

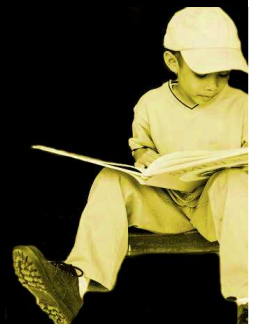
The African-American Picture Book

Its Past, Present, and Promising Future

Leshell Hatley, Doctoral Student

iSchool, UMD

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The African-American Picture Book

Its Past, Present, and Promising Future

- Leshell Hatley

- First Year Doctoral Student, Information Studies, iSchool and Founder of Center for Learning and Educational Media (CLEM)
- Derived from paper written in Literature and Materials for Children with the same title
- Point of departure for research and development of user-centered, culturally relevant educational media

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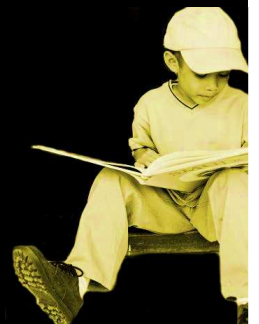
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- **Definitions:**
 - User-centered, culturally relevant
 - Designed based on user-needs, culture of user (culture can be ethnic, youth, digital, etc.)
 - Educational Media
 - Picture Books, Software, TV, Animation, Cartoons
 - African-American Picture books are books filled with images/imagery by and about African-Americans

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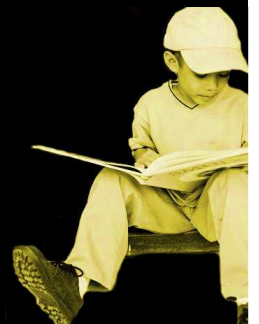
The evolution and rise in prominence of the **African-American Picture Book** holds great promise for improving the educational process for all children and their parents.

This presentation takes us on a historical overview of the African-American picture book. We'll emphasize its educational and cultural contributions to American society and list ways in which those contributions can be enhanced in the future.

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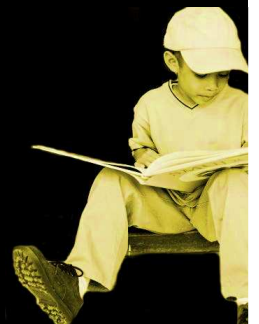
- **Historical Overview:**

- Turn of the 20th century marked the definition of the **New Negro**, especially in print
- **The Crisis**, Publication of NAACP, by W.E.B. Dubois
- Used children as imagery to depict forging ahead to the future in a movement lead by young people
 - Campaigns of protest (lynching, social injustice)
 - Until violence by Whites during ‘Red Summer’ of 1919
- **The Brownies Books**, new publication to shield youth from violence, dedicated to ‘*Children of the Sun*’

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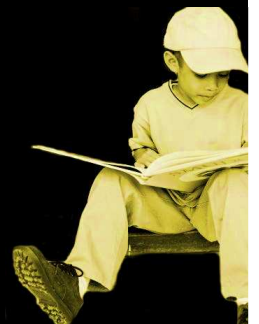
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- The Brownies Books:

- Became the first periodical for black children
- Filled with 'cross-writing' - didactic content addressing adult readers, while connecting with children readers
- Featured biography, poetry, short stories, political inquiry, conduct material, drama, social and historical analysis, and *imagery that held children in high regard* – a response to the stereotypical minstrelsy images of the 19th century
- With it, DuBois reinvented black childhood and instituted a genre of black children's literature (the picture book)

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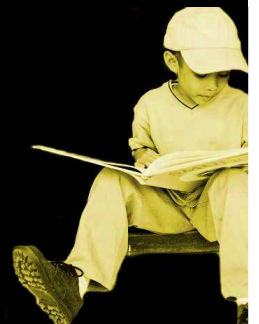
- **New Genre of Black Children's Literature:**
 - **The Brownies Books** were filled with writings from (teenager) Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps
 - In the 1930s and 1940s, with increasing publications with mainstream publishers, these writings became a direct representation of the black experience to a larger audience, mainstream America

“Anyhow, seems like we’re going to be models for future generations of writers for children and students of [this] literature.”

-Arna Bontemps to Langston Hughes, 1939

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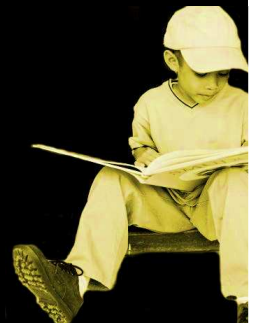
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- **Augusta Baker and The Schomburg Center:**
 - The demand for more positive and reflective imagery of the black experience in children's literature and literature in general continued to grow.
 - During this time, only 27 book about the 'American Negro' were suggested for inclusion in libraries - only 4 were written for children.
 - **Arthur Schomburg, James Weldon Johnson,** and renowned librarian **Augusta Baker**, purchased 40 books for the 135th Street Branch (Harlem) of the NY Public Library – this and other donations became the **Schomburg Center**

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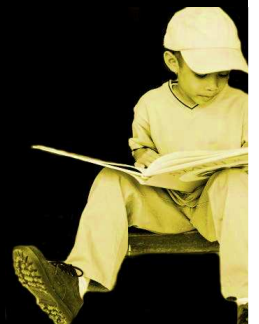
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- Contributions of The Black Arts Movement:
 - The Black Arts Movement of the 1960s became a time when black artists (writers and illustrators) were again on a mission to create imagery in black children's literature.
 - During this time, John Steptoe entered the profession with his first authored and illustrated picture book, Stevie (1969) – hitting the industry by storm with full color illustrations.
 - The American Library Association (ALA) would later create the John Steptoe Award for New Talent in writing and/or illustration in his honor.

