# **Q&A and Discussion of Coretta Scott King Award-Winning Books**

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And now, I'm open for questions.

Hi again, Deb, thank you so much. I love seeing all those covers, books I've read. Some of that reminded me to look at them again.

And also I'll just mention I watch the movie, Harriott, not too long ago. It's excellent. Highly, highly recommend. So I don't see any questions in the chatbox. But what I am going to do to try something out here is I'm going to I knew our audience because when we go to the breakouts, I'll need to do that anyway. But then I think what will happen is you still need to admit yourself when you talk about this kind of like eliminates a layer there. So if you would like to ask Deb a question, you can raise your hand and will I'll call out your name and then you can talk. If you are not speaking and you're the microphone next to your name is Green, you can go ahead and mute yourself. That way we don't get the feedback and you hear a little feedback. So does anyone have a question or maybe you have a comment about the presentation or some of the books that you saw?

And then also, if you have any questions about process, about how the whole process is it the same as Newbery, Caldicott, or where is it different or what are some other process questions. If you have any questions about how they're, they're evaluated and what we look for, I'll be happy to answer those as well, because I think there are many similarities, but there are also some differences. So I'm happy to answer any process questions as well.

I see Christi's hands up. I actually prefer that I do have a process question. So I was on an award committee I've been on two and in general, you know, the other award committees choose one winner and, and however many on our books they have. So does the one committee do all of those awards? How does that work? How much? And you have the same amount of time as every other committee. So how crazy are you at the end? Like, like not crazy, but like how exhausted are you?

You're exhausted because in addition to all of those, you also there's kind of an expectation that the committee will also write a study guide that, which is available online for free. Each year, your committee also does a kind of a study guide for the books and a little bit of information about the books and how they can be used and what have you. Yes. And the reason you can do that is not the best of reasons, and it's because there are not that many books that are eligible. If you think about three or four thousand children's, and YA e-books maybe close to five thousand YA books a year, there might be two hundred, maybe not quite two hundred that are eligible because there's an author or illustrator who is African-American. So, the reason that you can do all of those is that you don't have a huge pool to work with. I know it's very hard to imagine that once upon a time, the Newbery and Caldecott were chosen by one committee way back then.

But yeah, it's partially because the pool of books that you have to work with is small. And so you are looking at books all the way from, you know, from preschool or infant books all the way up to high school. And you're still maybe looking at a few hundred books that are eligible.

So that's how you're able to get that done.

I see a question. Did you see that question?

Yeah, there's a couple come through the chat. Felicia says: I love that African-American authors and illustrators are receiving their just due at this period in time. Do you have any information on how we can access multiple copies for high schools?

So I don't know if you know of any tips. Actually, you know about First Book.

I don't know if people are familiar with First Book as a way that you can and they do all the way up through high school. I think many people think of First Book as a charity for books for elementary schools, but they do go up through high school. And that is one way that you can get multiple. That's one of the ways that you can get multiple books for high schools and that you can get books. And they are really working hard to incorporate books like the books that are one, the Walter Awards, which are multicultural books. And so that I would highly recommend investigating First Book to see if that's a good source for you.

And I think, I think I have a list somewhere or two of grant opportunities.

Felicia, you can, you can email me or I'll try to remember to email you after too.

So that's just something to look into, and then Jane wants to know that if there was, there was the biggest difference between the Coretta Scott King Award and being on the Newbery in terms of the process of choosing the awards.

Both awards. Well, first of all, Newbery has a larger, is a bigger committee. And so you have 15 people who are voting and who are weighing in on, on the committee.

And Coretta Scott King has nine. No, I think it might even have eight.

Not remembering that, but it's a smaller number. So that's one. Once you have fewer people, the discussion does change. The dynamic of discussion does change in many ways.

Now, the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, the committee is looking for, in addition to all the literary things, but a Newbery committee person is looking for the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, is definitely looking for books that they really feel reflect the history, culture and all of those aspects of African-American life, both for folks who are living that life and for the larger community. So, as you can imagine, so you're waiting. So you're still looking for high-quality literature. All of those things that you would look for in any literary award have to be there as well. And any artistic award has to be there as well. When then you're adding on the layer of looking for outstanding depiction or discussion about some aspect of African-American culture, life history, all of those things. So, you know, it does kind of it's all of those things from Newbery with an additional layer of additional cultural extra literary layer.

I noticed that when I because Christi and I are running, we are running a mock awards. And it years ago it started off as a mock Newbery. Then we added Caldecott and people want to read more types of books. So now it's going to be just like read all kinds of books and then you can not just nominate it, but also say what award.

