RISING UP: 
SOCIALY RELEVANT TEXTS
AND
IDENTITY

Cindi Koudelka
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WHO ARE YOU?

List 10 words that describe your identity.

★ Why did you choose the words you did?

★ How do some of these identities work together or conflict?
COMPLETE YA SUMMIT SOCIAL JUSTICE BOOK LIST
PROBLEMS

- Adolescents are inundated with social media, reality TV, videos, and news stories that are often difficult to differentiate as credible, biased, or outright false.

- Education has focused on a banking system (Freire, 1970/2016).
PROBLEMS

● Mandates require teachers to focus on high-stakes testing and the incorporation of a deficit perspective that fails to honor a student’s “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 1992)

● Inequity and situated power silencing students’ voices and critical thinking.
Instruction: The Battle of Balance

YAL: Experimentation Explosion

- point of view
- new organizational features
- digital technologies
- inclusive/controversial topics

(Koss & Teale, 2009)
SPHERES OF INFLUENCE

Macrosystem
- Attitudes and ideologies of the culture

Exosystem
- Neighbors
- Friends of family

Mesosystem
- School
- Family
- Health services
- Church group
- Neighborhood play area

Microsystem
- Peers
- Mass media
- Legal services
- Social welfare services

The individual
- Sex
- Age
- Health etc.

Time
- (sociohistorical conditions and time since life events)

Chronosystem
Flexibly self-Constructed through individual actions in everyday locations (Bean & Monti, 2003; Gee, 2006)

YAL provides a place for adolescents to explore identities in order to find a place in the world (Neilsen, 2006)

Experiment with their understanding of traditionally normed identities, explode stereotypes, make connections, and form parasocial relationships (Del Nero, 2017; Kokesh & Sternadori, 2015; Neilsen, 2006)
THE BOOKS: SOCIAL IDENTITY (IMMIGRANT/GLOBAL)

- *Refugee* by Alan Gratz
- *First They Killed My Father* by Loung Ung
- *Harbor Me* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Blue Sky White Stars* by Sarvinder Naberhaus
The Books: Social Identity (Civil Rights)
THE BOOKS: SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. For Everyone
   By Jason Reynolds

2. Long Way Down
   By Jason Reynolds

3. Just Mercy
   By Bryan Stevenson
Delete 5 of the words that are less important to you.

★ What are you left with?

★ Why did you choose the words you did?
Educators often take a deficit view and approach

Marginalized students will often use silence or non-verbal communications when faced with texts that position them negatively (Burke & Kao, 2013; Carter, 2007)

Justice-themed texts provide images of their communities and the associated possibilities they imagine for themselves (Tatum, 2006)
“When we segregate literature, we focus only on mirrors. Certainly, seeing yourself in books is necessary and crucial to the development of identity . . . but not allowing those same books to serve as windows into the lives of others will most certainly limit imagination and possibility.”

(Alexander, 2016, p. BR 33)
By 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority.
Diversity in Children’s Books 2015

Percentages of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds. Based on the 2015 publishing statistics compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

cbcc.education.wisc.edu/books/pccstats.asp

- **0.9%** American Indians/First Nations
- **2.4%** Latinx
- **3.3%** Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans
- **7.6%** African/African Americans
- **12.5%** Animals, Trucks, etc.
- **73.3%** White

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* About a quarter of the total children’s books published in 2015 were picture books, and about half of those depict non-human characters, like animals & trucks.
** The remainder depict white characters.
YA novels using previously marginalized voices “highlight historical and current injustices that maintain white privileges.”

(Schieble, 2012, p. 215)
THE BOOKS: RACE RELATIONS AND MULTICULTURALISM

"A witty, sensitive debut." — People

Does My Head Look Big In This?
Randa Abdel-Fattah

"A story that will show the power of poetry and love back into your heart."
— KARLIE HALEN ANDERSON,
author of Speak and Chaos

The Poet X
ELIZABETH ACEVEDO

"Gene Luen Yang has created that rare article: a youthful tale with something new to say about American youth."

