

Irma Lerma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School  
Dallas, TX  
Diana O'Connor, MLS – Rangel Teacher Librarian

## **Respect Starts Here Summer Reading List 2015 (Year 1)**

**“as I reflect on Dr. King’s legacy, I am reminded of this quote by him: ‘People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they have not communicated with each other.’ ” **Black Lives Matter: Building Empathy Through Reading (Part I)****

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### **Summer Reading 2015: Building Empathy**

Each year our school is fortunate to have support for a school-wide summer reading program from the fund-raising supported by the Young Women's Preparatory Network. The books are common to a grade-level, supplied to each student at the beginning of the summer and are meant to spark discussions into the following school year, across the Rangel academic, social, extra-curricular, parent and civic communities.

This year's theme is the idea of building empathy by stepping into a character or protagonist's shoes and trying to see her world through a different set of eyes – one of the great strengths of reading deeply and broadly throughout a lifetime. Our narrators are female and male, representing various ages, races and ethnicities, and, in one novel, sexual orientations. The selection of novels was very deliberate as we move into an exciting new program/curriculum for 2015-16 called “Respect Starts Here: Listen, Learn and Act”. We will kick-off the school year with several events and classroom lessons building on the issues raised in the novels, current events across our nation and globe and the persistent questions about how we acknowledge each other's stories in the context of our differences and our similarities with respect and true listening and understanding. This will be a time of great learning for all students, teachers, parents and Rangel staff – a challenge and an opportunity! More to come...

- **6<sup>th</sup> -:** *The Other Half of My Heart*, Sundee Frazier (2011)

Excerpted from **Goodreads**

The close relationship of a pair of biracial twins is tested when their grandmother enters them in a pageant for African American girls in this new story from Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award winner Sundee T. Frazier.

When Minerva and Keira King were born, they made headlines: Keira is black like Mama, but Minni is white like Daddy. Together the family might look like part of a chessboard row, but they are first and foremost the close-knit Kings. Then Grandmother Johnson calls, to invite the twins down South to compete for the title of Miss Black Pearl

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Preteen of America.

Minni dreads the spotlight, but Keira assures her that together they'll get through their stay with Grandmother Johnson. But when grandmother's bias against Keira reveals itself, Keira pulls away from her twin. Minni has always believed that no matter how different she and Keira are, they share a deep bond of the heart. Now she'll find out the truth.

- **7<sup>th</sup> – *Wonder* R.J. Palacio (2012)**

**Excerpt from *The Guardian*, February 2, 2014**

When I finally finished *Wonder* it was hard to stop thinking (not that I wanted to) about how it inspired and refreshed me. The positive feedback covering the inside pages and back cover of my copy could only begin to describe the great emotional journey that is *Wonder*. It is a book that I can guarantee will leave any reader feeling better.

*"My name is August. I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse."*

August is ten years old and he does the normal things that other ten year olds do. He likes ice cream and riding his bike. He plays ball and has an Xbox but despite 27 operations, he will never look normal.

Things are tough for August and his family too. His protective big sister, Via feels angry when people stare and his parents love him yet cannot help but argue about whether August should go to school.

What were the chances that Auggie's face turned out the way that it did? The face of a boy who was unlucky enough to get a double dose of a mutant gene that makes him and his family not so ordinary after all.

- **8<sup>th</sup> grade: *The Queen of Water*, Laura Resau (2012)**

**Excerpted from the author's website: <http://www.lauraresau.com/the-queen-of-water.html>**

Born in an Andean village in Ecuador, Virginia lives with her family in a small, earthen-walled dwelling. In her village of indígenas, it's not uncommon to work in the fields all day, even as a child, or to be called a longa tonta -stupid Indian -by the

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ruling class of mestizos, or Spanish descendants. On the day Virginia is taken from her village to be an unpaid servant to a mestizo couple, she has no idea what the next decade will hold for her.

Virginia, who has always dreamt of leaving her village, soon embraces the privileges of mestizo life. But as much as she wants to be part of her new family, she instead receives a tangled mixture of love and disdain. Beaten and taunted by her boss, she has to fight to hold onto her spirit and humor. Told that the sole purpose of indigenous girls is to serve, she teaches herself to read and write... and performs science experiments in secret.

But when her most cherished ally betrays her, can she gather the courage and wits to escape? And once free, will Virginia—now a teenager caught between cultures—find a place where she belongs?

In this poignant novel based on a true story, acclaimed author Laura Resau has collaborated with María Virginia Farinango to recount an indigenous girl's unforgettable journey to self-discovery that will speak to anyone who has ever struggled to find his or her place in the world. Virginia's story will make you laugh and cry, and ultimately, fill you with hope.

### **Excerpt from *Queen of Water***

*Before dawn, I wake up to the sound of creatures scurrying inside the wall near my head. Mice and rats and dogs have burrowed these tunnels through the dried clay, searching for food scraps. I'm always searching for food scraps, too. Right now my belly's already rumbling, and it's hours till breakfast.*

*The house is dark as a cave except for bits of blue light coming through the holes in the earthen walls. My gaze fixes on a new trail of golden honey oozing from a crack, just within arm's reach. Bees live in there, black bees that sting terribly, but make the best honey in the world. I poke my hand in the wall and scoop out the sticky sweetness and lick it from my finger. It's gritty, but good.*