And when I was going through the materials for Coretta Scott King, I noticed that and I really loved that about the award like that.

And I love that, actually, each award is really different. And I don't think people always realize that, that the criteria is different and that this really should be such a big part of getting the award or being eligible.

It's that celebration of the experience and culture. You can't just call it in. You know.

Right. The other thing that's interesting about the Coretta Scott King Book Awards, it's in their bylaws to be reflective of Dr. King and Mrs. King is that the committee is multiracial. I mean, it is in their bylaws. So the committee has to have diversity. So that is something that I mean, that's from way back from reflecting Dr. King and Mrs. King, carrying on with his legacy of the beloved community so that you really do have to have a diverse community committee to talk about these books and to make the decisions.

So I think that's really one of the special aspects of the award. I would love to talk to a bunch of questions about it.

Yeah, I just, I just saw that I was thinking about that because you had mentioned with the, the Red Drops, yeah, the red drops, that was kind of rare. So I'm going to ask, is there ever going to be a CSK nonfiction award?

I would hope that there would be enough book.

That we sort of like the Boston Globe hornbook, that's where they have a non-fiction award and a fiction slash poetry award. I think that that would be wonderful to do that.

I think right now the smallness of the pool, so to speak, means that, you know, you don't have a whole lot of room for branching out.

But I would definitely like to see that. And with the non-fiction, with using some of the things that we learned in Sibert about how to evaluate non-fiction books. I think that would be ideal. But yeah, I'm team non-fiction, as you know. So I would love that. I would love nothing better because I would, it would mean that we have a growth in the quality non-fiction that will be available for the committee. That was one of the things that Sibert did for non-fiction, I think for children's non-fiction. Is it really paying attention to it that way?

It would definitely made people sit up and take notice? I think. So I would love that.

Right. And I think going back to something you said, and I know is echoed a lot in the youth literature community, is that we're seeing more variety within that non-fiction realm of the African-American or black experience where it's not always just going to be about slavery.

And not that that's not hugely, hugely important. But like the, the one about the Chicago riots or like I only just learned about black Wall Street, like, two years ago. And I totally see, you know, these different, different parts of history. Even going up to like for now, like 10 years ago is history for young people. And Christi says to she was on Sibert last year. I feel like the pool is definitely bigger these days. I have my Sibert books out still and many would be eligible for CSK. Also team non-fiction. So maybe I have love to see that, too.

I would love to see it.

I mean, there have been some other honorees like Tonya Bolden has been was honored for her wonderful book on Maritcha about post. Maritcha grew up right before the Civil War and then went on to go to move to Rhode Island and then come back to New York to be a school teacher. I mean, there are few that are definitely out there. And of course, many of the picture book winners would be, would be eligible, like the hidden figures, like the book about Memphis. But it would be wonderful if the pool was big enough that you could have both a fiction and a non-fiction author award as well.

Right. And what I think would be great, this would be a good segway maybe to go into our freakouts. Before we do, there was a wonderful comment from Teresa that says: Thank you, Deb, for your great presentation as a K to eight public school librarian. I read these books, but you really brought into place some context that I overlooked in terms of our richness to bring to students. Appreciated that. Some lovely comment. And but also goes back to, to like celebrating these books in these types of stories all year round. And what we're going to do now is going to our breakouts in depth. Did you have any like did you have particular questions you want the groups to think about or just like a free form discussion about the books that they, they've read?

I think, just think about in addition to talking about the books themselves, but think about how you might use them outside of African-American History Month.

How would you, how might you use them in a display or in a program or in a book discussion that could happen at any time in the year or any other ways? Could you use them with a mother-daughter book club or could you use them with a family read? So, just think about the various ways you could use the books, and then we'll come back and share.

Great.

I'm happy to have a discussion with as many people as we can get in this particular screen.

I have a question that came out of what just came up after we had a small group that we were getting going on a really great conversation.

And one of the things that came up was that.

The reviews of books about the African-American experience don't always share all the information that we'd want to know where all the depth and nuance and that part of the problem is that so many reviewers are white and don't necessarily understand or pick up on all of that.

Right.

What, do you have any recommendations for places to go for reviews or, or what to look for or how to solve that problem?

I think, I think some of them, you know, I review for Kirkus and I know that our editors, children's and white editors really are very, very strong in terms of in fact, there's a whole questionnaire we have to fill out about if a book meets that diversity category.

