

FEATURING A NEW FOREWORD BY ACCLAIMED
ACTOR AND AUTHOR **LEVAR BURTON**

Parable of the Sower

NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER

OCTAVIA E.
BUTLER



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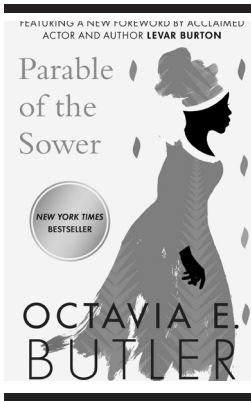
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About the Book

Parable of the Sower

by Octavia Butler (Grand Central)

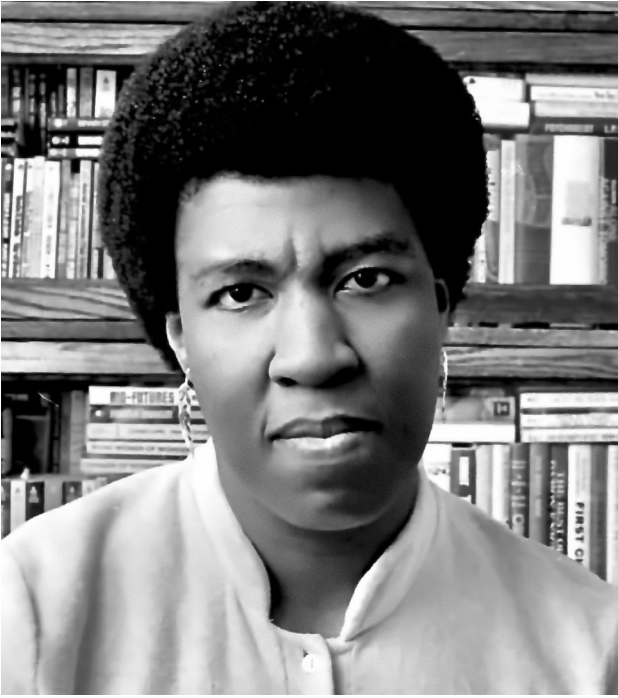


When global climate change and economic crises lead to social chaos in the early 2020s, California becomes full of dangers, from pervasive water shortage to masses of vagabonds who will do anything to live to see another day. Fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina lives inside a gated community with her preacher father, family, and neighbors, sheltered from the surrounding anarchy. In a society where any vulnerability is a risk, she suffers from hyperempathy, a debilitating sensitivity to others' emotions.

Precocious and clear-eyed, Lauren must make her voice heard in order to protect her loved ones from the imminent disasters her small community stubbornly ignores. But what begins as a fight for survival soon leads to something much more: the birth of a new faith . . . and a startling vision of human destiny.



About Octavia Butler



Octavia E. Butler, often referred to as the “grand dame of science fiction,” was the author of several award-winning novels including ***Parable of the Sower*** and ***Parable of the Talents***, winner of the Nebula Award for Best Novel. Recipient of a MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant and numerous literary awards, she has been acclaimed for her lean prose, strong protagonists, and social observations in stories that range from the distant past to the far future. She passed away in Seattle on February 24, 2006.



Engage with *Parable of the Sower*

Discuss

Reading Our Futures: A Black Futurist Book Club

Moderated by Brooke Bosley

Monday, April 22, 6 p.m.

loving room: diaspora books and salon, 1400 20th Ave

Presented in partnership with loving room: diaspora books and salon.

This book group centers Black and Brown lived experience.

Parable of the Sower Discussion

Moderated by Taylor Brooks

Thursday, May 2, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Douglass-Truth Branch, 2300 E. Yesler Way

Parable of the Sower Discussion

Moderated by Eric Grob and Misha Stone

Tuesday, May 7, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Northgate Branch, 10548 Fifth Ave. N.E.

Low Vision Book Group discuss "***Parable of the Sower***"

Tuesday, May 14, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Central Library, Level 4, Room 6

Parable of the Sower Discussion

Moderated by Jane Singer

Wednesday, May 22, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Broadview Branch, 12755 Greenwood Ave. N.

