puts a person before their diagnosis or disability. “A person with autism” is an example of person-first language.

“I always tell people to air on the side of caution, and person-first language is the way to do it. You aren’t putting the disability first, you are putting the personhood first, because we are people. We are defined by more than our disability, so putting it out front, I think focuses too much on the disability and not enough on the person,” says Ian Watlington, a senior disability advocacy specialist for the National Disability Rights Network.

As a person with a disability, one of Watlington’s main focuses throughout his years at NDRN has been awareness training and language-based training in the D.C. community. He says that shifts in language can help with normalization within the community and help people with disabilities to become more visible in mainstream society.

“Now people [with disabilities] are your colleagues, or your community members or your neighbors,” he says. “I think as our visibility is increased, our ability to shape the language has increased. But I also think the language has increased our visibility.”

IDENTITY-FIRST LANGUAGE

However, while person-first language has formed into the standard, both Watlington and Kolp say that there is a new wave of language forming: identity-first language.

“(Terminology) is highly individualized, and we go back to the person and how they like to refer to themselves,” says Kolp.

With identity-first language—for example, “autistic person”—the comfort level of being able to choose your labels and take pride in what makes you who you are is added. That differs from the concept of person-first language, in which the speaker makes the decision.

But the conversation around language isn’t over yet. Watlington, a long-serving outspoken advocate in the community, says he experiences discrimination when it comes to his disability. “I still deal with condescension and people treating me like a child, or not treating me as equal, and I can tell by their language and by their voice. There is still a lot of that to get beyond,” he says.

However, Watlington recognizes the strides the community has made in shaping their language and hopes they continue the progress in years to come. ■

Editor’s Note: For years, we called our monthly column about families living with disability “Your Special Child” because that was the most accepted language at the time that column started. But we know that language has evolved beyond that title, and we are considering new names. If you have a suggestion, please email us at editor@washingtonfamily.com.



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A Phone Call Away

Telemedicine becomes a pandemic success story

by Jessica Gregg

Another way that the coronavirus has changed our world? Telemedicine.

Prior to this year, most of us had never been on a video call with our physicians. But with stay-at-home orders and limited patient hours at many physician practices this spring, parents experienced Zoom or Skype appointments with obstetricians, pediatricians and other doctors.

At Baltimore's Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, psychologists found telemedicine to be a valuable tool. It's one they had long hoped to use for counseling sessions, says Dr. Kenneth Gelfand, the hospital's psychology manager.

The hospital sees young patients from all over the state with a variety of medical issues, including feeding disorders, autism and long-term medical conditions. Its counseling staff conducts about 25,000 patient visits each year.

For families with transportation issues or children who are immunocompromised, for example, the hospital's practitioners had long hoped to serve patients through telepsychology. It was something for which his team had advocated

for years, Gelfand says. When staff had to shift gears in mid-March because of the pandemic, the chance to try telemedicine reinforced the ways it could be useful.

"For a lot of families, this really has created an equivalent level of care," Gelfand says.

Many of the hospital's teenaged patients had an "increased interest" in their appointments, because they didn't have to take the time from busy schedules to come in for appointments, he says. For patients with anxiety, counselors were often able to talk with them as the anxiety was happening and give them in-home strategies for coping and alleviating it.

Visits were conducted by Zoom, and with small children,



staff did have to be “creative,” Gelfand says. Psychologists engaged kids with online games and activities, multimedia and the help of family. Many patients provided tours of their homes or introduced their pets, so practitioners got to learn firsthand about that child’s daily life. For kids with feeding disorders, psychologists could see them eating in their kitchens and offer valuable feedback and hints.

There were adjustments, of course. Implementing this new tool with patients with autism was initially challenging, Gelfand admits. Many children with autism found the changes in daily life during the pandemic to be stressful. But telepsych visits eventually provided structure for home and family, he says.

After the pandemic, hospital staff hopes that 10 to 20 percent of its counseling visits will continue to be conducted remotely. Face-to-face sessions remain important, of course, but telepsych can continue to be a tool for patients with transportation and other barriers, Gelfand says.

“In whatever a post-COVID world brings, telepsychology remains a tool for practitioners to use,” he says.

Helping military families

Before the pandemic, behavioral psychologists at Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore used telehealth with military families at Fort Meade, Fort Detrick and Aberdeen Proving Ground through a program the hospital started in 2016, says Dr. Jennifer Crockett, director of training with the department of behavioral psychology. The program later expanded to include families at Naval Air Station Patuxent River.

