

Everyone has a Story to Share
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Throughout the year, we have month long observances reminding us of important issues, historical events, and groups of people that contributed to those things. February is Black History Month. It is a time to recognize the struggles, achievements, and culture of Black people here in the United States. The library is a great place to connect to people from an amazing variety of backgrounds through our collection and our shared space.

Reading is a conversation between you and the text. You bring ideas, assumptions, and perspective to the conversation, and the author has done the same. It is a personal experience because each of us is unique in some way. It can be easy to engage with information we find interesting or to relate to a protagonist that is similar to us in age, ethnicity, family situation, and so on. It takes real effort, however, to seek connection with viewpoints we disagree with or people that we assume are different from us. If we take the time, you might find more in common, especially in what matters, than what you first assumed. Listening and seeking to understand take patience and a mind open to the ideas of others. It can be an uncomfortable experience at times but is rewarding in helping us recognize our shared humanity.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to meet children's book author, Mitali Perkins. When she was young, her parents moved from Kolkata, India to New York City. With culture shock and a new language, she found solace at her local library and read as many books as she could. One of her favorite characters in the books she read was Laura Ingalls Wilder. She felt like she could identify with moving to a strange new place, working hard, and wanting to speak up as a young girl. She found things she had in common, and it encouraged her to keep reading new stories and ideas. Today she writes books for children with protagonists from a variety of backgrounds and hopes that children from anywhere will be able to see themselves in her stories.

For Black History Month this year, why not find a story in our collection that you haven't lived, imagined, or thought about? You could try Marlon Peterson's biography, *Bird Uncaged*. He shares about growing up with parents who immigrated from Trinidad to New York and the struggles of dealing with violent crime, incarceration, and his journey to nonviolent activism. For adult fiction, try Daniel Black's *Don't Cry for Me*. A father nearing the end of his life writes a letter to his estranged son in order to reconnect and reconcile the past. If you're looking for young adult fiction, Brittney Morris' novel, *The Cost of Knowing* features a young man trying to save his little brother while dealing with a special power he feels is a curse. B.B. Alston's book for younger readers, *Amari and the Night Brothers* is a fantastic start to a new magical series with a brave girl searching for her missing older brother while trying to understand the magical world around her and who she is.

These examples are just a small part of the wide array of perspectives, stories, and people you can engage with through our collection. We'd love to help you find more! Don't forget about the benefit of engaging with each other too. The library is a great place for our community to come together, enjoy interests, ask questions, and get to know one another. We're happy to be a part of this great community, and we hope that you'll take advantage of this place of open ideas with the freedom to read.

The library will be closed on Monday February 21st to celebrate Presidents' Day. The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.