*Our guinea pigs are hungry now, too, squeaking and dancing around in their corner, waiting for alfalfa. I can see every corner of our house from my sleeping place on the floor. Mamita and Papito are snoring under their wool blanket on a bed frame made of scrap wood. My brother and sister are curled up next to me, Hermelinda on the end and Manuelito wedged in the middle, and the fleas and bedbugs and lice are crawling wherever they please. My spot against the wall is cozy, the perfect place for licking honey in secret.*

*Soon Mamita will wake up, standing and stretching in her long white blouse and thick, bare legs. Then, yawning, she'll wrap her long, dark anaco around her waist, her golden beads around her neck, and her red beads around her wrists. Then she'll open the door, and a rectangle of misty morning light will shine into our house's musty darkness. Then she'll light the cooking fire and we'll all slurp steamy potato soup around the fire pit.*

*If she catches me with all this honey dripping from my fingers, her face will twist into a frown. When people tell her, "Your little Virginia is vivísima!" Mamita snorts, "Hmphh, she's clever for stealing food, that's about all."*

*It's true, I do use my wits to fill my belly with fresh cheese or warm rolls. Or to get something I really want, like a pet goat or a pair of shoes. But there's more. I have dreams. Dreams bigger than the mountaintops that poke at the clouds. In the pasture, I*

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*always climb up my favorite tree and shout to the sheep, "I'm traveling far from here!" and my tree turns into a truck and I ride off to a place where I can eat rice and meat and watermelon every day.*

*In the half-light of dawn, I plunge my hand deeper into the darkness inside the wall, searching for honey, dreaming, as always, of golden treasures.*

- **9<sup>th</sup> *The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano* by Sonia Manzano (2014)**

Excerpt from Scholastic.com”

**A Pure Belpré Author Honor Book**

There are two secrets Evelyn Serrano is keeping from her family—her true feelings about growing up in their Spanish Harlem neighborhood, and her attitude about Abuela, her sassy grandmother who's come from Puerto Rico to live with them. Then, like an urgent ticking clock, events erupt that change everything.

The Young Lords, a Puerto Rican activist group, sets the street's garbage on fire, igniting a powerful protest. When Abuela steps in to take charge, Evelyn is thrust into the action. Tempers flare, loyalties are tested. Through it all, Evelyn learns important truths about her Latino heritage and the history makers who shaped a cultural identity.

Award-winning actress and writer Sonia Manzano has crafted a gripping work of fiction reflecting her own experiences. Infused with actual news accounts from 1969, this stirring story reflects a fiery, unforgettable time in America, when young Latinos took control of their destinies.

- **10<sup>th</sup>, *How it Went Down*, Kekla Magoon (2014)**

**A Coretta Scott King prize winner**

Excerpted from keklamagoon.com

In Kekla Magoon's *How It Went Down*, 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. By the day, new twists and turns further obscure the truth.

Tariq's friends, family, and community struggle to make sense of the tragedy, and of 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.

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- **11<sup>th</sup> *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky*, Heidi Durrow (2011)**  
[Bellwether Prize for Literature of Social Change](#)

**Excerpted from the author's website @ [Heididurrow.com](#):**

This debut novel tells the story of Rachel, the daughter of a Danish mother and a black G.I. who becomes the sole survivor of a family tragedy.

With her strict African American grandmother as her new guardian, Rachel moves to a mostly black community, where her light brown skin, blue eyes, and beauty bring mixed attention her way. Growing up in the 1980s, she learns to swallow her overwhelming grief and confronts her identity as a biracial young woman in a world that wants to see her as either black or white.

Meanwhile, a mystery unfolds, revealing the terrible truth about Rachel's last morning on a Chicago rooftop. Interwoven are the voices of Jamie, a neighborhood boy who witnessed the events, and Laronne, a friend of Rachel's mother. Inspired by a true story of a mother's twisted love, *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* reveals an unfathomable past and explores issues of identity at a time when many people are asking "Must race confine us and define us?"

In the tradition of Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Sandra Cisneros' *House on Mango Street*, here is a portrait of a young girl—and society's ideas of race, class, and beauty.

- **12<sup>th</sup> *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition* by Katie Rain Hill (non-fiction) (2014)**

Excerpted from [thebookwars.wordpress.com](#):

Katie never felt comfortable in her own skin. She realized very young that a serious mistake had been made; she was a girl who had been born in the body of a boy. Suffocating under her peers' bullying and the mounting pressure to be "normal," Katie tried to take her life at the age of eight years old. After several other failed attempts, she finally understood that "Katie"—the girl trapped within her—was determined to live.

In this first-person account, Katie reflects on her pain-filled childhood and the events leading up to the life-changing decision to undergo gender reassignment as a teenager. She reveals the unique challenges she faced while unlearning how to be a boy and shares

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what it was like to navigate the dating world and experience heartbreak for the first time in a body that matched her gender identity. – [X]

From website review: “Stylistic choices aside, the thing that I really enjoyed about *Rethinking Normal* is, obviously, the content. First and foremost, *it is her story*; that is to say that, she incorporates every aspect of her life into this books. Yes, her being a trans person and her transitioning process are all central to the story, but she also talks about her romances, her friends, her writing, her aspirations, her love for Pigfarts ... basically, she is uncompromisingly honest about who she is- *all* of her- and I really appreciated that. Not only does this allow her to bring (the more difficult) readers to a place of understanding through empathy and education, but also enables her to address various kinds of readers- readers who identify (or struggle to identify) as trans or queer for instance, or readers who identify (or struggle to identify) as allies, or even readers who are curious and would like to learn and be more informed. There is a certain confidence and strength in her own story that allows Katie to question stereotypical representations of trans narratives in the media while providing people an insight into her own experiences.