

### Centering Black Perspectives

*American Street* by Ibi Zoboi. 2018. HarperCollins. Keywords: Immigrant, Haitian, Mothers and daughters, Bildungsroman, American Dream. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: On the corner of American Street and Joy Road, Fabiola Toussaint thought she would finally find *une belle vie*—a good life. But after they leave Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Fabiola's mother is detained by U.S. immigration, leaving Fabiola to navigate her loud American cousins, Chantal, Donna, and Princess; the grittiness of Detroit's west side; a new school; and a surprising romance, all on her own. Just as she finds her footing in this strange new world, a dangerous proposition presents itself, and Fabiola soon realizes that freedom comes at a cost. Trapped at the crossroads of an impossible choice, will she pay the price for the American dream?

*Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam. 2021. HarperCollins. Keywords: African American, False imprisonment, Teenager, Judicial error. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy:

*The story that I thought  
was my life  
didn't start on the day  
I was born*

Amal Shahid has always been an artist and a poet. But even in a diverse art school, because of a biased system he's seen as disruptive and unmotivated. Then, one fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighborhood escalates into tragedy. "Boys just being boys" turns out to be true only when those boys are white.

*The story that I think  
will be my life  
starts today*

Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it? With spellbinding lyricism, award-winning author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam tell a moving and deeply profound story about how one boy is able to maintain his humanity and fight for the truth in a system designed to strip him of both.

**Notes: novel in verse**

*How It Went Down* by Kekla Magoon. 2015. Square Fish. Keywords: Gun violence, Grief, Community. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: When sixteen-year-old Tariq Johnson dies from two gunshot wounds, his community is thrown into an uproar. Tariq was black. The shooter, Jack Franklin, is white. In the aftermath of Tariq's death, everyone has something to say, but no two accounts of the events line up. Day by day, new twists further obscure the truth. Tariq's friends, family, and

community struggle to make sense of the tragedy, and to cope with the hole left behind when a life is cut short. In their own words, they grapple for a way to say with certainty: This is how it went down.

*The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. 2017. HarperCollins. Keywords: Police violence, Gun violence, Teenager, Friendship. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what **really** went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does—or does not—say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

*Sing Unburied Sing* by Jesmyn Ward. 2018. Scribner. Keywords: Family, Ancestry, Ancestral Grief, Ghosts, Prison, Rural south, Poverty, Racism, Addiction, Growing up. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: Jojo is thirteen years old and trying to understand what it means to be a man. He doesn't lack in fathers to study, chief among them his Black grandfather, Pop. But there are other men who complicate his understanding: his absent White father, Michael, who is being released from prison; his absent White grandfather, Big Joseph, who won't acknowledge his existence; and the memories of his dead uncle, Given, who died as a teenager. His mother, Leonie, is an inconsistent presence in his and his toddler sister's lives. She is an imperfect mother in constant conflict with herself and those around her. She is Black and her children's father is White. She wants to be a better mother but can't put her children above her own needs, especially her drug use. Simultaneously tormented and comforted by visions of her dead brother, which only come to her when she's high, Leonie is embattled in ways that reflect the brutal reality of her circumstances. When the children's father is released from prison, Leonie packs her kids and a friend into her car and drives north to the heart of Mississippi and Parchman Farm, the State Penitentiary. At Parchman, there is another thirteen-year-old boy, the ghost of a dead inmate who carries all of the ugly history of the South with him in his wandering. He too has something to teach Jojo about fathers and sons, about legacies, about violence, about love.

**Notes: trigger warning - graphic violence and racism**

*Another Brooklyn* by Jacqueline Woodson. 2017. HarperCollins. Keywords: Black girlhood, Womanhood, Friendship, Brooklyn, Memory, Bildungsroman. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: Running into a long-ago friend sets memory from the 1970s in motion for August, transporting her to a time and a place where friendship was everything—until it wasn't. For August and her girls, sharing confidences as they ambled through neighborhood

streets, Brooklyn was a place where they believed that they were beautiful, talented, brilliant—a part of a future that belonged to them. But beneath the hopeful veneer, there was another Brooklyn, a dangerous place where grown men reached for innocent girls in dark hallways, where ghosts haunted the night, where mothers disappeared. A world where madness was just a sunset away and fathers found hope in religion. Like Louise Meriwether's *Daddy Was a Number Runner* and Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, Jacqueline Woodson's *Another Brooklyn* heartbreakingly illuminates the formative time when childhood gives way to adulthood—the promise and peril of growing up—and exquisitely renders a powerful, indelible, and fleeting friendship that united four young lives.