“Telehealth has such great applicability to military families, because it’s portable,” Crockett says.

And because Kennedy Krieger had success with this program, they were able to scale it up for other departments when COVID-19 hit. In fact, Crockett co-chaired a task force to make sure this happened.

Practitioners in every department, even physical and occupational therapies, have been able to work with their patients via telehealth. This also includes inpatient services, Crockett says, adding that a practitioner at a child’s bedside can use technology to connect with a speech therapist,

a physical therapist and a parent to talk through that child’s care needs.

“We find children take to it well,” she says.

But so do parents. Crockett often works with children as young as 2. In those instances, a telehealth call centers on coaching the parent in behavioral strategies rather than engaging a child who might not be interested in Zoom.

“One of the benefits that we suspected we would see, and we have seen, is that parents are saying, ‘I’m getting this quicker now because I’m doing it,’” Crockett says. “They are not watching us do something. They’re doing it, and they’re doing it in their own homes.”

Telehealth also has been a good way for practitioners to connect with children feeling anxious because of the extreme disruptions in their life.

“We’ve seen an increase in COVID stressors, so some of things we are doing are specific to what is happening in the world right now,” Crockett says.

In addition to its inpatient and outpatient services, Kennedy Krieger also has a school program that provided distance learning to its students this spring.

“Oftentimes people think that kids with special needs can’t use technology,” says Lisa Nickerson, assistant vice president of marketing, public relations and communications. But that would not be true, she adds.

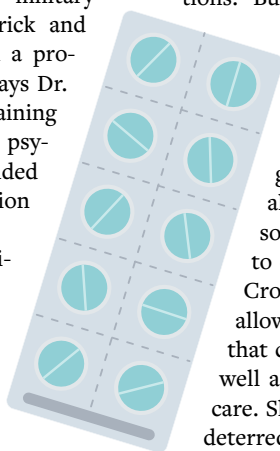
With the help of their parents and teachers, students completed many lessons through tele-education.

Like other schools, the biggest issue was accessibility; not all students had computers. That’s something the hospital works hard to overcome with its patient families.

Crockett says she looks for grants that allow the hospital to purchase laptops that can be loaned to patient families as well as other ways to improve access to care. She adds that families should not be deterred from seeking help for their child because of technology.

And after COVID-19? Crockett hopes that telehealth remains a care option for Kennedy Krieger patients.

“There’s still so much that is unknown,” she says. We’re still working every day to continue to ramp up the process. COVID gave us the opportunity to jump into telehealth. I hope people see the value in it.” ■



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A person wearing a light pink button-down shirt is holding a large, round, light blue clock face with a white wooden frame over their head. The clock has white tick marks and hands. The title 'The Morning RUSH' is printed in large black letters across the center of the clock face. The author's name 'By Jacqueline Renfrow' is printed in smaller black letters below the title. The background is a solid light blue.

The Morning RUSH

By Jacqueline Renfrow

Two-and-a-half hours of parenting one neurotypical child and two children with disabilities

Two months into virtual school, Jacqueline Renfrow began to realize just how much she appreciated the slower mornings of quarantine. Getting three kids logged into Zoom at the same time could be chaotic, but it didn't compare to chaos of getting them out the door every morning when school still took place in classrooms.

Here, the Maryland mom of a neurotypical child, an autistic child and a 2E child reflects on the hectic pace of her family's pre-coronavirus mornings.

6:30 a.m. My nine-year-old son, Max, who is twice-exceptional, walks into my room, looking for me to get him breakfast. I shake my head yes and slowly try to slip out from under my seven-year-old son, Joey, who is sleeping on top of me. Oh, so gently, I rise from the bed, but he's onto me. As I creep into the bathroom I hear, "Mommy, where are you going?" Joey, who is autistic, has a sense for always knowing where I am—day or night. Bathroom, exercise bike, kitchen sink, bed, he's right there next to me.

6:45 a.m. I head downstairs, and my seven-year-old daughter, Amelie, follows. She's awake, no doubt due to the fact that her twin brother is screaming from my bed for me to come sit with him. She's hungry, too. For the next 15 to 20 minutes, she will tell me she doesn't know what to eat, and I will list the options repeatedly while trying to make three lunches. After the whining and debating, she will inevitably land on Cheerios and milk.

