

social ACTIVISM

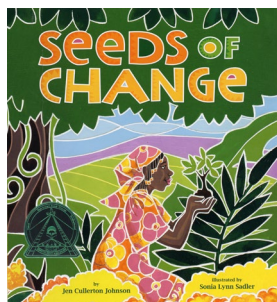
diverse reading list

Discover characters and historical figures who stand up for peace, equity, and justice for gender, socioeconomic status, race, or the environment. These mentor texts suggest ways that students can enact change in their own communities.

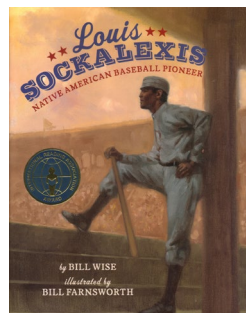
Check each Lee & Low book's link for corresponding lesson ideas and activities.



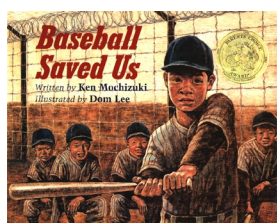
Grades PreK-2



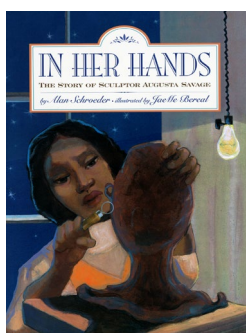
Seeds of Change: Planting a Path To Peace • written by Jen Cullerton Johnson, illustrated by Sonia Sadler • This picture book biography profiles scientist Wangari Maathi, the first African woman — and first environmentalist — to win a Nobel Peace Prize, for her work planting trees in her native Kenya. **Gender, Environment, Making Change, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change>



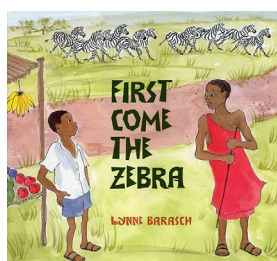
Louis Sockalexis: Native American Baseball Pioneer • written by Bill Wise, illustrated by Bill Farnsworth • Louis Sockalexis, a Penobscot Indian, was the first Native American to play professional baseball. This biography focuses on his formative years and culminates in a historic game at New York's Polo Grounds in 1897. **Race, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/louis-sockalexis>



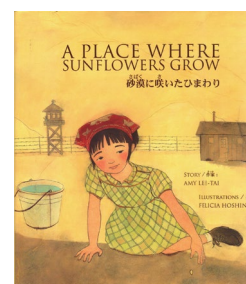
Baseball Saved Us • written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee • This classic, award-winning picture book tells the story of Shorty and his family, placed in an internment camp after the attack on Pearl Harbor along with thousands of Japanese Americans. (Also available in Spanish.) **Race, Historical Experience, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us>



In Her Hands: The Story of Sculptor Augusta Savage • written by Alan Schroeder, illustrated by JaeMe Bereal • Discover the story of Augusta Savage, a pioneering female sculptor and a major figure of the Harlem Renaissance. **Gender, Race, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/in-her-hands>



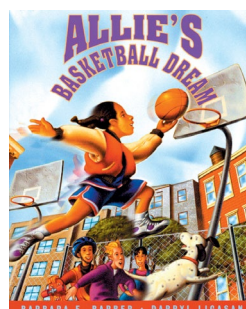
First Come the Zebra • written and illustrated by Lynne Barasch • Two young Kenyan boys, one Maasai and one Kikuyu, find a way to overcome their traditional rivalries and become friends. **Peace, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/first-come-the-zebra>



A Place Where Sunflowers Grow • written by Amy Lee-Tai, illustrated by Felicia Hoshino • During World War II, a young Japanese-American girl finds things to be joyful about in the Topaz Internment camp. (Bilingual English/Japanese.) **Race, Historical Experience, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-place-where-sunflowers-grow>

