



OJAI VALLEY LIBRARY FRIENDS & FOUNDATION

# Library Reader

**Ojai, California**

**Winter 2021**

## **New Friends and Take-Home Fun at Your Ojai Library**

By Ron Solórzano, Regional Librarian

As we enter 2021 we find ourselves beginning our second year living with the COVID-19 pandemic. The branches of the Ventura County Library have been closed to the public for over ten months, but we have been offering walk-up service at all locations—including the Ojai, Meiners Oaks, and Oak View libraries—for eight of those months. Our staff continues to work diligently to provide service in a manner that is safe and sustainable, and we are so grateful to be encouraged by the kind words of our customers, many of whom we now see regularly again (from an appropriate social distance).

Speaking of staff, the Ojai Library is pleased to welcome Youth Librarian Rebecca Rowe to our team! Rebecca recently moved to California from Maryland where she was working as Children's Supervisor and Research Specialist at the Howard County Library System. She has extensive training related to family and children's literacy instruction, school partnerships, online learning, experiential learning, teaching critical thinking through art, diversity and equity, and community engagement. Rebecca possesses extensive experience providing exceptional customer service, specifically to diverse populations in a library, school, and community setting. She enjoys reading, cooking, camping, knitting, and traveling, and is sure to be a wonderful addition to the Ojai Library staff.

In recent months, the Ojai Library has added a new offering for our customers: Adult Activity Kits. These take-home kits contain materials and instructions for simple crafts, and have included embroidery, knitting, and watercolor activities. We even handed out special New Year's celebration kits featuring festive hats and a build-your-own disco ball! We will continue to offer these kits monthly, with the next few involving origami, pencil drawing and coloring, and sticker art. These kits are generously funded by the Ojai Valley Library Friends & Foundation.

**Want to receive this newsletter by email? Send a message to-  
contact [@ovlff.com](mailto:ovlff.com) with "Newsletter" in the subject line.**

## **Visit our New Website**

After fifteen years the OVLFF website has had a major facelift: [www.ovlff.com](http://www.ovlff.com). It is easy to navigate and is chock full of relevant information for library and book lovers. The site not only provides information about The Ojai Library Friends: current board members, what the OVLFF is all about, current and past newsletters, details about our used bookstore Twice-Sold Tales, the Little Free Libraries program and the distribution of the LFLs throughout the valley- it also provides easy links to the three valley libraries of the Ventura County Library System. Many thanks to board member Liz Beaty for taking on this project . ❁

*See Solórzano on page 2*

*Solórzano continued from page 1*

All Ventura County Library branches will soon be offering two additional kits for lending: Chromebook Kits and Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Kits. Each Chromebook Kit will include a laptop computer and a hotspot for use in connecting to the internet, while the Home Energy Kits will include a combination of items to keep (like lightbulbs and low-flow showerheads) and items to return (like books and tools for measuring your home's energy use). Our goal as always is to help the community meet its needs, and adding these kits to our growing Library of Things broadens our ability to support our users.

Of course, customers can still use our walk-up service to pick up items they have on hold, and can also return their items in our libraries' book

drops. People looking to place new holds may do so online through our catalog, and can also call the library during our open hours for assistance. Current hours of operation for the Ojai Library are Monday through Friday, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Meiners Oaks Library is offering walk-up service on Monday and Wednesday from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and the Oak View Library is open Monday through Thursday, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Those visiting the library to pick up holds must wear a face covering in accordance with local public health guidelines, and are asked to observe social distancing when interacting with library staff.

most rewarding they have ever done. We salute their efforts, and look forward to their return to our libraries when this crisis has ended.