7:00 a.m. I am proud that I now have two children eating breakfast. Well, until one gets distracted and asks the other to go downstairs and play. "Only for a few minutes. You have to get dressed for school," I yell, but they are already gone. While they are away, I return to my bedroom to try and drag Joey out of bed. "Sit with me, Mommy, please," he whines and whines. Eventually I relent and sit for two minutes. I pretend I am happy to be cuddling, but my mind is actually thinking about what else needs to get done in the next hour.

7:15 a.m. Joey is asking for pizza, again. I'm annoyed and tell him, "No, you can have pizza later." This immediately sets him off. As he's screaming, throwing things on the ground and calling me names, I'm biting my tongue so that I don't make the situation worse. I've learned that the

best response to my son, if he's not hurting anyone, is to ignore him until he's calmed himself. Only then can I give him a hug and talk to him in a fairly reasonable tone. But this could take close to 30 minutes, and I worry I've now slowed down the morning process even more. Getting him dressed and fed will have to wait.

7:30 a.m. I hurry back down to finish the lunches. I quickly wash the water bottles and put them into the backpacks with Joey still next to me, crying. I scan the notes on the fridge to see what specials or extracurricular activities each child has today. One must remember to wear sneakers for PE, another needs a snack for afterschool drawing and a third has to bring money for a field trip.

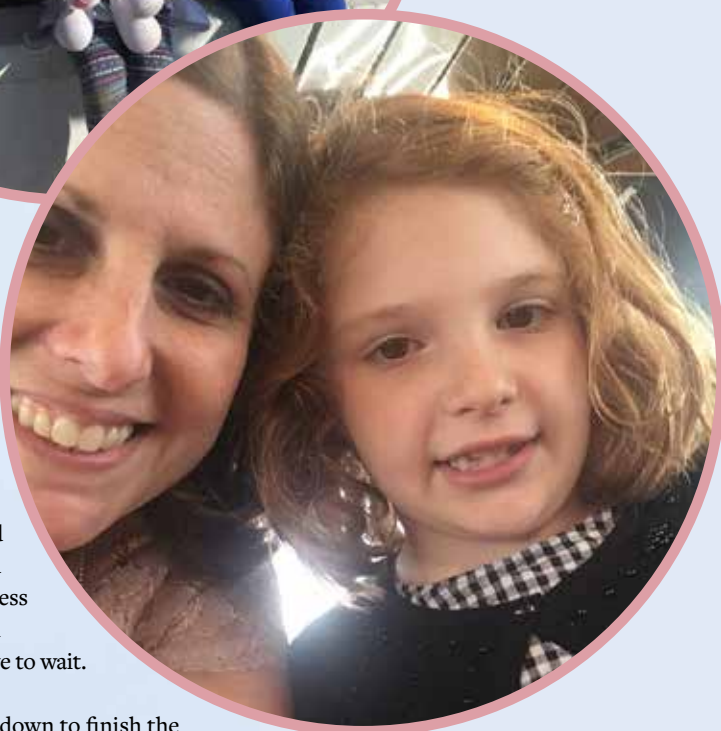
7:45 a.m. "Come up from the basement now, we're going to be late. Pleeeassee go get dressed!" Max and Amelie finally emerge from the basement, and someone says, "But I didn't finish my breakfast!" At this point they can finish in the car. "Go

upstairs and get dressed. And don't forget to brush your teeth while you're up there."

7:55 a.m. I run upstairs to check progress. One is playing LEGO and another is dressing her dolls. I chase Amelie around the room with a hairbrush, and she ducks and screams with every stroke. Apparently, I'm evil for trying to get the knots out. I send her to the bathroom to brush her teeth and run into the next room. Yes, Max is ready! Well, minus socks and shoes, but that won't take long, right?



Left: Max, Amelie and Joey in Annapolis on New Year's Day. Below: The author and her daughter dressed up for a wedding.





8:00 a.m. “We have to be out the door in 10 minutes. Everyone finish up and go downstairs!” Two kids head down the stairs—in bare feet. I throw socks down after them, then deal with my seemingly calm autistic child. I get Joey dressed, and he tells me he still has not eaten. I sheepishly heat up some pizza.

