

# Friends' News and Notes

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## What is Read Woke in Merced County?

- ✓ **Community activism and sharing**
- ✓ **Recommended books by topic for you & your children**
- ✓ **Biweekly book discussions led by the community**
- ✓ **Video book talks by library staff on youtube**
- ✓ **A virtual author visit by Anthony Ray Hinton (PLUS the opportunity to get his book free from the library)**
- ✓ **Read Woke crafts & multicultural children's programs from the library**
- ✓ **Woke art classes at Merced Multicultural Arts Center**

Merced County's Read Woke Challenge, an opportunity for all ages to read and think about the breadth of humanity, began in January, and the events continue through May (schedule on p. 3). Read Woke lays a foundation for learning and discussions that will last long after the scheduled events. The goal is to build greater understanding of, and respect for, every Merced County resident.

Sponsored by the Merced County Library, the FOMCL, and many other community members and organizations (see page 2), the Read Woke Challenge offers various ways to participate. Sign up at [mercedcountylibrary.beanstack.com/reader365](http://mercedcountylibrary.beanstack.com/reader365) [continued on page 3].

## New Early Literacy Program at the Merced County Library

By Linda Weems

Merced County Library and First 5 Merced County are launching an early literacy program to promote kinder readiness for our county's children by engaging their caregivers with theme-based learning kits.

Each learning kit will be kept in a clear backpack and includes at least 3 board books, [continued on page 4]



A literacy kit backpack and contents

**The mission of the Friends of the Merced County Library is to enhance, focus public attention on, and generate community support for Library services, facilities, and other needs in Merced County.**

## The Friends Thank Our Generous Corporate Sponsors



### GOLD-LEVEL SPONSOR:



MERCO Credit Union

### SILVER-LEVEL SPONSORS:

Hattie Givens Testamentary Trust

Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union

### BRONZE-LEVEL SPONSOR:



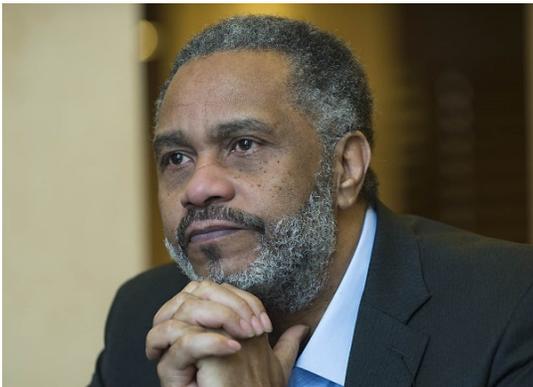
Rotary Club of Merced

## Author Virtual Visit on May 4<sup>th</sup> Anthony Ray Hinton

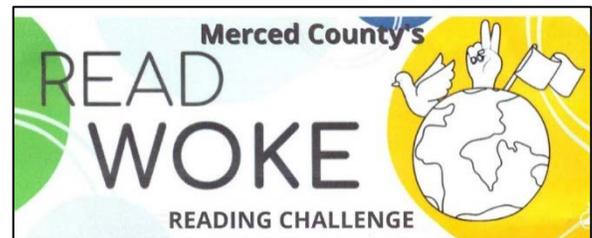
Anthony Ray Hinton, author of *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life and Freedom on Death Row*, will visit Merced remotely on **Tuesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 pm**. The Hinton webinar will be the Capstone event of Merced County's Read Woke Challenge. Webinar sponsors are the FOMCL, the Merced County Library, and UC Merced School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts.

This Zoom webinar is open to everyone! The sponsors are working on pre-registration arrangements now, so stay tuned to the FOMCL website for updates:

<http://friendsofthemercedcountylibrary.org/events.html>



Anthony Ray Hinton



## Merced County's Read Woke Supporters, Category Sponsors, and Partners

**Program Supporters:** City of Merced; Friends of the Merced County Library; Merced County Library; Merced County Office of Education; United Way of Merced County; UC Merced School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts; and WCW Solutions, Inc.