Our library leadership continues to monitor the situation across the county and the state, and as guidelines change we will work to respond and report any changes to our services on our website. For more information on the status of the Ventura County Library, or to check out our eBook collections, virtual storytimes, and winter reading contests, visit [www.vencolibrary.org](http://www.vencolibrary.org). ❁

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Our library is proud of all of our staff who are working diligently, whether remotely or on-site, to bring these services to our customers, though a special recognition is owed to those who are serving under special assignment as Disaster Service Workers. As county employees, our staff may be called upon to assist during a declared emergency, and several have been asked to help out with tasks including contact tracing, delivering meals to folks in need, and supporting operations at testing and vaccination sites. Our DSW staff have told us that they are working hard, but that the work is some of the



Rebecca Rowe

## Decline of The Attention Span

In her intriguing book, *Bored and Brilliant* (2017), technology writer and podcast host Manoush Zomorodi writes at length about the effect that smart phones and other devices have on our ability to concentrate. Zomorodi makes a compelling case that smart phones not only cause us to lose our ability to focus on longer pieces of information, they interrupt the very valuable experience of being bored. She points to research that indicates that letting our minds wander leads to creative thinking and problem solving. We tend to use smart phones to ever avoid hav-

ing such down moments. Young people are particularly prone to addictive behavior with gadget use. In a 2015 study, 77 percent of people aged 18 to 24 responded that when they were bored, they were likely to reach for their phones (Borrelli 2015).

Some of us might think this behavior has a humorous side, especially when we notice so many people around us staring at smartphones all day, sometimes even walking into us on the sidewalk while engrossed. But public librarians should find the implications real and trou-

bling. Public libraries have traditionally been about the deeper dive, the thoughtful reflection. The often-noted serendipity of wandering through the stacks may be a pleasure that we have lost in our need to be constantly and instantly gratified. People may recognize the value of libraries, but how much will they actually use libraries once they lose the capacity for close reading and slow thinking?

(Zomorodi, M. 2017. *Bored and Brilliant*: how spacing out can unlock your most productive and creative self. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press) ❁

## How Talented Low-Income Kids Are Left Behind

Jonathan Wai and Frank C. Worrell

Phi Delta Kappan - Kappan magazine –December 2, 2020

*Identifying academically gifted students early in their education will put them on track to greater success, to the benefit of society as a whole*

Talented but disadvantaged students who can marshal their internal resources may be able to overcome environments of disadvantage (Damian et al., 2014). But these students face strong headwinds, whereas their more advantaged peers enjoy favorable tailwinds (Stevens, 2020).

Universal screening for early talent identification coupled with universal opportunities for consistent academic challenge and development throughout K-12 education (e.g., Wai et al., 2010) would do a great deal to help talented but disadvantaged students develop to the fullest. Not only would investing in talented students from the beginning of their education help these students flourish personally (Moon, 2009), it would also help resolve the ongoing tension between equity and excellence in education (Benbow & Stanley, 1996;

Gardner, 1961; Loveless, 2014). At the same time, even a small early investment in talented students from poor backgrounds has the potential to greatly boost societal innovation and the economy, improving life for us all. Surely such an effort is worth it.

[Ed. Note- excerpted from full-length article; for a PDF copy of the full article send an email to [contact@ovlff.com](mailto:contact@ovlff.com) with the word "Kids" in the subject line.]

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## Books, Censorship, And Anti-Intellectism In Schools

Phi Delta Kappan (online) Emily J.M. Knox, March 26, 2020

*Efforts to remove certain books from schools are rooted in a strong belief in the power of books to introduce people to new ideas and to change their minds.*

The book plays an outsized role in intellectual life. Because there is a taken-for-granted correspondence between reading books and the life of the mind, research on intellectualism often focuses on how much individuals read. For example, in his article “Anti-intellectualism is a virus,” Michael Peters (2018) writes about a book he read in childhood: “It was the second book I had read and I was 15-16 years old at that stage! . . . I don’t know what sparked my interest in ideas. There were no books in our home” (p. 360). In Peters’ formulation, there is no gap between the ideas that he’s taken an interest in and the books that contain them.

My analysis of the discourse of censorship suggests that the people who try to remove books from school curriculum and library collections tend to believe strongly in the power of books. We can understand this attitude if we accept the power of books to change people’s minds, which is, of course, the whole point of education. As I tell my students, it is no mistake that my syllabus includes

books and articles that I hope will lead them to wrestle with ideas. By the end of the course, I hope they will have integrated these ideas and concepts into their own understanding of the world, even if that means disagreeing with some of those ideas. This process of changing an individual through education is exactly what censors are trying to control when they target books in public libraries and schools.