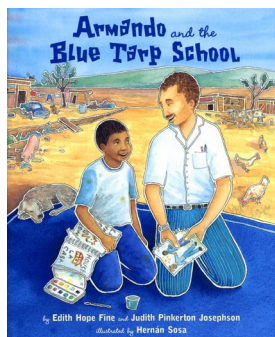


Parrots Over Puerto Rico • written by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore, illustrated by Susan L. Roth • This Sibert Award-winning picture book reveals intertwined histories of the Puerto Rican parrot and the island of Puerto Rico, culminating with current efforts to save the parrots from extinction. **Environment, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/parrots-over-puerto-rico>

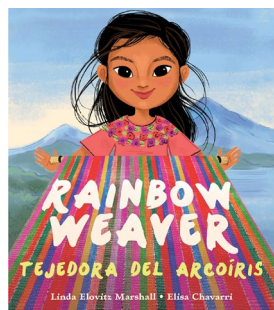


Allie's Basketball Dream • written by Barbara E. Barber, illustrated by Darryl Ligan • Basketball is Allie's favorite sport—she's loved it ever since her father took her to her first game at Madison Square Garden. Allie's story of self-determination is one that young athletes, both boys and girls, will recognize. **Gender, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/allie-s-basketball-dream>

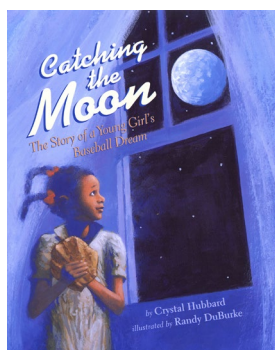
Grades PreK-2



Armando and the Blue Tarp School • written by Edith Hope Fine and Judith Pinkerton Josephson, illustrated by Hernán Sosa • An artistic young Mexican boy living in a colonia (trash dump community) takes the first steps toward realizing his dream of getting an education. The story reflects the work of David Lynch, a teacher from New York who first began working in a colonia in Mexico in the early 1980s. (Also available in Spanish.) **Environment, Making Change, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/armando-and-the-blue-tarp-school>



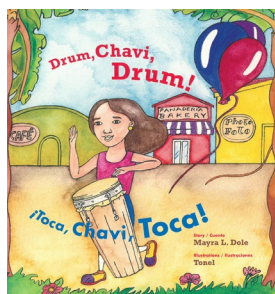
Rainbow Weaver/Tejedora del Arcoíris • written by Linda Elovitz Marshall, illustrated by Elisa Chavarri • A young Mayan girl isn't allowed to use her mother's thread to weave, but with a little ingenuity, she discovers how to repurpose plastic bags to create colorful weavings. The story is based on an actual recycling movement in Guatemala. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) **Environment, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-weaver-tejedora-del-arcoiris>



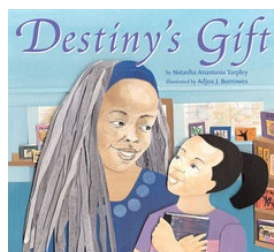
Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream • written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Randy DuBurke • The spirited story of Marcenia Lyle, the African American girl who grew up to become "Toni Stone," the first woman to play for an all-male professional baseball team. **Race, Gender, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/catching-the-moon>



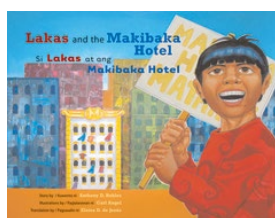
Sparkle Boy • written by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Maria Mola • Casey loves sparkly things! But his older sister Jessie does not approve — until an encounter with bullies helps her learn to accept and respect Casey for who he is. **Gender, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sparkle-boy>



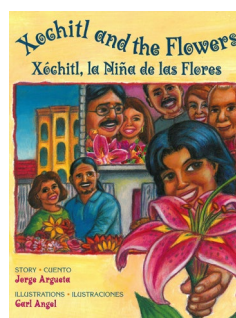
Drum, Chavi, Drum! iToca, Chavi, Toca! • written by Mayra L. Doyle, illustrated by Tonel • Even though nobody in her neighborhood thinks girls should play the drums, Chavi knows she was born to drum. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) **Gender, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/drum-chavi-drum-toca-chavi-toca>