Parable of the Sower Discussion

Moderated by Brooke Bosley

Thursday, June 6, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Rainier Beach Branch, 9125 Rainier Ave. S.



Learn

“eARTHseed: How Octavia Butler’s Work Inspires the Arts”

Featuring Aramis Hamer and Berette Macaulay, facilitated by Brooke Bosley

Sunday, April 21, 3 - 5 p.m. / ARTE NOIR, 2301 E Union St Suite H

Presented in partnership with ARTE NOIR

“Queering the Future: LGBTQ+ Authors on Octavia Butler’s Impact”

Featuring Anastacia-Renée, Nisi Shawl, and Amber Flame

Wednesday, June 5, 7 p.m. / Elliott Bay Book Company, 1521 10th Ave

Presented in partnership with Elliott Bay Book Company and Clarion West

The Genius Conference

Featuring workshops with Donte Felder, Reagan Jackson,
and Jourdan Imani Keith among many others

Friday June 7, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday, June 8, 11 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, 104 17th Ave S.

Presented by the African-American Writers’ Alliance and Langston Seattle

“Optimism in Afrofuturism: A Discussion”

Facilitated by Brooke Bosley

Tuesday, June 11, 7 p.m. / Wa Na Wari, 911 24th Ave

Presented in partnership with Wa Na Wari

“earthSEED: Growing Change”

Sunday, June 23, 2 - 6 p.m. / ARTE NOIR, 2301 E Union St Suite H

Presented in partnership with ARTE NOIR



"Once Upon a Spacetime" by Aramis Hamer

January 17 to May 5

Wednesdays – Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Sundays, 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. / ARTE NOIR, 2301 E Union St Suite H

Presented by ARTE NOIR

Dream Temple [For Octavia] by Mia Imani Harrison and Mayola Tikaka

March 7 to May 23

Wednesdays– Saturdays., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

and until 8 p.m. on First Thursdays

King Street Station, Top Floor, 303 S. Jackson St.

Presented by ARTS at King Street Station

African-American Writers' Alliance Open Mic

Thursday, May 9, 7 p.m. / Third Place Books Seward Park, 5041 Wilson Ave S.

"The Uterine Files" by Jourdan Imani Keith

Saturday, May 25 to Sunday, June 2

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, 104 17th Ave S.

Presented by Langston Seattle

Sistah Scifi's Wine Down Wednesdays

June 26 - July 31, 5 - 6 p.m.

Online Event Series Featuring Black speculative fiction authors

Presented in partnership with Sistah Scifi and Clarion West

Prentis Hemphill

"What it Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World"

Thursday, June 27, 6 p.m.

Central Library, Level 1 - Auditorium

Presented in partnership with Langston Seattle



Celebrate

A Celebration of Octavia E. Butler and her Influence

Saturday, June 22, 7 p.m.

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, 104 17th Ave S.

Presented in partnership with Langston Seattle

For more information on these events and others,
please visit **www.spl.org/seattlereads**



A Conversation with Octavia Butler (Pasadena, CA 1999)

What attracted you to writing?

I've been telling myself stories since I was four years old. I was an only child, shy and often alone. Telling myself stories was my way of entertaining myself. It didn't occur to me to begin to write down my stories until I was ten, when I realized I was forgetting some of my early stories. One day while my mother was combing my hair, I sat writing a story in an old half-used notebook. My mother asked me what I was doing. When I told her I was writing a story, she said, "Oh. Maybe you'll be a writer." This was absolutely my first indication that people could be "writers," but I understood the idea and accepted it at once. People could earn a living writing stories. People had been paid to write the books I enjoyed reading. The Pasadena Public Library had been one of my favorite places for years. I loved not only reading books, but being surrounded by them. For the first time in my life, I considered seriously that I might be able to do something that I enjoyed for a living—and I did enjoy writing stories. They were terrible, but I had fun with them. Until that day, "work" had been, to me, something tiresome that adults made me do. Adult work was something even more tiresome that a boss made the adult do. Work was, by definition, unpleasant. But if writing were my work . . . !