8:05 a.m. I’m putting the pizza in a to-go container, and the kids are talking. No one has on a jacket yet and only one is wearing shoes. I hear myself like a broken record: “Put on your shoes and jackets!” Someone asks for a snack, and I grab some protein bars for the car. Then I realize I’m not dressed. I run up the stairs, and my absence creates a fight. It’s the daily battle of the wits between my autistic son and my 2E son, who currently attends a school for the gifted. Both have a knowledge of geography and history well beyond their years—and neither can EVER be wrong. I need to get back downstairs. I hurry on some shoes and manage to brush my teeth. I can brush my hair later.

8:15 a.m. Crap, coffee. I need to make some to take with me in the car. I yell out a one last “get your shoes on” as I head for the coffee machine. My travel mug is MIA. Coffee will have to wait. I grab my keys and get to the door where the boys are arguing

in each other’s faces and my daughter is walking around the yard and humming to herself. I grab the jackets (still on no one’s body) and head for the minivan.

8:22 a.m. We are on the road to school No. 1. Max is playing multiple choice: “The longest river in the world is A: The Amazon River, B...” I hope my daughter can guess correctly so that she is not chastised by the perfectionist.

8:30 a.m. We arrive at the school, and Max is still talking. I want to scream “just get out of the car,” but I manage a “have a great day, I’ll see you after school,” instead. We are back on the road and Joey yells at his twin sister for singing along



Left: Joey and Amelie on a hike through Great Seneca National Park.

Right: Amelie and Max wading in a creek near their home.

Bottom: The brothers playing video games in the basement.



with the song on the radio.

Ah, the true irony of autism:

Everything is too loud for him, yet he is the loudest person I know.

8:40 a.m. I arrive at school No. 2. There is a debate as to how far I should walk them. Do I take them all 500 steps to the front door of the school, as my daughter has requested, or stay behind and just wave to them as they look back, as my son would like? Eventually, one will run off and the other will take my hand and walk me to the front door.

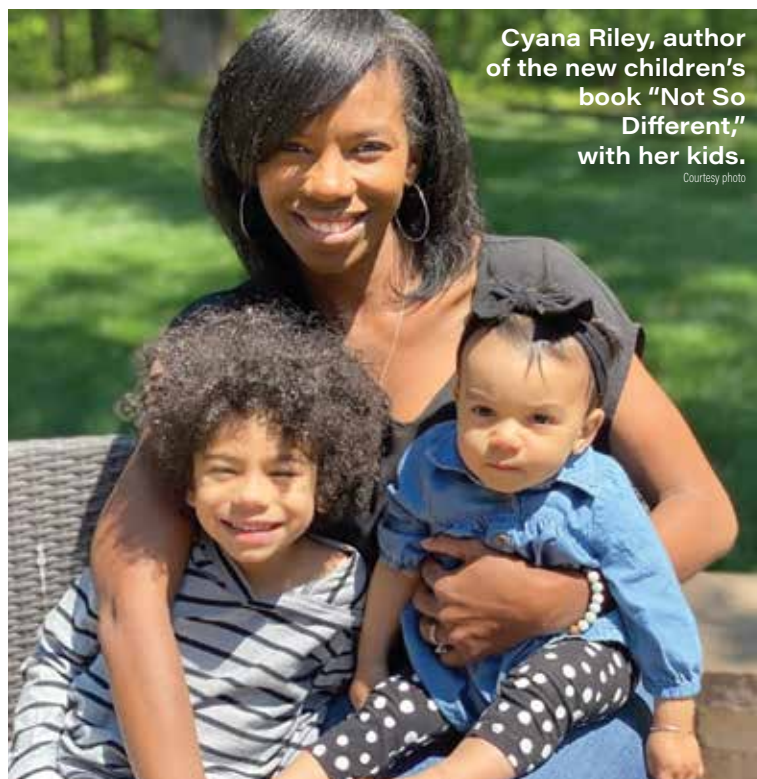
8:55 a.m. I am home. I finally make my coffee, power on my computer and sigh a big breath of relief: It’s time to start the work day. ■

Would you like to share a morning, afternoon or day in your life? Send a snippet of your daily routine to editor@washingtonfamily.com for a chance to be featured on our website or in our magazine.

Celebrating Differences and Embracing Diverse Friendships

"Not So Different" was inspired by the author's own interracial marriage and biracial children.