Destiny's Gift • Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, illustrated by Adjoa J. Burrowes • Destiny tries to keep her friend's neighborhood bookstore from going out of business by using her resourcefulness and creativity. **Making Change, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/destiny-s-gift>

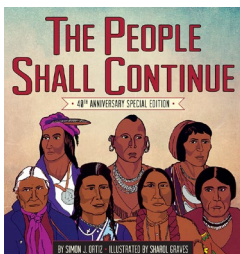


Lakas and the Makibaka Hotel • written by Anthony Robles, illustrated by Carl Angel • When Lakas discovers that the Makibaka Hotel is about to be sold, he leads a protest with his friends who are facing eviction. (Bilingual English/Tagalog.) **Making Change, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/lakas-and-the-makibaka-hotel>

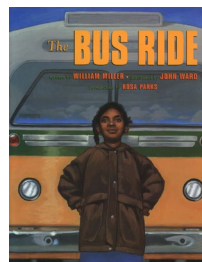


Xochitl and the Flowers • written by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Carl Angel • Thousands of miles away from El Salvador, Xochitl and her family make a new home in the United States. When they start a flower business, Xochitl learns the value of her new community. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) **Making Change, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/xochitl-and-the-flowers-xochitl-la-nina-de-las-flores>

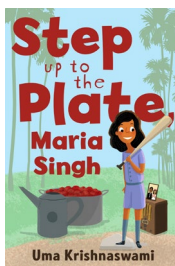
Grades 3-5



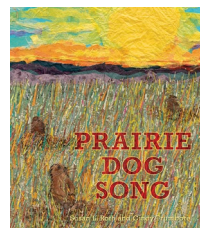
The People Shall Continue • written by Simon J. Ortiz, illustrated by Sharol Graves • Renowned Acoma Pueblo poet and storyteller Simon J. Ortiz traces the progress of Native/Indigenous people of North America from the time of creation to the present. (Also available in Spanish.) **Race, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue>



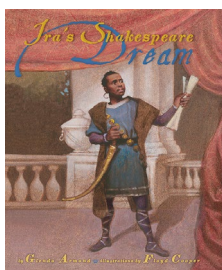
The Bus Ride • written by William Miller, illustrated by John Ward • An African American girl discovers how one child can make a difference when she refuses to sit in the back of a bus. Includes an introduction by Rosa Parks. **Race, Making Change, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-bus-ride>



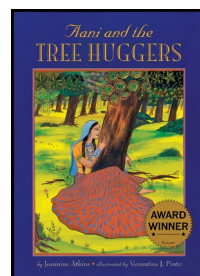
Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh • written by Uma Krishnaswami • While her parents and neighbors are struggling through World War II, working for India's independence, and trying to stay on their farmland, nine-year-old Maria Singh learns to play softball just like her heroes in the All-American Girls' League. **Race, Historical Experience, Fiction, Novel** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh>



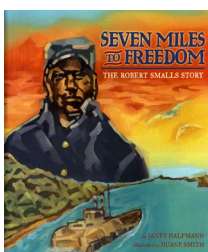
Prairie Dog Song: The Key to Saving North America's Grasslands • written by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore, illustrated by Susan L. Roth • Focusing on the role of prairie dogs as a keystone species, this book tells the connected histories of the North American grassland prairies and current efforts to preserve and recover the Janos grasslands in northern Mexico. **Environment** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/prairie-dog-song>



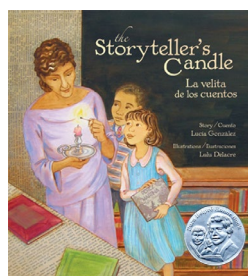
Ira's Shakespeare Dream • written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper • This biography chronicles the life of Ira Aldridge, an African American man who is considered to be one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of the nineteenth century. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream>