How did you wind up writing science fiction and fantasy?

I never told myself ordinary stories. I was never interested in fantasizing about the world I was stuck in. In fact, I fantasized to get away from that drab, limited world. I was a little "colored" girl in that era of conformity and segregation, the 1950s, and no matter how much I dreamed about becoming a writer, I couldn't help seeing that my real future looked bleak. I was supposed to get married and have babies and, if I were lucky, my husband would support me and I could stay home, wash the floor, and mind the babies. If I were a little less lucky, I would have to get a job, but a job that allowed me to dress nicely and stay clean all day. I would become a secretary, perhaps. My mother, who had only been permitted three years of education, was a maid. House cleaning was all she knew how to do. Her dream for me was that I should become a secretary. My aunt, the nurse, thought I should become a nurse. The other two occupations most open to women during those years were grade school teacher and social worker.



A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

I knew kids who wanted to be social workers, but I wasn't even sure what a social worker did. I knew enough, though, about secretaries, nurses, and teachers to know that for me, those jobs would be like a life sentence in hell. I fantasized about traveling and seeing some of the things I found in the secondhand National Geographic magazines that my mother brought home. I fantasized living impossible, but interesting lives—magical lives in which I could fly like Superman, communicate with animals, control people's minds. I became a magical horse on an island of horses. My horse friends and I made fools of the men who came to catch us. Then when I was twelve, I discovered science fiction. It appealed to me more, even, than fantasy had because it required more thought, more research into things that fascinated me. I was developing an interest in geology and paleontology—the origin of the Earth and the development of life on Earth. The manned space program was getting started, and I was fascinated with that. My favorite class in junior high school was eighth grade science. Other planets, evolutionary biology, botany, microbiology. . . . I wasn't a particularly good student, but I was an avid one. I wanted to know about everything, and as I learned, I wanted to play with the knowledge, explore it, think about what it might mean, or where it might lead, write stories about it. I've never lost that fascination. And science fiction and fantasy are so wide open that I never had to drop them to be able to pick up other things. There doesn't seem to be any aspect of humanity or the universe around us that I can't explore.

Where did the Earthseed religion come from? What inspired the belief system?

Earthseed is a result of several of my efforts and interests coming together. First, I had a great deal of trouble beginning *Parable of the Sower*. I knew that I wanted to tell the story, the fictional autobiography, of Lauren Olamina, who begins a new religion and who, sometime after her death—after people have had time to forget how human she was—might easily be considered a god. I wanted her to be an intelligent, believable person. I didn't want to write satire. I didn't want to write about a hypocrite or a fool. I wanted her to believe deeply in what she taught and I wanted her teachings to be reasonable, intellectually respectable. I wanted them to be something that someone I could admire might truly believe and teach. She didn't have to be always right, but she had to be reasonable.



A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

I put Earthseed together by asking myself questions and coming up with answers. For instance, I asked what was the most powerful force I could think of? What one thing could we not stop no matter how hard we tried? The answer I came up with after some thought was “change.” We can do a lot of things to influence the ongoing processes of change. We can focus them, alter their speed or impact, in general we can shape change, but we can’t stop it no matter how hard we try. Throughout the universe, the ongoing reality is change. That’s where I began. I was a bit disconcerted when I read about other religions and was reminded that in Buddhism, change was also very important, although in a different way. To put it simply, in Buddhism, since everything is ephemeral, we can avoid suffering only by avoiding attachment because all things to which we might become attached are bound to pass away. But Lauren Olamina says that since change is the one inescapable truth, change is the basic clay of our lives. In order to live constructive lives, we must learn to shape change when we can and yield to it when we must. Either way, we must learn and teach, adapt and grow. Once I established Change as Olamina’s god, I had to be true to the idea. That meant I had to work out what such a belief would mean in the various aspects of life. I looked to science, to other philosophies and religions, and to my own observations of how people behave, how the world works. Writing Olamina’s beliefs in verse somehow helped me get going with the novel. I hadn’t tried to write verse since I was forced to in school. I didn’t do it very well, either. But trying to do it was a good challenge. I had to focus on learning a little about this different kind of writing, and I had to figure out how to use it to do the job I wanted to do. My physical model for my character’s religious book was the ***Tao de Ching***. It’s a slender book of a few seemingly simple verses. I didn’t want to copy any of the Taoist verses, but I immediately liked the form.

