Upcoming Event

Why I Write or Illustrate Books for Children
-a panel discussion -

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2020
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

featuring

Susan Patron
Author of The Higher Power of Lucky, Lucky Breaks, Lucky for Good

Jose Ramirez
Local Artist and Teacher, Illustrator of Quinito, Day & Night, When Angels Sing: The story of Rock Legend Carlos Santana

Susan Goldman Rubin
Author of The Quilts of Gee’s Bend, Sing & Shout: The Mighty Voice of Paul Robeson

-FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC-
LAFL Central Library, Meeting Room A
Our 40th Annual FOCAL Award Luncheon took place downtown on Saturday, Dec. 14, 2019. This year’s winner was “Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix.” FOCAL members, librarians, teachers, students, parents, and other guests gathered to honor the three recipients: authors Jacqueline Briggs Martin and June Jo Lee, and illustrator Man One.

The Street Food Remix is a delightful and lively picture book that tells the story of how Roy Choi became Chef Roy Choi. Roy immigrated to America from Korea with his family when he was only two years old, and while growing up he struggled to find his identity. After high school, he attended a cooking school to learn “teamwork, knife work, and saucework,” and worked in fancy restaurants. As a greatly successful chef, he took on too much and burned out. Unemployed, he remembered his Korean roots, to cook with sohn-maash (with care and love). He put Korean barbecue in tacos, a “remix”, and a friend suggested they open a food truck. People of many and varied ethnicities loved the sweet, tangy, savory food, and the business was a success! He has since opened several popular restaurants in LA. Roy Choi’s story is one of persistence, despite setbacks, to achieve a goal and find his identity.

For the Award luncheon venue, we chose to return to the Border Grill. Caroline Gill opened the event and made introductions, and Renny Day conducted the elections, while we ate delicious tamale appetizers and Mexican food entrees of our choosing.
Authors Jacqueline Briggs Martin and June Jo Lee discussed their personal experiences of adapting to a new culture in America, and how this helped them in writing the book. They also mentioned how surprisingly easy it was to work collaboratively long distance. Man One showed slides of his artwork and explained that there were many details hidden in the illustrations that were noticed more readily by children than adults.

The four puppets by Jesse Kingsley and Moira Lael Macdonald were wonderful, and one will be on display as part of the LAPL Central Children’s Department collection.

The essay contest winners, Antonio D. Chow (grade 4), Elizabeth M. C. Bijleveld (grade 5), and Ariana M. Perez (grade 8) read their wonderful essays describing how they each identified with the book and what it would mean to meet the authors and illustrator. Please read the essays by these outstanding students printed below, and you will understand why they deserved to win the contest!

Also I must mention the centerpieces by Ray Moszkowicz and his Nobel Middle School Art Students - miniature Kogi food trucks with extremely tiny details - amazing!

Thank you to the 2019 Award Committee, Essay Judges, and FOCAL Board for all the work behind the scenes and in putting this luncheon together. In addition to supporting our Children’s Department, this annual event promotes accomplished writers and illustrators of children’s books while encouraging young students, who may themselves one day write children’s books. That is what Friends Of Children And Literature is about.
**Antonio D Chow, Grade 4**

I think the book Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix is an unbelievable and stunning book because the descriptions and illustrations make me want to try foods I have never eaten before. I like how poetry is used to describe delicious food. For example, the author vividly described preparing tacos by writing, “Sizzle. Grill short ribs. Slap the taco down. Toss on slaw, squirt Roy’s Awesome Sauce.” I also enjoyed reading the colorful definitions of foods. After reading the definition of “Banchan,” I wanted to try these dishes. In addition to the writing, the illustrations are really artistic and show parts of life that I have never seen before, such as scenes of people eating street food. I learned many new things from reading this book.

One scene that really stuck with me was when Roy Choi said eating a nice meal with his family was his happiest time. Similarly, I am also happiest when I spend time eating meals with my family. Like Roy’s family, my family eats dumplings, talks about our lives, and laughs. Spending time with my family is also my “best good time!”