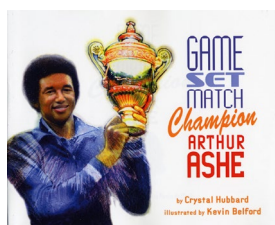
Aani and the Tree Huggers • written by Jeannine Atkins, illustrated by Venantius J. Pinto • In this enduring story of environmental action based on a true event in northern India, Aani and other women in her village save their forest from destruction. **Gender, Environment, Making Change, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/aani-and-the-tree-huggers>



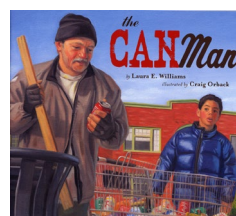
Seven Miles to Freedom: The Robert Smalls Story • written by Janet Halfmann, illustrated by Duane Smith • The true story of Robert Smalls, a slave steamboat wheelman who commandeered a Confederate ship during the Civil War and escaped with his family and crew to freedom. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seven-miles-to-freedom>



The Storyteller's Candle/La velita de los cuentos • written by Lucía González, illustrated by Lulu Delacre • Cousins Hildamar and Santiago long for their home in Puerto Rico — until they discover the library thanks to Pura Belpré, New York City's first Latina librarian. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) **Race, Biography, Historical Experience, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-storyteller-s-candle-la-velita-de-los-cuentos>

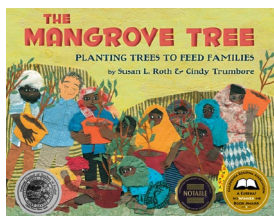


Game, Set, Match, Champion Arthur Ashe • written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Kevin Belford • Arthur Ashe began playing tennis on the segregated courts of Virginia — but he went on to conquer the world. • **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/game-set-match-champion-arthur-ashe>



The Can Man • written by Laura E. Williams, illustrated by Craig Orback • To earn money, a young boy decides to collect and redeem empty cans, but ends up giving his money away to a homeless man. • **Class, Making Change, Fiction** • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-can-man>

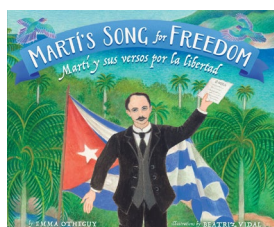
Grades 3-5



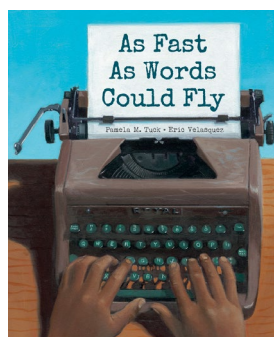
The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families • written by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore, illustrated by Susan L. Roth • With alternating verse and prose passages, readers discover how Dr. Gordon Sato's mangrove-tree planting project transformed an impoverished village in Eritrea into a self-sufficient community. **Gender, Environment, Making Change** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-mangrove-tree>



Silent Star: The Story of Deaf Major Leaguer William Hoy • written by Bill Wise, illustrated by Adam Gustavson • Meet William Ellsworth Hoy, the first deaf player to have a long and statistically distinguished career in professional and major league baseball. **Disability, Biography, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/silent-star>



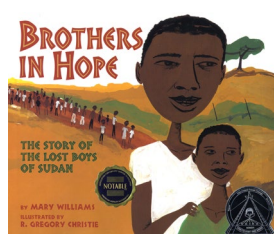
Martí's Song For Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad • written by Emma Otheguy, illustrated by Beatriz Vidal • José Martí dedicated his life to the promotion of liberty: the abolishment of slavery, political independence for Cuba, and intellectual independence from colonialism for all Latinos. This bilingual biography is written in verse with excerpts from Martí's seminal work, *Versos sencillos*. (**Bilingual English/Spanish.**) **Biography, Making Change** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marti-s-song-for-freedom-marti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad>



As Fast As Words Could Fly • written by Pamela M. Tuck, illustrated by Eric Velasquez • Mason Steele, an African American boy in 1960s Greenville, North Carolina, relies on his inner confidence and his typing skills to face challenges and break racial barriers after he begins attending a "whites-only" high school. **Race, Biography, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/as-fast-as-words-could-fly>