**Category Sponsors:** Nicola Adams, Coldwell Banker Premier Real Estate; Dee Near; and Susan Walsh. Anonymous donors honoring: Janet Fujimoto and Eileen Tanioka; Ella Luna Garza; and Robert Lenz.

**Community Partners:** Assemblymember Adam Gray; American Association of University Women, Merced Branch; Lao Family Community, Inc.; League of Women Voters of Merced County; Learn to Read Online; Merced City School District; Merced County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Merced Multicultural Arts Center; Soroptimist International of Merced; and Southeast Asian-American Professional Association.

## Read Woke Schedule:

### Featured Books, Book Discussions, & Capstone Author Visit

Book discussions are at 2:00 pm via Zoom. For a Zoom invitation, email: [friendsofmercedcountylibrary@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmercedcountylibrary@gmail.com)

#### January

- **Immigrant Voices:**  
*Americanah*
- **Those Experiencing Poverty & Homelessness:**  
*Nickel and Dimed*

#### February

- **African American Voices:**  
*Between the World and Me*  
[February 11<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)
- **Native American Voices:**  
*Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians but Were Afraid to Ask*  
[February 25<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)

#### March

- **Female Voices:**  
*The Moment of Lift*  
[March 11<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)
- **Hispanic American Voices:**  
*The Poet X*  
[March 25<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)

#### April

Get a free copy of *The Sun Does Shine*, the Capstone book, from your Library.

- **LGBTQ+ Voices:**  
*In the Dream House*  
[April 8<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)
- **Asian American Voices:**  
*American-born Chinese*  
[April 22<sup>nd</sup> book discussion](#)

#### May

- **Capstone Author Visit by Anthony Ray Hinton**  
[May 4<sup>th</sup> webinar at 3:00 p.m.](#)  
(See page 2 for details.)
- **Diverse Ability Voices:**  
*Sitting Pretty: The View from My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body*  
[May 13<sup>th</sup> book discussion](#)
- **Social Injustice Voices:**  
*The Sun Does Shine* (by A.R. Hinton)  
[May 27<sup>th</sup> Capstone book discussion](#)

## [Read Woke, continued from page 1]

Keep track of your reading, or just follow your interests among the scheduled topics (left). Download the select reading lists on each topic ([friendsofthemercedcountylibrary.org/events.html](http://friendsofthemercedcountylibrary.org/events.html)). Watch Read Woke book talk videos on the Library's new youtube channel ([www.youtube.com/channel/UC241x\\_FsRX4PVUHFirJQt4Q](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC241x_FsRX4PVUHFirJQt4Q)). Join the featured book discussions, led by community members who are familiar with the topic, on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month (see schedule left). In April, get a free copy of author Anthony Ray Hinton's book from the Library. Mr. Hinton, an innocent African American man, spent 30 years on death row before being exonerated and released. The Capstone Event of the Read Woke Challenge is Mr. Hinton's spring webinar (see page 2).

As you read the children's Read Woke books with your family, try out the related crafts (see the Library's youtube channel and social media pages). The Merced Multicultural Arts Center is also offering Woke art classes for all ages to go with the Read Woke Challenge. Don't miss these opportunities to learn more about the people of Merced!

### Immigrant Voices: *Americanah*

By Supervising Librarian Olga Castaneda

Video book talk at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc1FWd3lbgk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yc1FWd3lbgk)

*Americanah* is a thought-provoking novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Part political fiction, part romantic fiction, *Americanah* provides a witty narrative that opens windows into the immigrant experience and the reasons why people leave their countries of origin.

For immigrants like me, *Americanah* mirrors experiences shared by most immigrants throughout the world. Immigration forces us to grapple with self-identity, making conscious and unconscious choices to hide truths in order to survive and integrate. Like Ifemelo, the protagonist, we have to decide what is truly necessary--should we spend our vital energy ensuring others enunciate our names correctly, or is it best to ignore their shattering of this precious aspect of self? I found myself guffawing as I read about what Ifemelo encounters when traveling to the United States and during her first weeks as an immigrant. It is highly liberating to read about incidents that once mortified you—thinking you were alone in enduring them only to discover that no one comes out unscathed from the immigrant experience. And, as with any life event, these interactions help survivors develop grit, discipline, and character; they provide the raw material for good stories.