Hidden Roots
JOSEPH BRUCHAC

Bowman Books
THE BOOKS: RACE RELATIONS AND MULTICULTURALISM

1. The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas
2. I Am Alfonso Jones
3. All American Boys by Jason Reynolds
4. Dear Martin by Nic Stone
THE BOOKS: RACE RELATIONS AND MULTICULTURALISM
Delete 2 of the remaining words.

★ What are you left with?

★ Why did you choose the words you did?
★ Schneider Award
★ Older work - Same damaging tropes again and again
★ Often limited to certain disabilities or specific genres
★ Most disabled characters published in YA are white, cishet, and often male
THE BOOKS: ABILITIES

Wintergirls
BY LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON

Challenger Deep
BY NEAL SHUSTERMAN

Highly Illogical Behavior
BY JOHN COREY WHALEY

Little & Lion
BY BRANDY COLBERT
THE BOOKS: ABILITIES

1. Ms. Marvel: "No Normal" by Wilson, Alphona
2. All That I Can Fix by Crystal Chan
3. You're Welcome, Universe by Whitney Gardner
THE BOOKS: ABILITIES

1. The Running Dream by Wendelin Van Draanen
2. Ugly by Robert Hoge
3. A Time to Dance by Padma Venkatraman
Delete 2 of the remaining words.

★ What is your final word?

★ Why was this the most important word in defining you?
Gender & Sexuality

- Underrepresentation of LGBTQ youth in literature and in core classroom readings delays the identity development of LGBTQ youth
- Youth supported by agencies and discussions surrounding texts gain stronger identities and are better able to assert agency in and out of schools

(Blackburn, 2004; Blackburn & Clark, 2011; Blackburn et al., 2015; Hazlett, Sweeney, & Reins, 2011; Rhodes 2010)
2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

8% (1.3 million) of high school students described themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.
Gender - Blurring the Lines

- Stonewall Award
- Appeals to all genders
- Reaching younger readers
- Recognized as quality literature
Past depiction-isolated, alone, ashamed

Moved from ‘coming out’ stories in early 2000’s to general life issues today.

Moving from ‘ghetto genre’ to the mainstream
Publishing Gender and Sexuality YAL

- Publication Rate Increased Averages
  - 1970’s - 1 book
  - 1980’s - 4 books
  - 1990’s - 7 books
  - 2000’s - 12 (just between 2000 - 2005)

- Numbers
  - 59 books between 2000 - 2004
  - 230% increase from the 90’s
  - 13 more books than 1965 - 1989
 THE BOOKS: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gracefully
Grayson

The 57 Bus

The Prince and the Dressmaker
THE BOOKS: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

1. Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda
   - Author: Becky Albertalli
   - Award: National Book Award - Longlist

2. George
   - Author: Alex Gino
   - Publisher: Scholastic

3. Beyond Magenta
   - Author: Susan Kuklin
   - Award: Stonewall Honor Book
THE BOOKS: GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Freakboy
By Kristin Elizabeth Clark

Openly Straight
By Bill Konigsberg

Picture Us in the Light
By Kelly Loy Gilbert
Implications for Teachers

Include Diverse, Multimodal Texts to Promote Authentic Identity Formation

Incorporate Student Choice to Assure Relevance to Student Identity

Provide Direct Instruction and Open Ended Classroom Discourse to Develop Critical Literacy
Does your collection include:

★ books with characters of color? LGBTQ? Differently-abled?
★ books with a main character of color? LGBTQ? Differently-abled?
★ books written or illustrated by a person of color? Of different nationalities, religions or sexual preference?
Does your collection include:

★ books with a person of color on the cover? Do the characters on the book covers accurately reflect the characters in the book?
★ a mix of "mirror" books and "window" books for your students
★ books featuring diverse characters that are not primarily about race or prejudice?
Think about the subject matter of your diverse books. Do all your books featuring black characters focus on slavery? Do all your books about Latino characters focus on immigration? Are all your LGBTQ books coming out stories?

Do any of your classic books contain hurtful racial or ethnic stereotypes, or images? If so, how will you address those stereotypes with students? Have you included another book that provides a more accurate depiction of the same culture?
OurStory App from We Need Diverse Books
If you only read the books that everyone else is reading, you can only think what everyone else is thinking.

- HARUKI MURAKAMI -
THANKS!

You can find me at:

@mrskoudelka
koudelka21@gmail.com