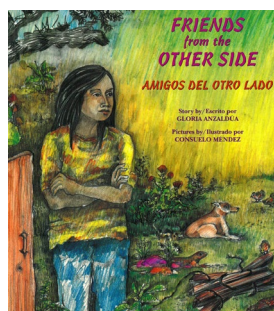
Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story • written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee • As a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania in the 1940s, Chiune Sugihara had a chance to help thousands of Jews escape the Holocaust, but to do so would go against his government's orders. When his five-year-old son asked, "If we don't help them, won't they die?" Sugihara decided to assist the refugees. (Also available in Spanish.) **Race, Religion, Biography, Historical Experience, Making Change** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom>



Brothers in Hope: The Story of The Lost Boys of Sudan • written by Mary Williams, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie • After war destroys his village in southern Sudan, a young boy unites with thousands of other orphans to walk to safety in a refugee camp. This powerful story of survival and brotherhood is based on true events. **Peace, Biography, Historical Experience** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/brothers-in-hope>

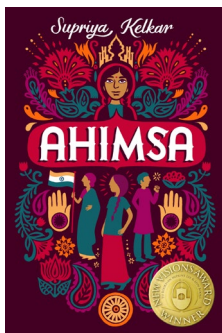


Irena's Jar of Secrets • written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan • Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker, helped save nearly 2,500 Jewish children during the Nazi occupation of Poland during World War II. **Race, Religion, Biography, Historical Experience, Making Change** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>

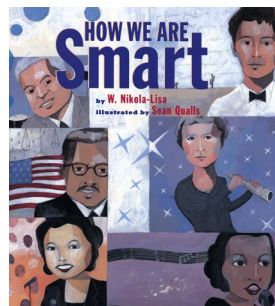


Friends From the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado • written by Gloria Anzaldúa, illustrated by Consuelo Méndez • This poignant immigration story captures not only the hardship of daily life on the border, but also the beauty of the landscape and the dignity and generosity of spirit that Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants share. (**Bilingual English/Spanish.**) **Race, Class, Historical Experience, Fiction** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/friends-from-the-other-side-amigos-del-otro-lado>

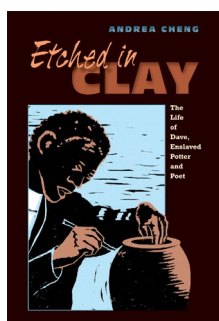
Grades 6-8



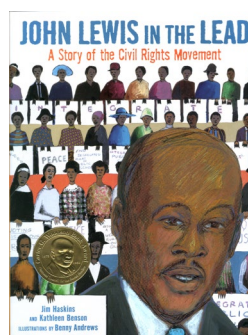
Ahimsa • written by Supriya Kelkar
 • In this historical novel, Gandhi asks for one member of each family to join the fight for independence from the British, and when Anjali's mother is jailed for doing so, Anjali must step out of her comfort zone to take over her mother's work. **Race, Historical Experience, Making Change, Fiction, Novel** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ahimsa>



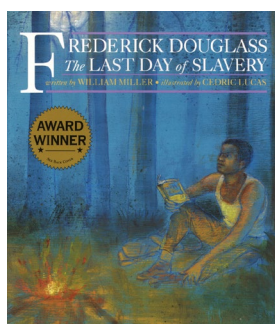
How We Are Smart • written by W. Nikola-Lisa, illustrated by Sean Qualls • Biographies of twelve talented people introduce readers to the eight ways people can be smart and the realization that intelligence is "not about how smart you are, but how you are smart." **Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/how-we-are-smart>



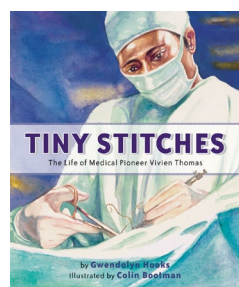
Etched in Clay • written and illustrated by Andrea Cheng • This older biography in verse reveals the life of Dave, an enslaved potter who inscribed his works with sayings and short poems, in spite of the slave anti-literacy sentiment in the years leading up to the Civil War. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography, Fiction, Novel** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/etched-in-clay>



