

# Children's Book Guild News



CHILDREN'S  
BOOK GUILD  
of WASHINGTON, DC

## Monthly News

Authors • Illustrators • Children's Literature Specialists

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Tuesday, January 26, 2021

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### About Me



#### Monthly News

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC is a professional organization of authors, illustrators and children's literature specialists promoting high standards in children's literature since 1945. Visit us at <https://childrensbookguild.org/>

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## February 2021

### JASON CHIN IN CONVERSATION WITH GUILD MEMBER YUKARI MATSUYAMA



Jason Chin is an award-winning illustrator and author of nonfiction, including his own recent *Your Place in the Universe*, a look at relative size and space, as well as *Grand Canyon*, a 2018 Caldecott Honor and Sibert Honor book, and *Gravity*, a gorgeous book about what keeps us all from floating out into space.

He is the author-illustrator of

*Redwoods* and *Island*, and the illustrator of two books with Miranda Paul, *Nine Months* and *Water Is Water*.

In a Zoom meeting at 1 p.m. on February 18, Chin will discuss his career and his approach to art, research and storytelling with Guild member Yukari Matsuyama, senior manager with First Book.

Also, the Guild is providing the opportunity each month for making a donation to an organization working for racial justice in children's literacy and education. February's chosen organization is **Black Lives Matter**. There is an option on the Guild website to donate after registering. To learn more about Black Lives Matter and their important work, check out their website: <https://blacklivesmatter.com>.

[Register Now!](#)

**THE GUILD CONGRATULATES**

**Tammar Stein,  
Author of *Beni's War...***



**And Erica Perl,  
Author of *The Ninth Night of Hanukkah.***



**Both titles were selected by the Association of Jewish Libraries as 2021 Sydney Taylor Notable Books.**

**THE GUILD ALSO CONGRATULATES**

**Deborah Wiles,  
Author of *Kent State,***



## Winner of the 2021 Odyssey Award, Honoring Excellence in Audiobook Production

### IN THIS ISSUE:

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### LETTER FROM GUILD PRESIDENT KAREN DEANS



Happy February, everyone!

Last month was momentous on many fronts and, while we are still navigating the tragic and devastating effects of the pandemic, there is much to be hopeful for in our midst. On January 20, our nation inaugurated its 46th president, Joe Biden, and our new vice president, Kamala Harris. It was a historic celebration, and its overarching theme, calling for unity, was inspiring. I'm guessing and hoping you all had the chance to hear Youth Poet Laureate Amanda

Gorman recite her magnificent poem, "The Hill We Climb." It is rich with purpose and vision, as well as hard truths and hope. I recommend all of you take the time to [view it again and again](#), in order to soak up the power and energy in its words as we move forward into this new year.

January's program was an enriching opportunity for all of us in attendance, as we learned about the career of award-winning author and illustrator [Juana Martinez-Neal](#). She shared with us the creative process of making her books, which include *Alma and How She Got Her Name* as well as her upcoming publication, *Zonia's Rain Forest*. We learned about the artistic legacy she inherited from her father and grandfather, as well as how she forged her path from fine art painting into illustration and then to children's books. Guild member Susan Stockdale moderated this energetic and informative program.

Last month's chosen organization supporting racial justice in children's literature and education was [Teaching Tolerance](#). Thank you to all who donated when registering for January's program. We received \$250 in small donations, which were collected and given to the organization as a gift from Members and Friends of the Children's Book Guild.

Welcome to our two newest members, Claudia Friddell and Ginger Park. [Claudia](#) is a former teacher who is the author of many nonfiction books about, as she puts it, "kid-friendly, little known and long-forgotten

stories of consequential Americans whose accomplishments--and often heroic feats--inspire readers, young and old alike." Claudia's most recent publication is *Saving Lady Liberty: Joseph Pulitzer's Fight for the Statue of Liberty*. Claudia has three more books lined up for publication this year and in 2022.