**Olga Castaneda**

Published in 2013, the novel's thematic relevance endures.

*Americanah* is available from your Merced County Library in large or regular print and as an eBook, eAudiobook, and CD/MP3.

**[Early Literacy Program,  
continued from page 1]**

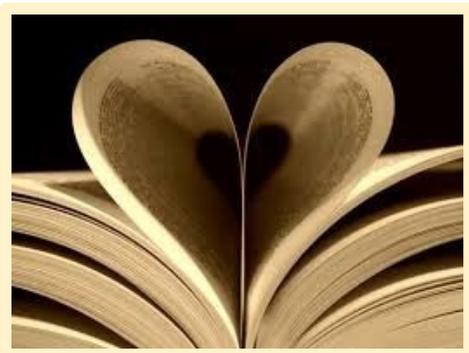
3 picture books as well as at least 1 bilingual picture book in either Spanish, Hmong or a language other than English to help promote cultural diversity. The kits will include a theme-based toy as well. All of this will be available for curbside checkout at 7 Merced County Library locations. Starting February 8<sup>th</sup>, there will be 21 kits available with various themes such as Music, Shapes, Colors, ABC or 1-2-3 counting. Eventually there will be over 200 kits available to be checked out. You can have fun while you learn!

The first 21 kits were funded by the Friends of the Merced County Library. Additional kits are being funded by a Merced County First 5 grant, with the initiative of encouraging literacy through “Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play”.

### **Help Provide More Library Books at Your Local Branch!**

Honor someone or something special in your life with a new library book labeled with your inscription. It's the gift that keeps on giving! To learn more, or for a brochure, visit:

[friendsofthemercedcountylibrary.org/donate\\_adoptabook.html](http://friendsofthemercedcountylibrary.org/donate_adoptabook.html)



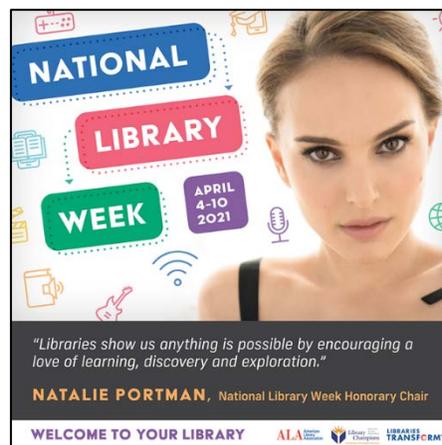
## **THANK YOU, FRIENDS, FOR FUNDING SUMMER READING 2021!**

Thanks to your generous response to the 2020 Thanksgiving Appeal, the Friends met **the incredible \$5,000 matching grant by the Estate of Philip Wilson**, for a total of \$10,000 for Summer Reading 2021! Because of you, the Friends' annual financial commitment to Summer Reading will bring exciting new opportunities that accelerate literacy and the love of learning. Your support makes a difference!



### **National Library Week: April 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>**

By Leigh-Ann Thornhill



The theme for 2021's National Library Week is “Welcome to Your Library.” The week runs from Sunday April 4 through Saturday April 11, coinciding with spring break in most Merced County schools. Like in 2020, National Library Week will be mostly virtually due to the pandemic. Stay tuned to the Merced County Library's social media for details. To quote the

American Library Association's website, National Library Week:

...promotes the idea that libraries extend far beyond the four walls of a building – and that everyone is welcome to use their services. During the pandemic libraries have been going above and beyond to adapt to our changing world by expanding their resources and continuing to meet the needs of their users. Whether people visit in person or virtually, libraries offer opportunities for everyone to explore new worlds and become their best selves through access to technology, multimedia content, and educational programs (<http://www.ala.org/conferenceevents/celebrationweeks/natlibraryweek>).