You’ve called *Parable of the Sower* a cautionary tale because the future presented in *Sower* is alarming, but possible. Do you have other ideas about the future that didn’t make it into the book?

The idea in ***Parable of the Sower*** and ***Parable of the Talents*** is to consider a possible future unaffected by parapsychological abilities such as telepathy or telekinesis, unaffected by alien intervention, unaffected by magic.

A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

It is to look at where we are now, what we are doing now, and to consider where some of our current behaviors and unattended problems might take us. I considered drugs and the effects of drugs on the children of drug addicts. I looked at the growing rich/poor gap, at throwaway labor, at our willingness to build and fill prisons, our reluctance to build and repair schools and libraries, and at our assault on the environment. In particular, I looked at global warming and the ways in which it's likely to change things for us. There's foodprice driven inflation that's likely because, as the climate changes, some of the foods we're used to won't grow as well in the places we're used to growing them. Not only will temperatures be too high, not only will there not be enough water, but the increase in carbon dioxide won't affect all plants in the same ways. Some will grow a little faster while their weeds grow a lot faster. Some will grow faster but not be as nutritious—forcing both their beasts and us to need more to be decently nourished. It's a much more complex problem than a simple increase in temperature. I considered spreading hunger as a reason for increased vulnerability to disease. And there would be less money for inoculations or treatment. Also, thanks to rising temperatures, tropical diseases like malaria and dengue would move north. I considered loss of coastline as the level of the sea rises. I imagined the United States becoming, slowly, through the combined effects of lack of foresight and short-term unenlightened self-interest, a third world country. And our only way of cleaning up, adapting, and compensating for all this in ***Parable of the Sower*** and ***Parable of the Talents*** is to use our brains and our hands—the same tools we used to get ourselves into so much trouble. Now in some of my other novels, ***Dawn***, ***Adulthood Rites***, and ***Imago***, for instance, my Xenogenesis novels, answers come through the intervention of extrasolar aliens. Our problem as a species, we are told, results from our having two inherited characteristics that don't work and play well together, especially since the wrong one is in control. The two characteristics are intelligence and hierarchical behavior—with hierarchical behavior dominant. The aliens fix things by altering us genetically. In ***Mind of My Mind***, ***Clay's Ark***, and related novels in my Patternist series, the future is changed by people with parapsychological abilities. It isn't changed for the better. It simply puts another powerful group in charge and their particular short-sightedness and unenlightened self-interests bring about different changes. These are all ideas I've had about the future in earlier novels. Other possibilities I'll save for other novels.



A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

What kind of research did you do for *Parable of the Sower*?