By Joy Saha



Cyana Riley, author of the new children's book "Not So Different," with her kids.
Courtesy photo

Weaving simple rhymes and a collection of curated illustrations into a captivating picture tale, the new children's book "Not So Different" encourages readers to embrace their own differences and unapologetically celebrate the uniqueness of others.

"I want this book to create a space where children can talk about their differences and they can point out differences with their friends, their peers and their families," says first-time author Cyana Riley, who lives in Maryland with her family.

A former preschool teacher, Riley developed

her passion for writing at a young age. She enjoyed writing poetry and frequently contributed to her school's newspaper. Now, as a mother of two, her primary literary goal is to include and uplift the voices of minority children within the world of books.

"I definitely want them to feel proud and confident about being represented in a children's book," she says.

"Not So Different" follows a young boy as he engages in conversations with his six friends about their diversity. Riley brainstormed the plot for three years, starting when she was pregnant with her son. She

took inspiration from the diversity within her own family, specifically from her interracial marriage and her biracial children, to craft the book's larger theme.

"I wanted to create something where my children could see their family structure in a book," she says.

The entire creative process for Riley's book took place over several years but her actual writing process lasted for less than a month. For Riley, the writing process was both smooth and natural, especially because the story itself was deeply personal.

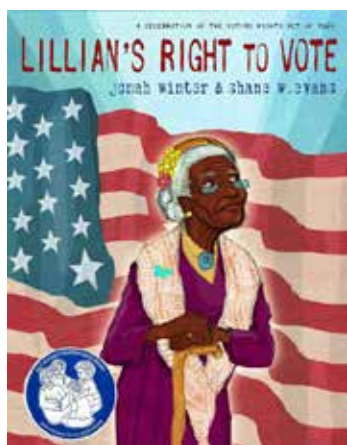
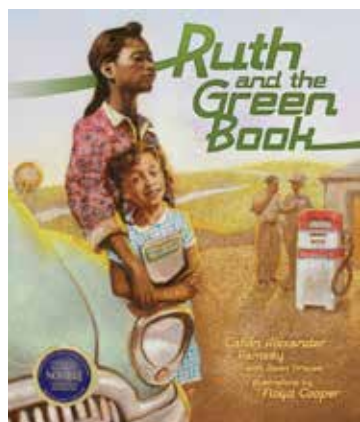
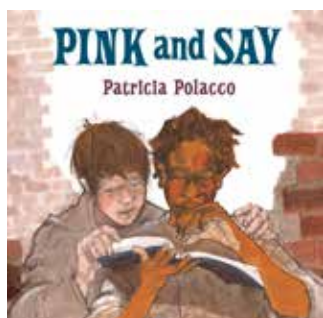
"Not So Different" features illustrations by Anastasia Kanavaliuk, a college student who lives in Belarus. Riley describes Kanavaliuk's illustrations as "whimsical, soft and inviting" and overall, a perfect fit for her book and story.

As for the main takeaway message, Riley explains that it relates to her larger themes of acceptance and kindness.

"I want children to walk away knowing and feeling like they are more comfortable being friends with people no matter what they look like and no matter the differences," she says. "And that's the big theme of the book: celebrating your differences, celebrating diversity and it being OK." ■

"Not So Different" can be purchased at notsodifferentbook.com.





America the Beautiful

Books that celebrate our nation's history and its people

BY MARGARETTE SNOW, CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN AT DC PUBLIC LIBRARY

Continue celebrating America's independence after the Fourth of July BBQs and fireworks have come to an end by sharing a book with your child about different American experiences and the individuals and events that have shaped the nation. This is a great way to spark family discussions about what America means to you and to keep up the habit of reading during summer break.

And speaking of summer reading, sign up for the DC Public Library's Summer Challenge at dclibrary.org/summerchallenge, open to all ages, to find literacy events and log your reading for the chance to win prizes.

PICTURE BOOKS

'Pink and Say'

Written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco

Say Curtis describes his meeting with Pinkus Aylee, a Black soldier, during the Civil War, and their capture by Southern troops. Based on a true story about the author's great-great-grandfather.

As an elderly woman, Lillian recalls how her great-great-grandparents were sold as slaves in front of a courthouse where only rich white men were allowed to vote and the long fight that led to her right—and determination—to cast her ballot when the Voting Rights Act was passed.