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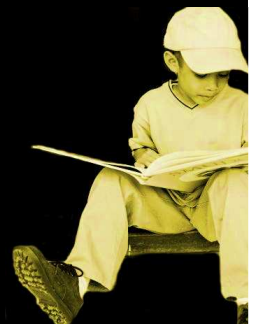
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- Importance/promise into the next decades:
 - The 1970s instituted the Coretta Scott King Award by the American Library Association, given to African American authors and illustrators to encourage the artistic expression of the African American experience via literature and graphic arts.
 - Donnarrae MacCann and Gloria Woodard published their first edition of their anthology, *The Black American in Books for Children: Readings in Racism* – 23 essays that discussed many important aspects of African-American images in children's books

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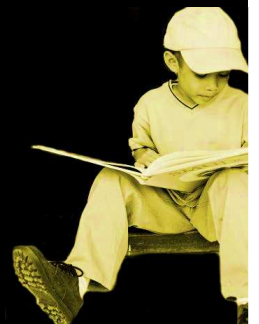
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- Importance/promise into the next decades:
 - This decade brought with it the first books Black picture books to win the Caldecott Honor Medal - **Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book** (published by Muriel and Tom Feelings in 1971) in 1972 and Caldecott Awards – **Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book** (also published by Muriel and Tom Feelings in 1974) in 1975.
 - Leo and Diane Dillon won the Caldecott Award for **Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions** (published in 1976).

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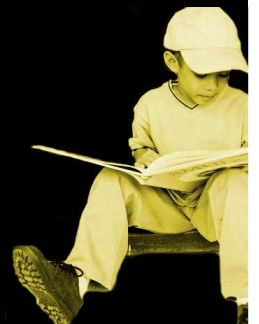
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- Importance/promise into the next decades:
 - In the 1980s, Just Us Books, an independent publisher dedicated to the publication of black children's literature, was established and is still in operation today.
 - Concepts including Africa, cornrows, and kente-cloth, along with baby and balloon, became the **Afro-Bets 123 Book** published in 1987. These books combined to create didactic African-American centered literature used to teach academic material, leading to the ultimate discourse of culturally relevant teaching material.

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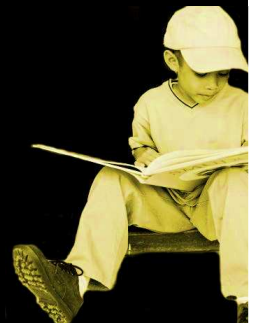
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- Importance/promise into the next decades:

- The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) at University of Wisconsin-Madison started watching trends and recording statistics of African-American (and other minority) picture book production for each year during the 1990s.
- This new found scholarly attention lead to the African American Review issue totally dedicated to the children's and young-adult literature (*African American Review*, Vol. 32, No.1) edited by Dr. Diane Johnson of the University of South Carolina.
- These writings became the first African-American, scholarly-based discourse in the affects of imagery on the development of children.

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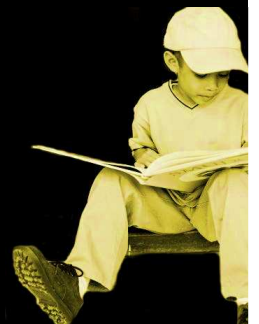
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- **Fine Arts in the 21st Century:**
 - The 21st century ushers in astounding artistic talent in the production of picture books – full color acrylic paintings, collages, and photographs awaken the style of visual imagery, thus raising the bar of visual production – resulting in full engagement of all readers.
 - Family traditions of African-American picture book creation is born with Javaka Steptoe, son of John Steptoe, the entire Jerry Pinkney family, and other second generation authors and illustrators exceed visual standards of their parents.

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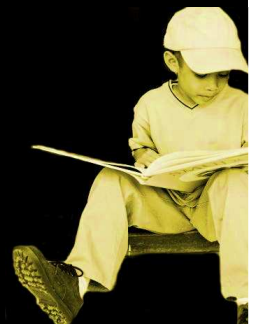
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- **Future of African-American Picture Books:**
 - The inclusion of Cognitive Development Theory within books
 - **Greater awareness for parents/guardians, not just African-American**
 - Informal Survey Results
 - Many African-American parents/guardians say their preschoolers may not be aware of race in books
 - Several others weren't sure where to find them
 - Many expressed appreciation for quality stories
 - **Current CLEM Design/Development Project**
 - **Children design partners;** Nation's Capital Children and Family Development Center in NE, Washington, DC

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