I read books and listened to taped classes that focused on religions. I found books on African religion and took a particular interest in the Orishas of the Yoruba people. Lauren Olamina's middle name is Oya because I liked both the name and the Orisha the name represented. Oya is, among other things, the deity of the Niger River. She's unpredictable, intelligent, and dangerous—a good namesake for Lauren Oya Olamina. I indulged my weakness for specialized dictionaries and encyclopedias by falling in love with *The Perennial Dictionary of World Religions*. I found it at the library and liked it so much that I hunted it down and bought it. I brushed up on guns. I had my research for my novel *Clay's Ark* to fall back on there. All I had to do was dig it out and add to it a little. I tacked detailed maps of different parts of California all over my walls. I used to travel up and down California on Greyhound buses, but I've never walked the length of the state. Since my characters had to do that, I had to understand how they would manage. I also read books by people who had walked the state, bicycled it, or ridden the length of it on horseback. I listened to my local National Public Radio and Pacifica stations and read newspapers and magazines. This wasn't so much research as my normal behavior, but because *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents* were largely inspired by the news, by the trends that seemed important to me [see question 4], the news I absorbed fed right into the novel. And finally, I pestered my mother, who had a green thumb, and I read books on gardening. I also took notes on my morning walks. What was in flower? What was in fruit? When? Gardening is popular in the Pasadena area. Most people who have houses have big yards, and everyone can grow something. My mother, who knew a good thing when she saw it, put me to work—so that I could get some practical experience.



A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

***Parable of the Sower* is, among other things, a coming-of-age story. What are the most important lessons Lauren Olamina learns as she matures?**

One of the first lessons Olamina learns is to value community. She learns this as a young girl, learns it without knowing she's learning. Her father's community is her teacher. She cannot agree with her father or other adults when they close their eyes in fear and hope to wait for the return of the good old days. But she can see that the people around her could not sustain themselves if they did not find ways to work together. When Olamina's birth community is destroyed, she begins to build another. She doesn't know at first that that's what she's doing, and she's afraid—terrified—of potentially dangerous strangers. But she learns to reach out in spite of her fear, to choose the best people she can find and bring them together. With her acceptance of Earthseed, she relinquishes hope for supernatural help. She recognizes a god, but not a knowing, caring, anthropomorphic entity. She believes that our only dependable help must come from ourselves and from one another. She never develops a "things will work themselves out somehow" attitude. She learns to be an activist.

Who or what are the most important influences on your writing?

These change from novel to novel. When I'm working on a novel, anything that catches my attention might wind up affecting the writing. Sometimes there's an incident on a bus or on the street or in some other public place, sometimes it's something someone says or does, or something I read. Early literary influences were fairy tales, mythology, comic books, and animal stories—especially horse stories (*A Forest World*; *Bambi*; *Bambi's Children*; *Black Beauty*; *Lad, a Dog*; *King of the Wind*; *Big Red*; *The Black Stallion*...). Later, I read science fiction indiscriminately. I particularly liked writers who created interesting and believable characters, but I read whoever I found at the library or in the magazines that I bought at the supermarket. My first science fiction magazines were *Amazing*, *Fantastic*, *Galaxy*, *Analog*, and *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*.



A Conversation with Octavia Butler

(Cont.)

Some of the authors I especially liked when I was in my early teens were Theodore Sturgeon, Eric Frank Russell, Zenna Henderson, Ray Bradbury, J. T. McIntosh, Robert A. Heinlein, Clifford D. Simak, Lester del Rey, Fredric Brown, and Isaac Asimov. Later, I discovered Marion Zimmer Bradley, John Brunner, Harlan Ellison, and Arthur C. Clarke. I devoured the many anthologies of Judith Merril and Groff Conklin. In short, like many science fiction fans, I read too much science fiction and too little of anything else. I also, as I mentioned earlier, read popular science. At school, I did very well in English and in history. History also took me to fascinatingly different places and made me think about the way people behave toward one another, the ways in which they handled power, for instance. These things held my interest and found their way into my writing. Writers use everything. We can't help it. Whatever touches us touches our writing.

What would you like readers to get from this novel? What would you like them to think about?

I hope people who read *Parable of the Sower* will think about where we seem to be heading—we the United States, even we the human species. Where are we going? What sort of future are we creating? Is it the kind of future you want to live in? If it isn't, what can we do to create a better future? Individually and in groups, what can we do?