'Ruth and the Green Book'

Written by Calvin A. Ramsey with Gwen Strauss, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

When Ruth and her parents drive from Chicago to Alabama in the early 1950s to visit her grandma, they rely on a pamphlet called "The Negro Motorist Green Book" to find places that will serve Black travelers like themselves.

'She Persisted: 13 American Women Who Changed the World'

Written by Chelsea Clinton, illustrated by Alexandra Boiger

A nonfiction picture book compilation of the stories of 13 American women who persisted in overcoming obstacles and changing the world, including Harriet Tubman, Ruby Bridges, Sally Ride and Sonia Sotomayor.

'A Taste of Colored Water'

Written and illustrated by Matt Faulkner

LuLu and Jelly are very excited to see the "colored" water they heard about in the city's water fountain but are very surprised to learn what "colored" water actually means.

MIDDLE GRADE

'Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh'

Written by Uma Krishnaswami

During World War II, nine-year-old Maria Singh learns to play softball just like her heroes in the All-American Girls' League at a time when her parents are experiencing racism and trying to keep their California farm.

'The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher'

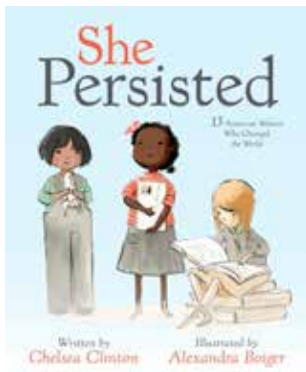
Written by Dana Alison Levy

Follow the adventures of a family with two fathers, four adopted boys and a variety of pets as they make their way through a school year, kindergarten through sixth grade, and deal with a grumpy new neighbor who complains about everything.

EARLY READERS

'Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965'

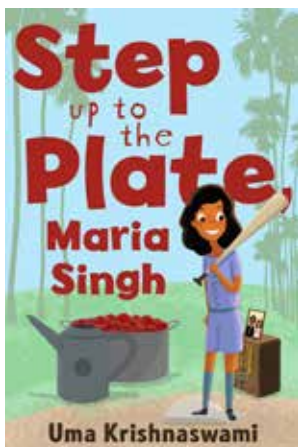
Written by Jonah Winter illustrated by Shane W. Evans



'Save Me a Seat'

Written by Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan

Ravi has just moved to the United States from India and has always been at the top of his class; Joe has lived in the same town his whole life and has learning challenges. But when their lives intersect in the first week of fifth grade, they are brought together by a common enemy (the biggest bully in their class) and the need to take control of their lives.



'The Detective's Assistant'

Written by Kate Hannigan

In 1859, 11-year-old Nell goes to live with her aunt, Kate Warne, the first female detective for Pinkerton's National Detective Agency. Nell helps her aunt solve cases, including a mystery surrounding Abraham Lincoln and the mystery of what happened to Nell's own father.

YOUNG ADULT

'The Lions of Little Rock'

Written by Kristin Levine

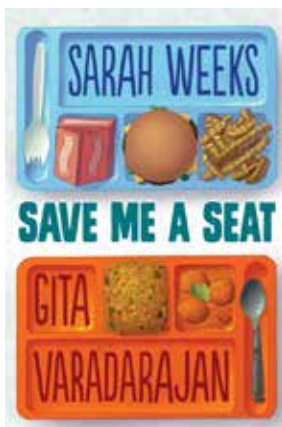
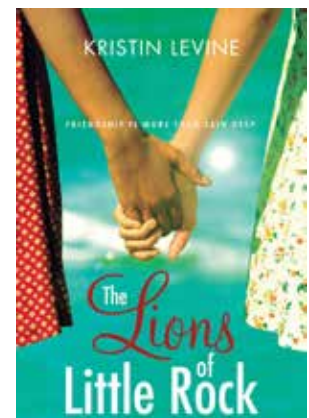
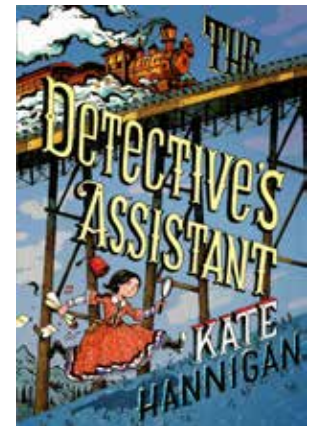
In 1958 Little Rock, Arkansas, painfully shy 12-year-old Marlee sees her city and family divided over school integration, but her friendship with Liz, a new student, helps her find her voice and fight against racism.