### Centering Queer Perspectives

*Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi. 2019. Random House Children's Books. Keywords: Family, Lesbian, Transgender, Angels and monsters, Didactic. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: There are no monsters anymore, or so the children in the city of Lucille are taught. Jam and her best friend, Redemption, have grown up with this lesson all their life. But when Jam meets Pet, a creature made of horns and colors and claws, who emerges from one of her mother's paintings and a drop of Jam's blood, she must reconsider what she's been told. Pet has come to hunt a monster, and the shadow of something grim lurks in Redemption's house. Jam must fight not only to protect her best friend, but also to uncover the truth, and the answer to the question—*How do you save the world from monsters if no one will admit they exist?* A riveting and timely young adult debut novel that asks difficult questions about what choices you can make when the society around you is in denial.

*Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender. 2021. HarperCollins. Keywords: Friendship, Bullying, Transgender, Romance. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Felix Love wants nothing more than to experience his own love story but fears he may be undeserving. When an anonymous troll starts sending him hateful messages and exposes old photos and his deadname to his art school classmates, Felix sets out for revenge. On his quest to uncover the truth, Felix ultimately learns that love has been within his reach the whole time. *Felix Ever After* is a poignant, personal and deeply heartfelt story of self-discovery.

*Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera. 2021. Penguin Young Readers Group. Keywords: Feminism, Lesbianism, Puerto Rican, Bildungsroman. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Juliet Milagros Palante is a self-proclaimed closeted Puerto Rican baby dyke from the Bronx. Only, she's not so closeted anymore. Not after coming out to her family the night before flying to Portland, Oregon, to intern with her favorite feminist writer—what's sure to be a life-changing experience. And when Juliet's coming out crashes and burns, she's not sure her mom will ever speak to her again. But Juliet has a plan—sort of. Her internship with legendary author Harlowe Brisbane, the ultimate authority on feminism, women's bodies, and other gay-sounding stuff, is sure to help her figure out this whole "Puerto Rican lesbian" thing. Except Harlowe's white. And not from the Bronx. And she definitely doesn't have

all the answers . . . In a summer bursting with queer brown dance parties, a sexy fling with a motorcycling librarian, and intense explorations of race and identity, Juliet learns what it means to come out—to the world, to her family, to herself.

*The Thirty Names of Night* by Zeyn Joukhadar. 2021. Atria Books. Keywords: Syrian American, Motherhood, Transgender, Nonbinary. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: Five years after a suspicious fire killed his ornithologist mother, a closeted Syrian American trans boy sheds his birth name and searches for a new one. As his grandmother's sole caretaker, he spends his days cooped up in their apartment, avoiding his neighborhood masjid, his estranged sister, and even his best friend (who also happens to be his longtime crush). The only time he feels truly free is when he slips out at night to paint murals on buildings in the once-thriving Manhattan neighborhood known as Little Syria, but he's been struggling ever since his mother's ghost began visiting him each evening. One night, he enters the abandoned community house and finds the tattered journal of a Syrian American artist named Laila Z, who dedicated her career to painting birds. She mysteriously disappeared more than sixty years before, but her journal contains proof that both his mother and Laila Z encountered the same rare bird before their deaths. In fact, Laila Z's past is intimately tied to his mother's in ways he never could have expected. Even more surprising, Laila Z's story reveals the histories of queer and transgender people within his own community that he never knew. Realizing that he isn't and has never been alone, he has the courage to claim a new name: Nadir, an Arabic name meaning *rare*. As unprecedented numbers of birds are mysteriously drawn to the New York City skies, Nadir enlists the help of his family and friends to unravel what happened to Laila Z and the rare bird his mother died trying to save. Following his mother's ghost, he uncovers the silences kept in the name of survival by his own community, his own family, and within himself, and discovers the family that was there all along.