It would mean a lot to meet the author June Jo Lee because I would like to ask her questions about how she fit in with people who were different than her. I am one of only a few Asian kids at my school. Other kids used to tell me I ate “strange foods” for lunch. Once, my mom packed me a steamed bun with meat and vegetables. Some of my classmates called it a “Chinese Taco.” But after describing this food, we all laughed, and that was what brought us together. I want to know if the author had similar experiences and if she has any good tips for me.

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**Ariana M. Perez, Grade 8**

Chef Roy Choi and The Street Food Remix is about showing diversity and culture coming together in the streets of Los Angeles. Through a mix of food made with love and a desire to share it with all types of people from different races and cultures. The story is about the importance of family and tradition to be honored, regardless of where you live, to be who you are and balance that with the environment that is all around you.

At first the character Roy Choi really doesn't fit in because he is different. This really stuck with me, because I often feel like this because I'm a mix of cultures. Roy Choi remix of cultures is inspirational when he first opens his Kogi Truck. He must overcome the obstacle that people didn’t think a Korean could make tacos because he’s not Hispanic. His cooking blends the cultures and environment together. People then see him for his skills and not his appearance. I especially enjoyed the part of the book that the family sits around the table and makes dumplings, and I thought about my own family preparing tamales with grandma.

I would compliment the authors of the book and tell them that I enjoyed reading their book because it is truly skillful that someone was able to write a book on an ordinary issue of a food truck and tell the story behind the scene. At first appearance the book appears to be so simple and yet it explains such complex issues. I enjoyed learning about the Korean language that was weaved into the story of the Korean culture. The illustration is drawn in a cool but whimsical point of view that complements the simplicity of the book, while discussing the complexity of multicultural inclusion for all.
All people have talents. Roy Choi has many. Cooking great food, being open to new ideas, and not letting rude comments drag him down, to name a few. But one important talent he has isn’t just putting love and care into his food; it’s letting people know he has done that. It’s those tastes lingering on your tongue, the taste of love and care, the taste of memories and home, the taste of you choosing who you are, and the taste of pure unforgettable talent. Roy’s sauce combines every flavor, like bitter, sweet, and tangy. These remind us of life. The bitter, burning eyes of hate. The sweetness of family, sisters and brothers together. The tangy notes, struck ever so carefully on a Spinet Piano.

In the third page of A Street Food Remix, I noticed a man laughing mockingly at Roy in his food truck, saying, “Korean guys can’t do tacos.” This is the laugh adults make when they underestimate a child like me. This laugh means, “you can’t do that.” On the contrary, it’s hilarious to watch you try and fail. Little do they know, it only makes us try harder.

Meeting the author would be important to me. Physically seeing the person who all these meaningful words poured out of would inspire me greatly. However, I don’t think it would be terribly different from meeting a stranger. You don’t know their story, but it is ever so interesting to learn it.

FOCAL LAUDS AUTHOR

LIBRARIANS

Shushers, guardians
in boxy sweaters, sensible shoes,

their sharp eyes squint
through pinched spectacles,

follow clues to track down more
than the questioner wanted;

acquainted with dust, transparent
like air, they classify thought.

Thus begins the first poem in the book, NOIR LIBRARIAN, by FOCUSAL author, Marilyn N. Robertson. More than shelvers of books, librarians are sources of comfort, sharers of secrets, and keepers of dreams for the patrons, young and old, who seek knowledge and guidance as they make their way through life.

The poems are not just about librarians, though. They are about all the experiences that crowd people’s lives...from Dick Cheney’s regrets to a broken umbrella.

Marilyn is a retired school librarian, and a hard-working member of the FOCAL Board. We persuaded her to let us sell copies of her provocative collection at the upcoming author’s event on February 29th.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please send renewals to: Renny Day/
15221 Via de las Olas/Pacific Palisades, CA 90272

Name ____________________________________________
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Membership is for the calendar year, January through December.
Dues are tax deductible.

☐ New    ☐ Renewal
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Dewi Ochoa, FOCAL Points editor

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