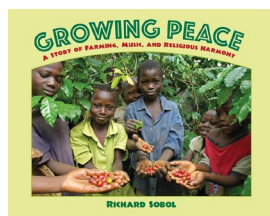
John Lewis in the Lead: A Story of the Civil Rights Movement • written by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrated by Benny Andrews • John Lewis, one of the "Big Six" civil rights leaders of the 1960s, was involved with Freedom Rides, the March on Washington, and the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. **Race, Historical Experience, Making Change, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/john-lewis-in-the-lead>



Frederick Douglass: Last Day of Slavery • written by William Miller, illustrated by Cedric Douglass • Young Frederick Douglass dreams of escape, so an overseer sets out to "break" him. Frederick's response to the overseer's brutality is an act of courage that frees forever what no person can hold captive: his spirit. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/frederick-douglass>



Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas • written by Gwendolyn Hooks, illustrated by Colin Bootman • Vivien Thomas, an African American surgical technician, developed the first procedure used to perform open-heart surgery on children. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/tiny-stitches>

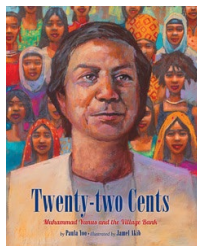


Growing Peace: A Story of Farming, Music and Religious Harmony • written and photographed by Richard Sobol • This photo-essay focuses on Jewish, Muslim, and Christian families in a Ugandan village who learned to live and work together peacefully as the result of a Fair Trade farming cooperative. **Religion, Making Change, Peace** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/growing-peace>

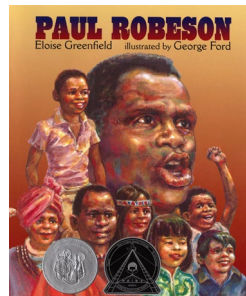


Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story • written by and illustrated by S.D. Nelson • Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian, was one of the six soldiers to raise the United States flag on Iwo Jima during World War II, an event immortalized by Joe Rosenthal's Pulitzer-Prize winning photograph. **Race, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/quiet-hero>

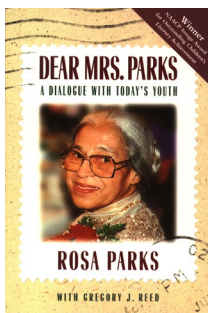
Grades 6-8



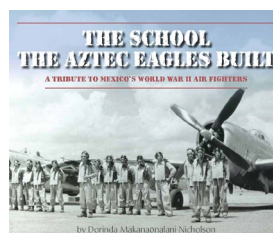
Twenty-Two Cents: Muhammad Yunus and the Village Bank • written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Jamel Akib • 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus revolutionized global antipoverty efforts when he developed the innovative economic concept of micro-lending. **Class, Making Change, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/twenty-two-cents>



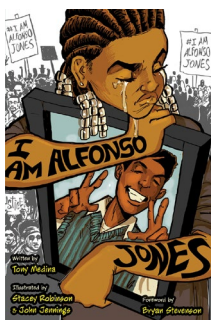
Paul Robeson • written by Eloise Greenfield, illustrated by George Ford • This award-winning biography of Paul Robeson, who overcame racial discrimination to become an international entertainer and civil rights activist, includes a new introduction and afterword by the author, focusing on Robeson's legacy. **Race, Historical Experience, Making Change, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/paul-roberson>



Dear Mrs. Parks: A Dialogue With Today's Youth • written by Rosa Parks with Gregory J. Reed • On a December day in 1955, Rosa Parks changed the course of history when she was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery, Alabama bus. **Race, Making Change, Historical Experience, Biography** <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/dear-mrs-parks>



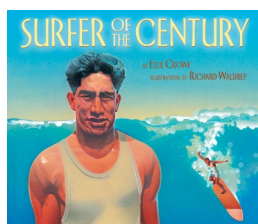
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