*More Than Organs* by Kay Ulanday Barrett. 2020. Sibling Rivalry Press. Keywords: Transgender, Love, Grief, Queer, Poetry. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: A love letter to Brown, Queer, and Trans futures, Kay Ulanday Barrett's *More Than Organs* questions "whatever wholeness means" for bodies always in transit, for the safeties and dangers they silo. These poems remix people of color as earthbenders, replay "the choreography of loss" after the 2015 Pulse shooting, and till joy from the cosmic sweetness of a family's culinary history. Barrett works "to build / a shelter // of / everyone / [they] meet," from aunties to the legendary Princess Urduja to their favorite air sign. *More Than Organs* tattoos *grief* across the knuckles of its left hand and *love* across the knuckles of its right, leaving the reader physically changed by the intensity of experience, longing, strength, desire, and the need, above all else, to survive.

**Notes: poetry**

### Centering Latinx Perspectives'

*The Dreamer* by Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sís. 2012. Scholastic. Keywords: Chile, Chilean history, Pablo Neruda, Fiction, Biography. Grades 6-8.

Publisher's catalog copy: From the time he is a young boy, Neftalí hears the call of a mysterious voice. Even when the neighborhood children taunt him, and when his harsh, authoritarian father ridicules him, and when he doubts himself, Neftalí knows he cannot ignore the call. He listens and follows as it leads him under the canopy of the lush rainforest, into the fearsome sea, and through the persistent Chilean rain on an inspiring voyage of self-discovery that will transform his life and, ultimately, the world. Combining elements of magical realism with biography, poetry, literary fiction, and transporting illustrations, Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sís take readers on a rare journey of the heart and imagination as they explore the inspiring early life of the poet who became Pablo Neruda.

*The Firefly Letters: A Suffragette's Journey to Cuba* by Margarita Engle. 2017. Square Fish. Keywords: Suffrage, Women's Rights, Feminism, Cuban, Friendship, Womanhood. Grades 6-8.

Publisher's catalog copy: When Fredrika Bremer asked the Swedish Consulate to find her a quiet home in the Cuban countryside, she expected a rustic thatched hut, not this luxurious mansion in Matanzas, where Elena, the daughter of the house, can barely step foot outside. The freedom to roam is something that women and girls in Cuba do not have. Yet when Fredrika sets off to learn about the people of this magical island, she is accompanied by Cecilia, a young slave who longs for her lost home in Africa. Soon Elena sneaks out of the house to join them. As the three women explore the lush countryside, they form a bond that breaks the barriers of language and culture. In this quietly powerful new book, which is young adult historical fiction based on a true story, award-winning poet Margarita Engle paints a portrait of early women's rights pioneer Fredrika Bremer and the journey to Cuba that transformed her life.

*Mexican WhiteBoy* by Matt de la Peña. 2010. Random House Children's Book. Keywords: Biracial, Mexican, Growing up, High school. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Danny is tall and skinny. Even though he's not built, his arms are long enough to give his pitch a power so fierce any college scout would sign him on the spot. Ninety-five mile an hour fastball, but the boy's not even on a team. Every time he gets up on the mound, he loses it. But at his private school, they don't expect much else from him. Danny is brown. Half-Mexican brown. And growing up in San Diego that close to the border means everyone else knows exactly who he is before he even opens his mouth. Before they find out he can't speak Spanish, and before they realize his mom has blond hair and blue eyes, they've got him pegged. But it works the other way too. And Danny's convinced it's his whiteness that sent his father back to Mexico. That's why he's spending the summer with his dad's family. But to find himself, he may just have to face the demons he refuses to see—the demons that are right in front of his face. And open up to a friendship he never saw coming. Matt de la Peña's critically acclaimed novel is an intimate and moving story that offers hope to those who least expect it.

