Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Reading Beyond Race: Asian Authors to Support During Covid-19

Dulcie Yamanaka · Sunday, June 14th, 2020

As we continue to live safely amid the Coronavirus crisis, there's another infectious disease that is rapidly rising that many have to fight against; Hate Speech. The sad part is, many have used this pandemic to blame certain ethnic groups, erasing their identity and judging them solely based on their ethnicity or by the way they look. Now, an uncomfortable air lurks around Asians as many feel watched or surveillanced.

The pandemic has made it easy for most individuals to forget the accomplishments of people who are of Asian descent. It's important to remember that this virus is not a person or a race. Hate and discrimination is not the solution to this pandemic; there should be no reason to spread negativity when we are all suffering in some way from this.

Therefore, in the hopes to try to lighten the mood; I would like to acknowledge Asian American writers and highlight some of my favorite books written by them. All of these authors have written beautiful pieces of work that landed on the Best Selling status and mentioned in national newspapers, magazines, blogs, and more.

Now is the perfect time to discover new writers and to support them.

Here are some of my favorite books and short poems by Asian authors:

***Little Fires Everywhere,* Celeste Ng**

This multiple award-winning novel written by an already bestselling author tells the story of two families in Shaker Heights, Ohio whose lives become intertwined through their children. The relationships that develop throughout the novel explores many levels of racism, class structure, motherhood- and the hardships of accepting your very own identity to *belong* in a status of power. *Little Fires Everywhere* was a ***#1 New York Times Bestseller*** and was named ***Best Book of the Year*** by *NPR*.

P.S- if you want to skip reading the book, the TV adaptation is now available on Hulu!

***A Tale for the Time Being,* Ruth Ozeki**

If you're looking for a fictional novel based on true events, then you may enjoy *A Tale for the Time Being* written by Ruth Ozeki. This brilliant novel has earned the notable ***LA Times Book Prize*** and was a finalist for both the ***Pulitzer*** and ***Man Booker Awards***. The novel is narrated by two characters- a woman who found a Hello Kitty lunchbox filled with letters and a diary on the shore, and the teenager that wrote the diary and let it go in the ocean. In this diary, readers will realize the difficulty living in Japan under strict rules, society structure, bullying, and the mental & psychological abuse which lead her to her darkest side.

***Pachinko,* Min Jin Lee**

Pachinko written by Min Jin Lee was a ***National Book Award Finalist*** and was named as the ***New York Times Notable Book of 2017***. The novel tells the story of the hardships of living in Japan during the 20th century. The fictional novel follows a poor Korean family through four generations, trying to live a life "every day in the presence of those who refuse to accept your humanity." The novel goes in and out of the different lives of each family member and they soon realize that they can never feel like they belong. They constantly fight for acceptance of their identity while living within a mold of societal expectations.

***The Farm,* Joanne Ramos**

The Farm written by Joanne Ramos is one of my favorite books because the story reflects what is happening very commonly today; surrogacy. The novel follows an immigrant woman from the Philippines who lost her job and decides to become a surrogate for a wealthy client. With spa-like amenities, the facility provides top of the line living to make hosts feel at home. However, she soon realizes that life is not as easy as it seems. For nine months, she is monitored every day and is not allowed to have contact with anyone outside of this facility, making her feel belittled and worlds apart from her life back home.

Throughout the book, there are certain parts that hint that agents target vulnerable women in poor living conditions, "in America, you only have to know how to make money, money buys everything else." This novel was chosen as a "must-read novel" and gained major press-ups from various publications such as *The Oprah Magazine*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *New York Magazine*.

***Beware Beware,* Steph Cha**

Beware, Beware by Steph Cha has quickly become a fan favorite as she takes inspiration from Raymond Chandler's fictional character, Phillip Marlowe to write her characters. In her novel, the protagonist- Juniper Song, shares a few characteristics with Marlowe. She's independent, drinks & smokes, and is a private detective. When she gets hired to watch over a client's boyfriend, she unexpectedly gets involved in a murder mystery that uncovers layers of secrets and scandals.

Not only is the story great, but the protagonist is Korean-American! She certainly does not fit

under the Hollywood stereotype as a quiet, submissive, “China Doll.” Juniper Song is a smart, fearless woman that goes against all the negative stereotypes.

“Moving East,” Esther Tseng

Moving East is a poem written by a Taiwanese-American writer, Esther Tseng. This poem is a great sum of experiences that I’m sure a lot of Asian-Americans go through in life. *Am I Asian enough? Am I White enough? Where do I fit in?* Tseng gracefully confronts these situations when she moves to the West and learns new histories, tastes all sorts of food fusions, and meets humans from all different races. She is finally accepted into the melting pot of cultures and has made Los Angeles her new home.

*

Asian-American writers, poets, scholars, and artists have all worked so hard to teach the world a piece of their history and background. They’ve worked so hard to break the quiet and “invisible” mold that is often put on us. The writers I listed above are just the few that have been read by millions. But there are many stories from everyone waiting to be heard, so let’s not silence their stories with negativity and hate from this pandemic.

This pandemic is a temporary jolt that has made the world feel uncomfortable. But this temporary jolt should not be the reason to make permanent decisions. We are all trying to avoid catching the virus, we shouldn’t try to avoid being attacked for being ourselves. No one should be ashamed of their own race, culture, and history.

That defines and shapes who we are and we cannot let this virus overshadow everything that we’ve worked hard for. It’s a constant battle to have our identity noticed, so let’s remember that naming, blaming, shaming Asian Americans is no way to ease this situation, it only ignites it.

This entry was posted on Sunday, June 14th, 2020 at 8:45 pm and is filed under Fiction
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.