The 2021 chairperson is Natalie Portman. Each day of the week celebrates a different area of the library: from National Library Workers Day (April 6) to a day dedicated to bookmobiles and outreach services (April 7). Librarians, library workers, and library patrons look forward to this week because it is a chance to honor the library and its workers. It illustrates to the public just how important a role the library serves within the community. To see what the Merced County Library is doing for National Library Week, please visit <https://www.facebook.com/mercedcountylibrary>.

# County Librarian's Report

By Amy Taylor, County Librarian



**Amy Taylor**

Welcome to 2021! The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed how we serve our communities. The library has shifted to contactless curbside pickup service, virtual programming, video creation, and staff have become more creative at finding ways to engage residents. Staff continue to listen to customers and have brought forward ideas for new programs and services to assist County residents through the pandemic's stay-in-place orders. One new service is Dial-A-Story, which began January 2021. Anyone may call (209) 439-5040 to hear a children's story in English or Spanish. This service is available 24/7 and callers never hear a busy signal. New stories are available every Tuesday.

In December 2020, the Library received a First 5 Merced County Innovation Grant for \$100,000.00. With part of the grant, supplemented by donations from the FOMCL, the Library will be creating Ready for Kinder Merced County learning kits (see page 1). Each learning kit will have books, theme-based toys, and activities around a topic. The kits are a perfect tool for parents to help their child get ready for kindergarten. In addition to the learning kits, the Innovation Grant will help fund an attractive wrap to decorate the outside of the new bookmobile, adding First 5 Merced County to the Library and FOMCL bookmobile partnership.

The Library has made multiple changes to our facilities since we have had to close. We have used this time to freshen up many libraries. Customers entering facilities will find the following:

- Merced Library – New paint and customer service desks installed.
- Atwater Library – New paint and carpet, plus a new entry mural (photo below) painted by Golden Valley High School graduates Dazzle Chongtoua and Anaya Vega.
- Gustine Library – New carpet and comfortable seating.
- Livingston Library – Library reconfigured for better use of space.
- Santa Nella Library – Library reconfigured for better use of space.
- All libraries – Plexiglas barriers at public service points of service, blue carpet squares designating 6 foot social distance for checkout lines/ stickers for tile floors, and COVID-19 signage.

The Library misses our customers and eagerly awaits the day when we may resume in-person service. Until that day, please know we are here to assist and welcome your phone calls and contactless curbside orders. Thank you for your continued support of Merced County Library as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries = Strong Communities. The Friends of the Merced County Library help to make our library strong. We could not do all we do without your support and generosity.

Stay safe and Happy Reading,

Amy Taylor, County Librarian  
 ...currently reading *Roll with It* by Jamie Sumner and  
*My Lovely Wife in the Psych Ward* by Mark Lukach



**New mural in  
Atwater Library**



### Memorial Donations

- For Kathleen (Kay) Caligiuri  
Joanna Browning
- For Rich Gipson  
Kara Middlebrooks
- For Tom Grave  
Kara Middlebrooks
- For Herbert George May  
Stephen & Sharon Wainwright
- For Philip Wilson  
Joyce Hambley



### Honorary Donations

- For Don & Kenra Bragonier  
Elmo & Jeanne Simpson
- For Julia Larson  
Anita Chisholm  
Karen Poso  
Judy Edwina Smith
- For Lori Nelson (from one past president to another)  
Twila Stout



### Memorial Adopt-A-Books

- For Kathleen Mary Caligiuri  
AAUW Book Section III
- For John E. Lancaster  
Susan Flinspach & Jack Vevea



### Honorary Adopt-A-Books

- For Karen Albright  
Don & Kenra Bragonier
- For Ann Andersen's birthday  
Don & Kenra Bragonier
- For Don & Kenra Bragonier  
Arlene Nixon
- For Bob & Suzie Burk  
Rick & Karen Albright
- For Susan Flinspach  
Don & Kenra Bragonier
- For Lee Lor (for her support of the Merced County Library)  
Don & Kenra Bragonier
- For Brett & Kris Van Bebber  
Rick & Karen Albright



## The International Literacy Association Honors Gustine Resident Zachery Ramos

In the January/February 2021 issue of *Literacy Today*, the International Literacy Association awarded top honors to Zachery Ramos of Gustine. Named one of the Association's "30 Under 30," Zachery—just 21 years old—was internationally recognized as a leader in field of literacy for the accomplishments of his Traveling Library charity.