**Ginger** has written several books for children, coauthored with her sister, Frances Park. The sisters have penned children's titles such as *The Royal Bee* and *My Freedom Trip*, and a new one is forthcoming soon. They opened a chocolate shop in downtown DC, called Chocolate Chocolate, over 30 years ago, and they wrote a memoir titled *Chocolate Chocolate: The True Story of Two Sisters, Tons of Treats, and the Little Shop that Could*. I was lucky enough to be a recipient of their delicious truffles years ago, when my husband, whose office was nearby, bought them for me every Valentine's Day.

Thanks to all of you who have generously donated to the Look at my Books! Campaign. An impressive number of books have been collected, as have monetary donations toward the purchase of books that will be distributed directly to more than 35 children at home during this time when access to school and public libraries is limited due to the pandemic. Thank you to Guild members Caroline Brewer, Karen Leggett, Kem Sawyer and Turning the Page's Megan Waters for their work on this meaningful project.

Registration for next month's Speaker Series program is now open. The Children's Book Guild will welcome award-winning illustrator and author **Jason Chin**, who will discuss his career and his approach to art, research and storytelling. Guild member Yukari Matsuyama will moderate this program. When registering for the program, you will be given the option to donate to **Black Lives Matter**, as the Guild continues to support organizations that work for racial justice and education in that sphere.

Wishing everyone a healthy and peaceful February,

Karen

## **FINDING WHO YOU ARE: JANUARY'S SPEAKER, JUANA MARTINEZ-NEAL**

*by Caroline Hickey*

Guild members and guests were treated to a lively presentation by children's book author-illustrator Juana Martinez-Neal for the meeting on January 21. Guild member Susan Stockdale introduced the speaker and led the discussion.

Martinez-Neal was awarded the 2019 Caldecott Honor for her debut picture book as an author-illustrator, *Alma and How She Got Her Name*, published by Candlewick Press. She is also the illustrator of *La Princesa and the Pea* (Putnam/Penguin), which won the 2018 Pura Belpré Medal for Illustration, and *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* (Roaring Brook Press), which won the 2020 Robert F. Sibert Medal.

Martinez-Neal was born in Lima, Peru, and currently lives in Scottsdale, AZ, with her husband, her three kids and two dogs. Both her grandfather and her father were artists who painted the indigenous

people of Peru, which was an unusual subject for their time. When Juana was sixteen, she started helping her father by doing illustrations for the toy company for which he designed. She began seeing her artwork everywhere around town, from big chain stores to street vendors.

When she was 21, she decided to go to art school. She wanted to be a painter like her dad and grandfather. Two years later, her teachers told her she was, in fact, not a painter—she was an illustrator. And it turned out they were absolutely right. She just didn't know at the time what that meant exactly.

Juana wanted to take some time off art school, so her parents sent her to LA to live with an uncle. Over the next 10 years, she stopped writing and painting and printmaking. She was working and helping her parents. She created only three pieces in those 10 years. Then she met her husband, and he brought her back to art. They would sit together and play with clay.

She began taking sculpting classes at UCLA and going for a degree in graphic design. But then she had her first child, which caused her to take a break from her art again. For the next several years, she went back and forth between school and having kids, taking breaks when she needed to and jumping back into it when she could. She began using colored pencils because they seemed the safest medium to have in the house with little children.

At 41, she felt like she was getting too old to start an illustrator career. But then she went to an SCBWI conference, thinking it would be her last. She entered her portfolio and ended up winning the grand prize—traveling to New York and meeting with three editors. She also met her agent at the conference. This one event changed her career.

Her book *Alma and How She Got Her Name*, which is a story about identity, pride, family and love, is the first book originally published in Spanish to earn the Caldecott Honor.

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP: ROBIN HA

Graphic novelist Robin Ha has applied for membership in the Children's Book Guild. She tells her story here:

"I've been an avid reader of comics since I was introduced to them by my mother as a young girl. The streets of Seoul were dotted with stores called *manhwabang*, which rent comics. I would run to one every day after school and read dozens of comics. Growing up as an only daughter of a single mother in Korea was tough, but my childhood memories are full of joyful times sharing yummy street food with friends and dreaming about becoming a cartoonist someday.