*How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez. 2010. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill. Keywords: Sisterhood, Dominican American, Immigration, Language, Bildungsroman. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: Acclaimed writer Julia Alvarez's beloved first novel gives voice to four sisters as they grow up in two cultures. The García sisters—Carla, Sandra, Yolanda, and Sofía—and their family must flee their home in the Dominican Republic after their father's role in an attempt to overthrow brutal dictator Rafael Trujillo is discovered. They arrive in New York City in 1960 to a life far removed from their existence in the Caribbean. In the wondrous but not always welcoming U.S.A., their parents try to hold on to their old ways as the girls try find new lives: by straightening their hair and wearing American fashions, and by forgetting their Spanish. For them, it is at once liberating and excruciating to be caught between the old world and the new. Here they tell their stories about being at home—and not at home—in America.

#### Centering AAPI & Middle Eastern perspectives

*Other Words for Home* by Jasmine Warga. 2021. HarperCollins. Keywords: Immigration and emigration, Refugee children, Syrians. Grades 4-8

Publisher's catalog copy: Jude never thought she'd be leaving her beloved older brother and father behind, all the way across the ocean in Syria. But when things in her hometown start becoming volatile, Jude and her mother are sent to live in Cincinnati with relatives. At first, everything in America seems too fast and too loud. The American movies that Jude has always loved haven't quite prepared her for starting school in the US—and her new label of "Middle Eastern," an identity she's never known before. But this life also brings unexpected surprises—there are new friends, a whole new family, and a school musical that Jude might just try out for. Maybe America, too, is a place where Jude can be seen as she really is. This lyrical, life-affirming story is about losing and finding home and, most importantly, finding yourself.

**Notes: novel in verse**

*American Born Chinese* by Gene Yuen Lang. 2006. First Second Books. Keywords: Chinese American, Identity, Graphic novel. Grades 9-12

Publisher's catalog copy: A tour-de-force by *New York Times* bestselling graphic novelist Gene Yang, *American Born Chinese* tells the story of three apparently unrelated characters: Jin Wang, who moves to a new neighborhood with his family only to discover that he's the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the powerful Monkey King, subject of one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables; and Chin-Kee, a personification of the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, who is ruining his cousin Danny's life with his yearly visits. Their lives and stories come together with an unexpected twist in this action-packed modern fable. *American Born Chinese* is an amazing ride, all the way up to the astonishing climax.

**Notes: graphic novel**

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. 2008. Riverhead Trade. Keywords: Family, Afghanistan, Womanhood. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: Born a generation apart and with very different ideas about love and family, Mariam and Laila are two women brought jarringly together by war, by loss and by fate. As they endure the ever escalating dangers around them—in their home as well as in the streets of Kabul—they come to form a bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, and that will ultimately alter the course not just of their own lives but of the next generation. With heart-wrenching power and suspense, Hosseini shows how a woman's love for her family can move her to shocking and heroic acts of self-sacrifice, and that in the end it is love, or even the memory of love, that is often the key to survival.

**Notes: recommended by student**

*Everything I Never Told You* by Celeste Ng. 2015. Penguin Publishing Group. Keywords: Daughterhood, Parenthood, Chinese American, Grief, Family. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: “Lydia is dead. But they don’t know this yet.” So begins this exquisite novel about a Chinese American family living in 1970s small-town Ohio. Lydia is the favorite child of Marilyn and James Lee, and her parents are determined that she will fulfill the dreams they were unable to pursue. But when Lydia’s body is found in the local lake, the delicate balancing act that has been keeping the Lee family together is destroyed, tumbling them into chaos. A profoundly moving story of family, secrets, and longing, *Everything I Never Told You* is both a gripping page-turner and a sensitive family portrait, uncovering the ways in which mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, and husbands and wives struggle, all their lives, to understand one another.