Through the Traveling Library, Zachery has distributed over 20,000 free books to residents of the Central Valley—families with young children, youth, and seniors. He has also raised \$20,000 for other organizations providing assistance to local communities.

In addition, Zachery is an ardent advocate for public libraries. He believes that libraries provide underserved communities with safe spaces where future leaders can cultivate a love of reading. "When it comes to future success and reading," he says, "the two go hand in hand."



**Zachery Ramos**

ILA's 30 Under 30 list celebrates the rising innovators, disruptors, and visionaries in the literacy field.



**30  
UNDER  
30  
2021**

**Zachery Ramos, 21**  
President/Founder, Traveling Library  
CALIFORNIA, U.S.

## New Bookmobile: Q & A with County Librarian Amy Taylor

The FOMCL adopted a new and better bookmobile as its long-term goal in September 2017. It contributed \$25,000 to the bookmobile grant for the basic vehicle, and in January 2021, it donated almost \$3,000 more for bookmobile enhancement (books, computers, and other operating essentials).

**Q:** Pre-COVID, we thought the new bookmobile would be ready for the road in 2021. Is that still likely?

**A:** The pandemic introduced many delays for the bookmobile. Originally the bookmobile was anticipated for early 2021. Now we anticipate it in late 2021/early 2022. The timeline has changed, but our goal of servicing our rural communities has not – the new bookmobile will be on the road on or before March 30, 2022, which is the grant deadline.

**Q:** What is its current status?

**A:** The County Purchasing Department opened the BID for the bookmobile on February 2, 2021. It will be open until March 8, 2021 and awarded after BIDS go through the review process. Although there was an extended interval in opening the BID due to COVID-19, some good news has come from the delay.

**Q:** What's that?

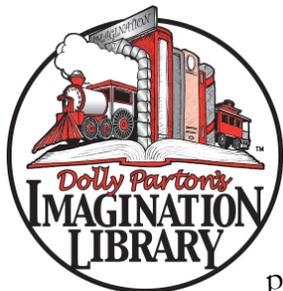
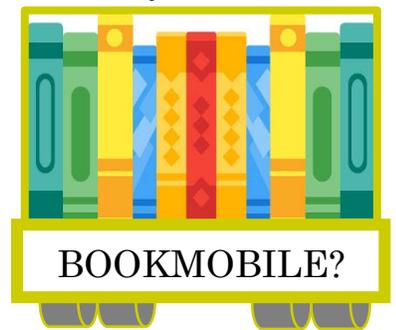
**A:** The Innovation Grant recently awarded to the Merced County Library by First 5 Merced County includes funding for a wrap for the outside of the vehicle, which is a big-ticket item.

**Q:** So does that mean you now have all the funding needed for the new bookmobile?

**A:** We appreciate everyone's generosity. Even with the FOMCL's contribution in January, we still have unmet needs—equipment, materials, etc.—so bookmobile donations continue to be welcome.

To contribute to the new bookmobile, write "bookmobile" in the memo line of your check, and make it out to the Friends of the Merced County Library (address below). Thank you!

Ready for a new



### A Book Delivered Monthly to Merced County Preschoolers

In the Friends' new partnership with First 5 Merced County, the Merced County Library, and the Merced County Office of Education, county children from birth to age 5 can be registered to receive a free book every month. This exciting program is expected to start in March or April. The partnership works with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, a charity that has mailed out over 150 million books to preschoolers in the U.S. and four other countries (<https://imaginationlibrary.com/>).

First 5 Merced County and the other partners will encourage families to register their young children for the program. The books will be sent from Tennessee under the FOMCL's non-profit bulk mailing permit, which lowers the mailing costs. All partners will work together to build on and expand the program to as many eligible children as possible in the coming years.

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## Friends of the Merced County Library

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“Return service requested”

<b>FRIENDS' LEADERSHIP 2020 - 2021</b>			
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