"My life took a sharp turn when my mother and I went on a "vacation" to Alabama when I was 14. To my surprise, my mother married a Korean

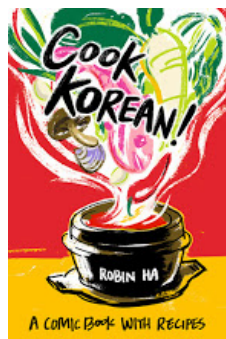


American man who lived there, and our vacation turned into a permanent relocation. I lost contact with all my beloved friends and *manhwabang* back home, and I was thrust into an American middle school without speaking any English. I was the only foreigner in the school, and there was no ESL program. The loneliness and isolation drove me into deep despair until my mother found a comics class at a local comic-book store where I was finally reunited with comics and made my first American friend.

"I continued to pursue my childhood dream and went to the Rhode Island School of Design to study illustration. But I was left clueless about how to make a living as an artist of any kind after graduation. I came home to Falls Church, VA, to live with my mother. After applying for countless art-related jobs with no success, I packed my bag and headed to New York City because I'd heard that's where artists go to make their dreams come true. (I can't say binge-watching *Sex and the City* during that summer after graduation had nothing to do with this decision.)

"After working for minimum wage as a sales clerk at Zara, then making less than minimum wage as an intern at a graphic-design firm, I finally found a full-time job as a textile designer. At first, I was excited that I was finally making a living using my art skills, but drawing flowers and plaids all day became boring after a year, and my mind began to wander. I made mini-comics and took them to dozens of comics conventions happening in and around New York City. I still couldn't find any gigs as a cartoonist, but I made many great cartoonists friends. Then I got hired as a fashion illustrator at Polo Ralph Lauren. The world of high fashion was dazzling to a 20-something-year-old girl like me, and I soon became a happy little cog in a giant machine of a commercial corporation. But the comfort of regular paychecks and a 401K started to fade after three years, and I realized I wouldn't be happy unless I gave myself a chance to fulfill my childhood dream once and for all.

"With the encouragement of my cartoonist friends, I quit my day job and dove into the treacherous, murky ocean of freelance cartooning. I joined a cartoonist studio in Brooklyn and started developing pitches for my graphic novels. After digging deep into myself for stories, I made a comic about my experience of immigrating to America from Korea as a teenager. I shared that experience with millions of Asian Americans, but there were no books about it, and I found this unacceptable. After a year of working on the pitch, I found an agent and started pitching it to all the major publishers. None of them wanted to take a chance on a memoir graphic novel by a newbie author like me; I was devastated.



"To ease my mind, I looked to my hobby, which was cooking. I started posting weekly Korean recipe comics online for fun and it quickly became a hit. Then one day I got an e-mail from a publisher stating that they'd like to offer me a book deal to make a Korean cookbook. I was beyond excited, then I was seized by fear. I've never imagined myself as a cookbook author. The closest I've gotten into the culinary world was working as a hostess at Olive Garden. Who was I to write a cookbook? But I came to realize this was my God-given chance to prove to the

world that I can make a graphic novel. So I accepted the challenge. After 10 months of cooking and drawing and becoming 25 pounds heavier, I finished my first graphic novel cookbook, *Cook Korean!: A Comic Book With Recipes*, which became a *New York Times* bestseller and has been translated into multiple languages.

"My agent pitched my memoir again, and this time I had no trouble getting publishers interested. *Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir* came out in January 2020, was nominated for the Harvey Award and became a Walter Award Honoree. I am currently living in

Washington, DC, and working on my third graphic novel for YA readers, which is based on a Korean folktale of Gumiho, the nine-tailed fox."



**LOOK AT MY BOOKS!: MEMBERS' DONATIONS MOVE A STEP CLOSER TO YOUNG READERS**

On Saturday, January 23, Guild members Caroline Brewer, Kem Sawyer, Karen Leggett and Karen Deans sorted and bagged donated books for distribution to DC children.