So I think and I think School Library Journal and I think all of the reviewers are much more aware now in terms of making of trying to get people a to kind of diversify the pool of reviewers is one big thing to bring many more voices in. But still, you need to have everybody kind of be aware of what you're looking for and the nuances and things that you just talked about. I think the best thing you can do right now is we're moving in this direction is to try to read more than one review. I know that everybody's time is strapped and how much money people's systems have to subscribe to multiple outlets and platforms is limited. But I think as much as possible to try to read at least two reviews for any book that is kind of gets cultural implications because I think it's true. I know with myself sometimes I recently reviewed a book and it just for some reason the words were failing me to get the right tone so people could understand what I saw in that book. I knew what I thought. I knew how it resonated with me as an African-American reader, but trying to find the right words to make sure I could impart that.

And so that's why I think it needs more than one review to try to get, get at some of those issues.

Awesome, thank you.

Hi, this April, again. I got, I got kicked out, but it looked like you guys were able to talk. I see that Deb Abner has her hand up. Do you wanna join them?

No. I have to. We couldn't get something to work, so I put my hand up. But then we got everybody on and we were sent back into the virtual world.

Ok, I'm glad you're back.

This is so funny because I can see nothing except the control panel, but I can hear everybody perfectly fine.

It's so odd. Thank you for everyone bearing with us. I do think a few people maybe jump ship, but for those of us who are so on the line, I mean, we would love to just kind of keep chatting.

So if you have something you want to say or question, go ahead and raise your hand and I'll just call on your name and you can unmute yourself.

I just saw that Sarah has a comment about Crown.

Did you want to. I don't know if I can unmute you, Sarah, but you might be able to unmute yourself.

Hi. I don't have anything brilliant to add. I just love, love, love Crown when I read it for the first time. And it's so memorable when you read a book and you literally gasp out loud when you turn a page and you see a spread and like the portraits, the art, the story, everything, it just blew me away. And it was like I felt very invested in that book when it started winning so many awards. It's so.

You know, and it's so interesting because Crown was one of those books. We talk a lot about books for having a universal theme, but the most universal theme book, the most books have the universal connection, I think, with readers of books that really are culturally specific, where you may not have had that experience.

But the joy and the other kinds of emotional connections are the things that really work. And I think that's what happened with Crown. And I think it surprised a lot of people that, that, that book kind of resonated because it was very culturally specific. And it's interesting because that book came out just as there were stories about African-American barbershops, having books, buckets of books for kids to read while they were waiting, and the kind of that confluence of, of both this was happening out in the community. And this book that reflected that whole experience was there as well. So, yeah, I think that's a wonderful book. And I was I felt the same way about it. And it also, it came from two people. I think Derrick Lawrence had been around for a couple of books, but it came from folks who had not been a big presence on the scene. So I felt the same way about it. I see I have a question about discussion problems for younger elementary students. And I think one of the things that you can actually find if you go to the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Web page is you can get those discussion guides. They have all of them, past ones, as well as the most recent one. And they, they include questions and suggestions for how to get discussions going. So, oh, thank you for doing that. But before putting that up there, because it's really, it's really a powerful tool. And, you know, I always think about the committee because their work is not done until they do that, especially.

So, you know, in addition to the exhaustion of having made your choices, now you've got to think about questions and how you can talk about them.

So and I know a lot of people know about that. Sorry to cut you off, but yeah.

I think you're right.

But it's so awesome.

And Deb Abdnor put in a link as well, let's see, Susan says: I just went through two months of reviews and it seems as though there were a ton of reviews about diversity and being kind to others.

So timely. We began talking when we got cut off of our breakout group. Sorry about that. And I wanted to share how much I have been enjoying listening to Embrace Race Webinars and their back recordings. They have, they also have info about books to share with patrons. So I can look up that link. And we also just updated our antiracism for Youth and School Librarians Guide. So we had this great collaboration of school and public librarians putting together the resources and really all our job. And I think Christie put in the embrace race link. But, you know, our job really was just to kind of collect everything and organize it as good librarians do. So I'll find that and put that in there to, you know, it's, it's, it's great that there are so many resources, but sometimes it can seem overwhelming. And to know which ones are sort of the best ones can be hard. So we think these at least are vetted by your colleagues.

I agree that especially right now when we're having that after I guess it was that first couple of weeks after the George Floyd incident and the protests, I felt like there was a list coming out from somewhere every day. And I do think that it was so much discussion and I think people were feeling a little bit overwhelmed and not knowing which direction to go in. It was and it was emotional. So I think that it's OK to step back a little bit and just concentrate on one or two that you want to really get to know well and not try to do everything. And if people tell you about other resources, if you can use that at the time, great. But if not, I think the important thing is not to feel so overwhelmed that people just kind of start blocking out the blocking it out. And this whole idea of what we just want to go back to normal, whatever that means. And but I think that it's it can be overwhelming. And we're, we're, we're having these conversations and it feels like everything is on blast and everything is at the highest volume. But I think the most important thing to think about, I think, is, you know, this is the way our, our country looks. It's got a variety of folks in it. And the best thing we can do for all children, regardless of what background they come from, is to give them as much variety and to be there to counsel in terms of what books they might like to, to, to read and what will resonate with them. So I think that's the most we can do.