**Notes: Recommended by student, trigger warning - suicide**

#### Centering Indigenous Perspectives

*Elatsoe* by Darcie Little Badger. 2021. Levine Querido. Keywords: Mystery, girlhood, Apache, Asexual, Ancestral grief, Magical realism. Grades 7-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Elatsoe—Ellie for short—lives in an alternate contemporary America shaped by the ancestral magics and knowledge of its Indigenous and immigrant groups. She can raise the spirits of dead animals—most importantly, her ghost dog Kirby. When her beloved cousin dies, all signs point to a car crash, but his ghost tells her otherwise: He was murdered. Who killed him and how did he die? With the help of her family, her best friend Jay, and the memory great, great, great, great, great, great grandmother, Elatsoe, must track down the killer and unravel the mystery of this creepy town and its dark past. But will the nefarious townsfolk and a mysterious Doctor stop her before she gets started? A breathtaking debut novel featuring an asexual, Apache teen protagonist, *Elatsoe* combines mystery, horror, noir, ancestral knowledge, haunting illustrations, fantasy elements, and is one of the most-talked about debuts of the year.

*Firekeeper's Daughter* by Angelina Boulley. 2021. Henry Holt and Co. Keywords: Womanhood, Indigenous womanhood, Community, Drug addiction, Lesbian, Ojibwe. Grades 9-12.

Publisher's catalog copy: Eighteen-year-old Daunis Fontaine has never quite fit in, both in her hometown and on the nearby Ojibwe reservation. She dreams of a fresh start at college, but when family tragedy strikes, Daunis puts her future on hold to look after her fragile mother. The only bright spot is meeting Jamie, the charming new recruit on her brother Levi's hockey team. Yet even as Daunis falls for Jamie, she senses the dashing hockey star is hiding something. Everything comes to light when Daunis witnesses a shocking murder, thrusting her into an FBI investigation of a lethal new drug. Reluctantly, Daunis agrees to go undercover, drawing on her knowledge of chemistry and Ojibwe traditional medicine to track down the source. But the search for truth is more complicated than Daunis imagined, exposing secrets and old scars. At the same time, she grows concerned with an investigation that seems more focused on punishing the offenders than protecting the victims. Now, as the deceptions—and deaths—keep growing, Daunis must learn what it means to be a strong Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibwe woman) and how far she'll go for her community, even if it tears apart the only world she's ever known.

*The Round House* by Louise Erdrich. 2013. HarperCollins. Keywords: Ojibwe, Indigenous, Womanhood, Justice, Family, Community, Land. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: From one of the most revered novelists of our time, an exquisitely told story of a boy on the cusp of manhood who seeks justice and understanding in the wake of a terrible crime that upends and forever transforms his family. One Sunday in the spring of 1988, a woman living on a reservation in North Dakota is attacked. The details of the crime are slow to surface because Geraldine Coutts is traumatized and reluctant to relive or reveal what happened, either to the police or to her husband, Bazil, and thirteen-year-old son, Joe. In one day, Joe's life is irrevocably transformed. He tries to heal his mother, but she will not leave her bed and slips into an abyss of solitude. Increasingly alone, Joe finds himself thrust prematurely into an adult world for which he is ill prepared. While his father, a tribal judge, endeavors to wrest justice from a situation that defies his efforts, Joe becomes frustrated with the official investigation and sets out with his trusted friends, Cappy, Zack, and Angus, to get some answers of his own. Their quest takes them first to the Round House, a sacred space and place of worship for the Ojibwe. And this is only the beginning.

**Notes: Trigger warning - rape**

*There There* by Tommy Orange. 2019. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group. Keywords: Family, Collective identity, Collective memory, Addiction, Indigenous, Powwow. Adult.

Publisher's catalog copy: A wondrous and shattering novel that follows twelve characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Powwow, all connected to one another in ways they may not yet realize. Among them is Jacquie Red Feather, newly sober and trying to make it back to the family she left behind. Dene Oxendene, pulling his life together after his uncle's death and working at the powwow to honor his memory. Fourteen-year-old

Orvil, coming to perform traditional dance for the very first time. Together, this chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American—grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism. Hailed as an instant classic, *There There* is at once poignant and unflinching, utterly contemporary and truly unforgettable.