Discussion Questions

1. Lauren Olamina has hyperempathy syndrome, an illness that gives her the delusion that she feels both the pain and pleasure of those around her. Do you think it is significant that this is a congenital disease she contracted because her mother was a drug abuser? How has this illness made Lauren different from those around her? Why was she unable to tell anyone about it? Why do you suppose it is significant to the story that she has this illness?
2. Why does Jo react so negatively to Lauren’s concerns about being better prepared as a community and as individuals to face crises? Do you think that Lauren’s ideas, including community night watches, learning to fend for themselves in the wild, studying local wild plant life to see if it can be used for food, are excessively paranoid? Lauren’s father has pointed out that the community as a whole has trouble thinking far ahead and into such sensitive areas. Do you see ways in which people in today’s America are equally unable to think ahead?
3. Earthseed can be described as a “cold” religion since it has such an impersonal god. Is there anything about it that you think could be described as comforting? Or liberating? Do you believe God has a consciousness? Is a thinking being? Or is Earthseed a system of beliefs that appeal to you? What are your feelings about religion?
4. The near future of ***Parable of the Sower*** reflects an America steeped in chaos with relentless poverty and lawlessness. Education is no longer guaranteed for everyone and violence is rampant. The author has said that she came to this vision of the future by imagining our current woes progressing unchecked to their logical ends. Do you agree or disagree that this is a possible future for America? In terms of government and societal stability as well as future technological advancements, in what ways do you believe America will change in the next two decades? Do you think things will be better or worse than they are now?

Discussion Questions (Cont.)

5. In the Bible, Mark 4:341 tells us the parable of the sower:

Hearken, Behold, there went out a sower to sow: And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the wayside, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: Afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

What relationship do you see between this parable and the novel? Considering that Lauren rejected her father's traditional Baptist teachings before going on to teach Earthseed, it's an interesting twist that the book is titled ***Parable of the Sower***. Why do you think this is?



Discussion Questions (Cont.)

6. According to Lauren, “The Destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars.” She feels that we must go “beyond Mars. Other star systems. Living worlds.” Are you curious about what’s out in space? Do you think we should be exploring other worlds? Do you think we should be trying to live on other planets?
7. Lauren Olamina says, “That’s the ultimate Earthseed aim, and the ultimate human change short of death. It’s a destiny we’d better pursue if we hope to be anything other than smooth-skinned dinosaurs—here today, gone tomorrow, our bones mixed with the bones and ashes of our cities.” What do you think about the possibility of humans becoming extinct? Do you think this is possible, and how do you think it would happen? Do you think this is something we have any control over?
8. An important issue in this novel is how well people know one another and when and how to trust people. Lauren struggles between her love for Curtis and her concern that he might not understand or accept both her hyperempathy or her Earthseed ideas. She also tells Harry Balter about her hyperempathy, and he worries that he can’t trust her because he feels like he doesn’t really know her. How do you learn to trust? How much do you have to know about a person in order to trust that person? What sort of lessons about trust do you think this novel holds for us? Do you think that it is easier or harder to trust people in our current social situation?
9. What lessons do you feel you took away from this novel?



Suggested Reading from Librarians at The Seattle Public Library

Grievors

by adrienne maree brown

adrienne maree brown is a vocal disciple of Butler. In her first novel, set in Detroit, she chronicles a strange epidemic that puts its victims into immediate comas. Like ***Parable***, this tackles themes of grief, loss, community, and resilience.

The Fifth Season by N.K. Jemisin

Essun and her family live quietly in a sparse and barren land until their secret is exposed: she and her children are orogenes, able to control and manipulate the Earth's forces. With the continent on the constant brink of disaster from tectonic activity, this ability becomes necessary to save her both family and the world.

Future Home of the Living God by Louise Erdrich

Cedar is newly pregnant as evolution seems to be reversing in a biological apocalypse. As calls for rounding up pregnant people abound, Cedar has to make decisions about who to trust, even as she seeks to connect with her birth mother's Ojibwe community.

Everything for Everyone: An Oral History of the New York Commune, 2052-2072 by M.E. O'Brien and Eman Abdelhadi

Like ***Parable***, this speculative fiction opens 30 years after publication, here envisioning the collapse of society and subsequent revolution and communization. It's structured as fictionalized interviews with folks instrumental to these processes, offering possibilities for a different world.