'March: Book One'

Written by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell

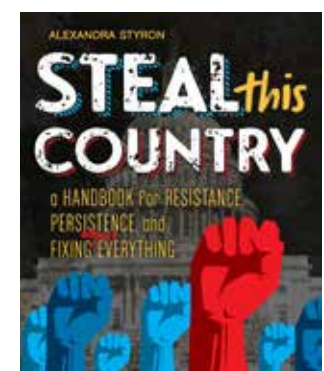
The first in trilogy, this graphic novel chronicles Congressman John Lewis's life and his involvement in the civil rights movement, from his childhood on an Alabama farm to lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville department stores.



'Steal this Country: A Handbook for Resistance, Persistence, and Fixing Almost Everything'

Written by Alexandra Styron

A guide for kid activists, "Steal this Country" features a collection of essays, profiles and interviews about what needs fixing in the world as well the practical tools for effecting change. Key issues include climate change, racial justice, women's rights, LGBTQIA rights and immigration. ■



Meet LaJoy Johnson-Law

BY PJ FEINSTEIN



OCCUPATION: Parent support specialist at Advocates for Justice and Education

LIVES AND WORKS: Washington, D.C.

CHILD: Abria, 8

Do you know a local parent who juggles multiple priorities while managing to make a positive impact in their community? Nominate them as a subject of our Mom/Dad Life column by emailing us at editor@washingtonfamily.com.

What do you love about the work you do?

Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE) is the federally mandated parent training information center under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). AJE helps empower families to advocate for their children. There is no greater advocate for a child than their parent or guardian, and I love how AJE helps parents navigate the D.C. education system and ensure that parents have the information and tools necessary to best advocate for their children.

What do you love about being a mom?

I love the fact that I am a mom, period. It is a miracle that I am a mom. My daughter was born at 23 weeks weighing 1 pound, 6 ounces. The doctors said that she wasn't going to make it, but I knew she would. So watching her love, laugh and grow into the beautiful little girl that she is is the best gift I could have ever asked for. Even though there have been many health challenges, my daughter is here. I am so honored to be Abria's mom.

What do you find challenging about raising a child with disabilities?

My daughter has chronic lung disease, epilepsy and a developmental delay due to her extreme prematurity. I think the biggest challenge is being financially stable. I have lost many jobs due to putting my daughter and her health first. Abria has many inpatient visits, outpatient doctor visits, therapy appointments, and she has often been too sick to go to school. It is a challenge balancing a work schedule and my child's medical and therapeutic appointments.

My motto is "Abria comes first in everything that I do," and I pray to God for him to take care of the rest. Things were so bad at one point, I even got a writ of eviction, and my daughter and I were about to be homeless because I was not able to work due to taking care of her healthcare needs. It has definitely been a struggle, but we are here.

What's something that makes juggling motherhood and your career a little bit easier?

My mom and godmother! Thank god for their support. They have been my rock and help me balance out the many things that need to be done. My daughter also has an amazing IEP team at her school, Rocketship Legacy Prep, and she has an amazing medical team at Children's National Medical Center. All of this combined helps tremendously.

How do you take care of your mental and physical health?

I love going to the gym and taking Zumba classes and exercising. My gym has a child care center, so it is a blessing to be able to take Abria with me when I go workout. I love music, and I will often dance to music around my home to keep my happy spirit. I also love bubble baths; they are so relaxing and calming. I love lighting my candles, playing my calming music and taking a bubble bath. I also wake up each morning and say a little prayer, and before Abria and I go to bed we say our prayers.

What are five things you always carry in your purse?

My keys, wallet, makeup bag, phone and my daughter's spacer and medicine.

What advice would you give to other parents with children who have disabilities?

My advice is to never stop fighting and advocating for your children. They need your voice. You are the best advocate for your child. Take it one day at a time and build a good support system around you. It is important that we all have someone we can reach out to if we need help or just a shoulder to cry on. Remember to take care of yourself so you can be whole for your child. ■

Read our extended interview with LaJoy Johnson-Law at WashingtonFAMILY.com

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, likely a Weimaraner, with brown and white fur and striking light-colored eyes. The dog is looking slightly to the left.

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