[Ed. Note- excerpted from full-length article; for a PDF copy of the full article send an email to [contact@ovlff.com](mailto:contact@ovlff.com) with the word “Censorship” in the subject line.] ❁

### The New TST - Three Years And Going Strong

It’s hard to believe but Twice-Sold Tales is celebrating its third birthday as the renovated bookstore and meeting room it is today. Our popular used book-

store and the oft used meeting room (in non-Covid times) opened for business in January 2018. Since that time The Friends have taken pride in how

the facility has been so widely adopted as a part of the downtown Ojai experience. Your patronage has provided funds to our three valley public libraries. Thank you! ❁



# Ojai Diversity Book Drive

by Jordan Perry

The book drive was born from a desire to make sure that the students of Ojai are learning about the dynamics of race and power. The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Oluwatoyin Salau and countless other unnamed Black people over the course of the history of the United States have made it clear that our country is in dire need of education to help us understand the effects of systemic racism and the importance of diversity and inclusion. As a former Black student in Ojai, I rarely got to read books with authors, let alone protagonists, that were facing the same questions about identity as I was. This book drive ran from June 22nd to July 4th and used donations to diversify the libraries of Ojai schools and make sure that Ojai students are exposed to intersectional issues like race,

power, and gender from an early age.

The Ojai Diversity Book Drive was born when I was thinking about ways to encourage discussion in schools about racism. I feel that Ojai is a particularly difficult place to talk about racism, especially anti-Black racism, as the population is only 0.5% black. I decided the best way to do this was to get books by authors that are Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, or Latinx into the school libraries. Rather than try to take on the red-tape filled task of trying to make changes to the curriculum, I decided to put the books where they could be used directly by teachers and students.

Starting out, I had three main goals for the Ojai Diversity Book Drive. First, I wanted to ensure

that Ojai educators have access to age-appropriate books that discuss systemic racism & diversity. Second, fill Ojai school libraries with books that allow students to explore and understand their identities by including books by diverse authors and with diverse protagonists. My third goal was to support contemporary LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) authors.

I am happy to say that the Ojai community stepped up and I was able to raise over \$4,700 to buy books. So far, I have ordered and covered 130 books and am planning on doing a second round of ordering in the near future. I completed as much of the order as I could from independent Black-owned bookstores and ordered the rest from Bart's Books. In addition, I am working with OUSD's Guiding Coalition on Diversity and Inclusion to find ways to continue this work, with the possibility of a teacher's book club. I am hopeful that these books will provide resources for students of all ages to begin engaging in conversations about structural racism, power, and identity that will ultimately benefit the entire Ojai Valley.

[Ed. Note: LGBTQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer; the "plus" is intended as an all-encompassing representation of sexual orientations and gender identities.] ❁





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### Recommended Read: Ron's Big Mission

Ronald McNair (October 21, 1950–January 28, 1986) was nine when he took his freedom into his own small hands. Ron's own future as a trailblazer who devoted his life to the ultimate unifying force, our shared cosmic belonging, and the futures of generations for whom he modeled the courage of re-writing the dominant narrative of permission and possibility. Today, a Space Shuttle graces the mural on the walls of the children's room at the Lake City

public library in South Carolina, where all children are allowed to check out any book they wish, including books starring children who look a lot like them. Astronaut Ronald McNair died in the Challenger disaster.

*Ron's Big Mission* by lyricist, scriptwriter, and teacher Rose Blue and former U.S. Navy journalist Corinne J. Naden, illustrated by Don Tate — a lovely addition to these emboldening picture-book biographies of cul-

tural heroes — tells the story of a summer day in the segregated South in 1959 when the young Ron, a voracious reader with a passion for airplanes and dreams of becoming a pilot, awakens with the daring determination to bring home a book from the library checked out under his own name. He knows this is not allowed — he has devoured countless books at the library, but he knows that only white people are allowed to check them out.