Sorrowland by Rivers Solomon

Solomon has penned a horror novel that looks at the shadow side of intentional community; what appears to be a Black utopia is the opposite, and Vern escapes to learn she has been experimented upon.



Suggested Reading from Librarians at The Seattle Public Library (Cont.)

Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction from Social Justice Movements

edited by Walida Imarisha and adrienne maree brown

Explore Butler's impact on a diverse group of speculative fiction authors in this anthology of stories from organizers, activists, and writers envisioning new worlds.

Afrofuturism: A History of Black Futures

edited by Kevin Strait and Kinshasha Holman

Butler is hailed as a foundational author of Afrofuturism, incorporating Black culture and identity into science fiction narratives to imagine Black futures. This book, companion to a Smithsonian exhibit, traces 30+ years of Afrofuturist writing, film, art, and music, including Butler's *Parable of the Sower*.

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds

by adrienne maree brown

Inspired by the way Butler imagined individual and societal reaction to change, activist and community organizer brown explores how we can organize in our communities, employing iterative cycles of community care and relationship building to shape the futures we want.

Octavia E. Butler: The Last Interview and Other Conversations

by Octavia Butler

Across ten interviews, including three never before published, Butler speaks on a wide range of topics including her work and her experience as a Black woman in a genre dominated by white men. Includes an introduction by Samuel R. Delaney.

Climate Resilience: How We Keep Each Other Safe, Care for Our Communities, and Fight Back Against Climate Change

by Kylie Flanagan

Flanagan gathers interviews with 39 women and nonbinary climate activists, addressing environmental justice and their work in community-focused, grassroots climate change action. Flanagan includes suggestions for how readers can learn more about and engage with different movements in a variety of ways.



About Our Community Partners

The Seattle Public Library collaborated with a number of community organizations to create programming this year. Learn more about their work below.

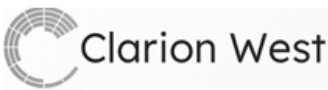


The Seattle-based African-American Writers' Alliance (AAWA), a diverse and dynamic collective of writers of African descent, provides an informal and supportive forum for new and published writers. They help one another polish skills, provide peer review, and create opportunities for public readings and other media venues. Ultimately the group encourages members to publish individually and collectively.

The African-American Writers' Alliance hosts monthly open mics and other programs throughout the city. Find more information at www.aawa-seattle.org



ARTE NOIR seeks to be a gathering place for exploring the dynamic creativity that springs from African and African American culture. With a focus on people, ARTE NOIR shines a light on the makers, thinkers, and doers who are, and have been, innovating in their fields; centering the soulfulness and power of Black art. ARTE NOIR exists to uplift Black artists! Learn more at www.artenoir.org



Clarion West supports emerging and underrepresented voices by providing writers with world-class instruction to empower their creation of wild and amazing worlds. Through conversation and public engagement, they bring those voices to an ever-expanding community. Learn more about Clarion West's classes and other events at www.clarionwest.org

About Our Community Partners (Cont.)



Located in the heart of Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, The Elliott Bay Book Company is a full-service bookstore. They offer one of the region's best selection of new books, with over 150,000 titles, as well as a large collection of remainders. In addition, Elliott Bay presents a robust schedule of author readings and events throughout the year. Learn more at www.elliottbaybook.com

LANGSTON

CULTIVATING BLACK BRILLIANCE

LANGSTON Seattle leads innovative programs and fosters community partnerships that center Black art, artists, and audiences while honoring the enduring legacy of Seattle's Black Central Area. Their wide-ranging programs span multiple disciplines and are rooted in their commitment to strengthening and celebrating our community through the transformative power of Black arts and culture. Learn more at www.langstonseattle.org



loving room is an independent, queer, Black woman-owned bookstore, community reading room, & cultural salon that cultivates space for collective Black ancestral healing + transformation through Black literature + African Diasporic decolonial aesthetics. Learn more at www.lovingroombooks.community



About Our Community Partners (Cont.)