We need to, to kind of get a kind of lower the volume and lower the temperature a little bit, I think, in terms of when we're trying to get enough that we can have enough psychic energy to keep doing the work. But it's a long haul. If we burn, if we all burn out over this topic, we will not be helping the kids that we serve. So I'm, I'm definitely on the to from the vantage point of let's do what we can and do it in a manageable way and not feel overwhelmed by everything that's coming at us.

Yeah, it's a good, good way of thinking about it.

I think someone also mentioned in the chat, you know, they were, they were happy to see that there was some crossover in terms of the books that were honored. And that has happened from time to time. I think the.

The book by Javaka Steptoe, Radiant Child, was both the Caldecott winner and the Coretta Scott King Award winner, but if you think about all of the awards and all of the books that get published and all of the things that get highlighted, that's kind of a rarity. And we still need to have books that kind of point people in the direction of books that have been selected and grouped for a particular purpose. Every time, every time it has happened, we start getting some push back. Well, we don't need these special awards. We don't need Belpre because, you know, a Latinx book won the National Book Award. We don't need it. Coatex one. But that doesn't happen all that often. So I think it's so important that we it's great when it when there's cross, crossover and you can see the different things that the committees found and each in the books. But I think it's so important that we continue to have this And it's another way of not being overwhelmed because you definitely know where you can look for the kinds of things that you want to put in the hands of kids.

I just I'm sorry, I was trying to figure that out.

I, I actually have a picture that I posted on Instagram of me and Congressman Lewis, who was a personal hero of mine. And when March came out and March the procession, the third book in the trilogy, swept every award that year.

I remember sitting. We were in Atlanta, right. April, I think we were in Atlanta. And he won every award, every award, Sibert, Printz, CSK. It was everything.

And I thought how in the world because he was in the 70s, how in the world is he going to go to all these things? He's probably going to have to send comments. He went to every one of them. He went to everybody's celebration for the awards that he won, and he made every one of them special. So, yes, it will be interesting to see who does right now. He's done his, his own story. He did it with the March trilogy and kind of let the children's book world own him for a few minutes and a whole year. And so I feel totally blessed by that. And so, yeah, I think it's going to be interesting to see. I know that there is, there is actually an adult biography of him coming up next month. But Jon Meacham that he had is kind of was authorized.

But it'll be interesting to see who does the long, big picture, long story of him. We watched a group of high school students across the Edmund Pettus Bridge a few years back.

And these kids have been so rambunctious, I was ready to throw them all off the bus into the Alabama River. But when we marched across that bridge, they got silent and there's a spirit in that place. So it's a powerful, powerful moment when you think about him and his, you know, he managed to have that impact.

And then, of course, the book about, I think, to borrow the same did I'm preaching to the kids, to the chickens. That's for very young children. Yeah. That illustrations by E.B. Lewis is a beautiful book. So but we need, we need lots of books about, about him. So kids get to know someone who manage. Someone said today from 18 to 80 to devote your life to a cause.

So it's, you know, and kids books can, I feel like we're so lucky to be working with books for young people. And whenever I hear somebody exclaiming some new piece of history or I didn't know about or whatever, and I said, I read that in the kids.

Me too. So many times.

And I read that about March, it will be read. And it was so brilliant, as I tell people all the time that many people experienced the civil rights movement in the time it was happening in a very visual way. It was on the nightly news and reexperience. Then if you didn't, if you were too young to know to live through that period experiences through documentaries like Eyes on the Prize or some of the things that Henry Louis Gates has done. So it's a very, it was a very visual part of history. And so a graphic novel was the perfect way to tell that story. So I just, I feel the same way. I think it will be read again and again and again.

And it came at a time when we were open to awarding recognition to graphic novels in a way that maybe 10, 15 years ago we wouldn't have been, so.

Yeah. Absolutely. I had.

The CSK jury is for two years, and not one, which I think is really having done both the ones that are one year and the ones that are and CSK, it's so helpful because you really do get to the first year that you're on the committee, you feel like you're learning and when you're on Newberry, Sibert or whatever, you feel like you have to learn the process and learn the books.

And it's a, it's a lot more kind of pressure and that weighs in that way.

So I think, you know, I think it really is helpful that you do get to spend the whole two years when you feel like that's second year. Oh, I've got this. I know how to do this, but I wonder if you have always been a large influx of biographies and an individual, especially picture book biographies.