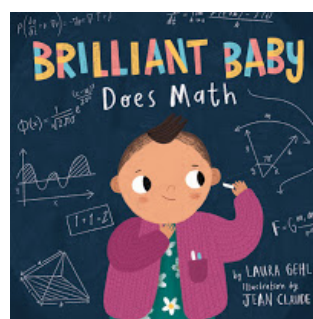




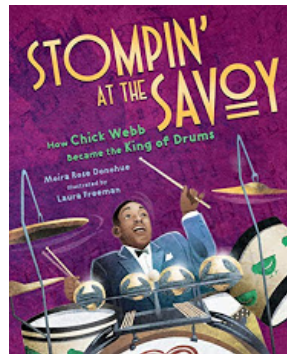
### MEMBER NEWS



Two books by LAURA GEHL will be released on February 2: *Brilliant Baby Plays Music* and *Brilliant Baby Does Math*.







**MOIRA ROSE DONOHUE** is pleased to announce the January 15, 2021, release of her picture book *Stompin' at the Savoy: How Chick Webb Became the King of Drums* by Sleeping Bear Press. The book is illustrated by Laura Freeman.

**LULU DELACRE** feels honored to be part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's new [#MetKids](#) Illustrator series. The series was launched January 14, featuring children's author and illustrator Mo Willems. The illustrator series will publish a new visual adventure once a month. Created in collaboration with a range of award-winning artists, it will encourage young readers to connect with art and experience the galleries in new and creative ways. Writes Lulu, "I'm told it will include doodling activities in the galleries, explanations of illustrating techniques, comics about the museum and stories about how illustrations exist beyond a picture book's pages."

Lulu's work will be featured on February 18 and will be followed by Sharee Miller's on March 18 and Rudy Gutierrez's on April 15. It is Lulu's understanding that more artists will be added throughout the year.

Lulu comments, "How I was selected for this terrific opportunity is a bit of a mystery. The only thing I can say is that Benjamin Korman, producer and editor of digital content within the Met's Digital Department, was personally attracted to the monoprint illustrations in *Luci Soars*. And that is what he requested I focus on."





This year Holiday House has reissued KAREN DEANS's picture book from 2007, *Playing to Win: The Story of Althea Gibson*, with updated back matter and a new title, *Playing to Win: How Althea Gibson Broke Barriers and Changed Tennis Forever*.

In January the updated *Playing to Win* received a starred review from *School Library Journal*, which stated, "Deans skillfully shows the depth of Gibson's journey by including moments of discouragement and loss, and by emphasizing the importance of the support and encouragement from friends. The historical context of racism is handled well, and the clear text is concise. Brown's illustrations sing with dynamic colors. . . A beautiful and thorough addition to every biography section."

#### REMEMBERING BEBE FAAS RICE, 1932-2020



Edgar-nominated author and Children's Book Guild member Bebe Faas Rice died on December 26, 2020, at age 88. Bebe published 18 books for young readers between 1988 and 2002. With titles such as *Music from the Dead* and *The Listeners*, her books often dealt with the mysterious and supernatural.

Elizabeth Faas was born in Philadelphia on February 13, 1932, and spent her childhood and youth in Iowa and California. Her writing talent was evident early, as revealed in her dedication of the 1993 novel *Class Trip* to Anne G. Wilson, principal of Garfield Elementary School in Ottumwa, IA, "who always told me I would be a writer of books someday." Before becoming a writer, Bebe attended a convent high school and the College of the Holy Names (now Holy Names University), in Oakland, CA. She earned a degree in English literature and medieval history and then joined the U.S. Marine Corps.

In 1955 she married a career military officer, Wesley H. Rice, who would rise to the rank of major general, USMC. The peripatetic nature of military life allowed the Rices and their son, John, to live in countries throughout the world. Bebe pursued varied professional interests, such as teaching school, lecturing in continuing education programs, working for small newspapers and, of course, writing her novels.

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### Virtual Programs at Politics and Prose

During the pandemic, Politics and Prose continues to host free events for children and adults--virtually. These can be viewed live, in real time, or afterward, as recordings. You can view P&P's events calendar and register for events at: <https://www.politics-prose.com/events>. (Advance registration is required to receive a link.)

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