Sistah Scifi is the first Black-owned bookstore focused on Afrofuturism, Indigenous Futurism, Science Fiction, and Fantasy in the United States. Sistah Scifi hosts digital programs and in person pop-up events in Seattle and Oakland, California. Learn more at sistahscifi.com



Third Place Books is the deliberate and intentional creation of a community around books and the ideas inside them. Founded in 1998 in Lake Forest Park, this general interest bookstore opened a store in the Ravenna neighborhood of Seattle in 2002, and another in the Seward Park neighborhood in 2016. Third Place hosts a wide variety of events at each of their locations. Learn more at www.thirdplacebooks.com



Wa Na Wari creates space for Black ownership, possibility, & belonging through art, historic preservation, & connection. Wa Na Wari uses the power of art and community stories to help reignite Black cultural life and social connections in Seattle's Central District. In addition to their art space, their programs include The Seattle Black Spatial Histories Institute, Bloom Food Justice Series, Love Offering, a community meal program, and many others. Find out more at www.wanawari.org



Seattle Reads Through the Years

- 2024:** *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler (Grand Central, 2019)
- 2023:** *The Swimmers* by Julie Otsuka (Anchor Books, 2023)
- 2022:** *The House of Broken Angels* by Luis Alberto Urrea (Back Bay Books, 2019)
- 2021:** *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett (Riverhead, 2020)
- 2020:** *There There* by Tommy Orange (Vintage, 2019)
- 2019:** *The Best We Could Do* by Thi Bui (Abrams Books, 2017)
- 2018:** *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi (Vintage Books, 2017)
- 2017:** *The Turner House* by Angela Flournoy (Mariner Books, 2016)
- 2016:** *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* by Karen Joy Fowler (Plume Books, 2013)
- 2015:** *The Painter* by Peter Heller (Vintage Books, 2015)
- 2014:** *For All of Us, One Today: An Inaugural Poet's Journey* by Richard Blanco (Beacon Press, 2013)
- 2013:** *Stories for Boys* by Gregory Martin (Hawthorne Books, 2012)
- 2012:** *The Submission* by Amy Waldman (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011)
- 2011:** *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave (Simon and Schuster, 2009)
- 2010:** *Secret Son* by Laila Lalami (Algonquin Books, 2009)
- 2009:** *My Jim* by Nancy Rawles (Three Rivers Press, 2005)
- 2008:** *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu (Riverhead Books, 2007)
- 2007:** *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri (Mariner Books, 2003)
- 2006:** *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (Pantheon Books, 2003)
- 2005:** *When the Emperor Was Divine* by Julie Otsuka (Anchor Books, 2002)
- 2004:** *Seattle Reads* Isabel Allende
- 2003:** *A Gesture Life* by Chang-rae Lee (Riverhead Books, 1999)
- 2002:** *Wild Life* by Molly Gloss (Mariner Books, 2001)
- 2001:** *Fooling with Words: A Celebration of Poets and Their Craft* by Bill Moyers (Morrow, 1999)
- 1999:** *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines (Vintage Books, 1994)
- 1998:** *The Sweet Hereafter* by Russell Banks (HarperCollins, 1991)

Seattle Reads is a city-wide book group, where people are encouraged to read and discuss the same book. It's designed to deepen engagement in literature through reading and discussion. Everyone is invited to participate in Seattle Reads by reading the featured book, joining in a book discussion, and/or attending programs. Seattle Reads *Parable of the Sower* is presented in partnership with African-American Writers' Alliance, ARTE NOIR, Clarion West, Elliott Bay Books, Langston Seattle, loving room: diaspora books and salon, Sistah Scifi, Third Place Books, and Wa Na Wari. It is made possible by The Seattle Public Library Foundation and The Wallace Foundation, with additional support from Grand Central Publishing, and media sponsor The Seattle Times.

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