And I think it may be time to think about a non-fiction award, especially when so many school standards, state standards are pushing towards reading more non-fiction and, I think that to be able to identify a group of books within the award that would help meet those standards, I think that would be powerful and would be helpful for teachers and librarians. So I think it definitely is something, an idea whose time has come out. You know, I go to Xscape meetings. I certainly would bring it up and say, you know, we can think about that. Just like awards boards are not stuck in time. They do change. They evolve. People look for different things.

So I think it would be a great. Oh, yes. Of the Vashti Harrison books are really, really good. And it's interesting that I think because for so long we had more non-fiction than we had fiction.

We certainly had more non-fiction than, you know, than kind of speculative. We had very little fantasy, very little mystery. And now we're starting to see more broad, to see a broader array in the fiction. But we don't want to lose that quality non-fiction.

So it might be a good time to kind of have a fiction award as part of it as well.

Hmm, Deb, I, I, I can't even believe it's almost eleven thirty, I could listen to you all day, but I'm going to say but I did notice I got a little distracted by our platform, but I when I came back to it, I noticed there were a couple hands up.

So I just want to make sure now I only see one, but I just wanna make sure I see Susan's hand was up. So I didn't know if you had something you wanted to share, Susan. Or a question.

Susan Smith.

Oh, and one was Natalie, so thanks for putting that in the chat.

No, I put it in the chat. Susan Smith.

Oh, you did too. OK.

I put my thanks.

Sorry about that. Just let me out. Yeah. Kicked me out twice. It's really discouraging. But, but I do want to be conscious of everyone's time.

But like I said, I could, I could just kind of listen and talk about books all day.

I think like many others here and we talked about this in our practice with Deb just missing, having people around to talk about books with like this is so wonderful.

So I didn't really respond to Natalie's comment about Mama Africa. And I think that excellent point about, you know, not just thinking about the social aspects, but the actual music and then having a chance for students to actually hear that music. I think one of the things that technology allows us to do is to retrieve things that we don't necessarily have at our fingertips so that we can introduce it to our students. And they get a much richer experience because not only do you learn about the person, but you hear the actual music that they used to, to do what they did.

So I think that's an excellent point. And another strong point for across the curriculum. You know, the, the one of the hardest things is when people say, oh, finding books for across the STEM spectrum or finding books that go across different parts of the curriculum. And that's what some of these books will allow you to do. And I think that that's an excellent way to do that. And also finding because kids are interested in so many different things. So to, to have a variety of books that allow kids to, to put their interests into there or to choose according to what they're interested in. I think is really ideal.

Mm hmm. Thank you so much. And as being SSW are a treasure. Thank you so much. I want to let everyone know that we did do the recording, so hopefully, that came out fine. I will share that with everyone once it's processed. Why should we save the chat log? So, you know, some of the links we put in there and the awesome comments you all made, that will be available as well and Deb's hand out. So we'll kind of like bundle that together and send that out to everyone. And I think, I think that will be it.

I just hope everyone has some wonderful rest of the day. Oh, yes. Go ahead, Deb.

Well, I just have one more combining. Just by in for a minute.

Yes.

CSK a book donation grant every spring, which is given out to three different locations for programs that might be with a prison or with a homeless shelter or something. But every year that happens and you get copies of all the books that were submitted to ALA for the CSK consideration. So I put that in the chat. But watch, watch for the announcements in the spring.

Thank you.

That's a really good point to mind and bond and really appreciate that, because. you know, sometimes and not so much lately, but they have had difficulties getting enough applicants. So I think they've been doing a little bit more outreach with the committee, has been doing a little bit more outreach. And but it's important to get the word out because people don't if you're not affiliated with L.A., you might not know. So we want to make sure people know that that's a possibility for them.

I'll be sure to send the notice to this Maziak Wistserk, because when I'm on the committee. So great.

Yes. Thank you. Any, any time. We love people to share that. All right, well, thanks again. Thank you, Dad. Thanks, everyone, for attending, participating, being patient with the manufacturer and yeah. Any anything else. You want to leave us with that before we sound off?

And also, April has my email, so I usually let me see if I can put it in the chat. But April has my email. And so if people have questions or they want to just, you know, be in touch, please feel fre. One of the nice things about being retired is that I can actually be responsive. And so there's my email. I'd love to hear from folks I love to kind of mentor and answer questions and, you know, spread the word. The CSK is really important to me.

Thank you. Thank you so much. And yeah, once again, I just hope everyone has a great rest of the day. And I hope you read some wonderful books. Lots of talk about them soon. Thanks, everyone.