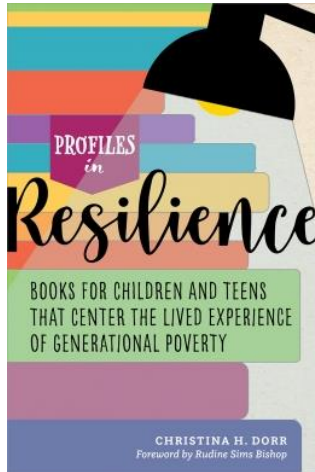


IJIDI: Book Review



Dorr, C. H. (2022). *Profiles in resilience: Books for children and teens that center the lived experience of generational poverty*. ALA Editions.

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Reviewer: KE Hones, KeyInfo, Inc, United States

Book Review Editors: Halie Kerns, SUNY Canton, USA
Stephanie Robertson, Brigham Young University—Hawaii, USA

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Profiles in Resilience: Books for Children and Teens that Center the Lived Experience of Generational Poverty explores a socioeconomic aspect of diversity: that of generational poverty. The book is organized in chapters that profile renowned children’s authors and American cultural and historical icons. Thus, the book seeks to inform its target audience of library and information professionals (particularly school media specialists) by highlighting the biographies of children’s authors (for theoretical foundation) and featuring biographies of historical icons for children’s work (for professional practice).

The foreword is penned by renowned children’s literature scholar, Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, professor emeritus from Ohio State University. Considered the “mother of multicultural children’s literature” (Chenoweth, 2019), Dr. Bishop cosigns that *Profiles in Resilience* “helps to expand the definition of diversity in children’s books by shedding light on an element of diversity that is sometimes overlooked—economic situation or income” (p. xi).

In her introduction, author Christina H. Dorr relates her personal experiences growing up as part of a large family cycling through generational poverty. Dorr references several authors who have researched and written about generational poverty. She cites the 15 characteristics of generational poverty from Ruby Payne’s 2005 book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* to conceptualize that for library and information professionals, empathy “is a must for being able to provide library and educational services that are meaningful and meet their needs” (p. xxvii). Payne (2005) states “that education is the key and that several supports and skills are necessary: role models and emotional resources, support systems, discipline, instruction to improve academic achievement, and developing positive relationships with adults. This is where librarians, teachers, counselors, and other personnel who work with children and teens are crucial” (as cited in Dorr, 2022, p. xxvii).

In the two main sections of *Profiles in Resilience*, Inspiring Storytellers and Inspiring Stories, the twenty facets of generational poverty are explored and expanded via the biographical profiles of various children’s authors and historical figures. Part One, *Inspiring Storytellers*,

features biographical sketches of the following legendary children’s authors and illustrators: Cynthia Rylant, Matt de la Pena, Christian Robinson, Gary Paulsen, Kelly Yang, Patricia Polacco, Elizabeth Acevedo, Rex Ogle, Joseph Bruchac, and Jason Reynolds. Part Two, *Inspiring Stories*, profiles the lives of the following historic luminaries: Sonia Sotomayor, John Lewis, Jose Hernandez, Coco Chanel, Carlos Santos, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Wilma Mankiller, Diane Guerrero, Homer Hickam, Barack Obama, Kamala Harris, and Ruth Bader Ginsberg. The stories of the featured authors, illustrators, and historical figures, provide authentic voices that can help build empathy in readers. The biographical chapters provide a mirror and self-affirmation for library practitioners seeking stories about generational poverty as a source of guidance and inspiration for developing diverse library collections and providing information for the communities they serve.

Dorr provides a compilation of narratives about the lives of authors, illustrators, and historic figures from diverse backgrounds. For example, in African American children’s illustrator Christian Robinson’s profile, he shares his story of how he grew up in a crowded apartment with his grandmother and several relatives. “We didn’t have a lot growing up, but I at least always had a pencil and paper. I couldn’t control the circumstances around me, but I could at least decide what I wanted on that piece of paper, what sort of world I wanted to create. ... Today I recognize that drawing was a way for me to create space for myself” (p. 23).

Award-winning children’s author and illustrator, Patricia Polocco, grew up in poverty and in her profile chapter, she discussed how she looked to both the real and imaginary worlds in art and nature. Polocco had trouble reading as a child, when finally, one of her teachers discovered that she was dyslexic. Even so, Polocco was confident that she “was very smart and could cover up the fact that she couldn’t read—even though her own mother was a teacher” (p. 38). Many of Polocco’s books recreates stories and experiences from her childhood growing up with Russian and Ukrainian grandparents in a diverse community.

Native American children’s writer Joseph Bruchac grew up living with his grandparents. In his profile chapter, Bruchac reflects that “it’s really important to recognize our common humanity. We feel sorry for someone because they’re not as well off as we are. But every human being has their own resources, their own strengths, their own weaknesses” (p. 61). Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latinx U.S. Supreme Court justice, grew up with a strong extended family, of rich Puerto Rican heritage where oral storytelling was cherished. While Civil Rights activist and U.S. Congressman, John Lewis (1940-2020) shared in his profile that he had “a wonderful teacher in elementary school who told me: ‘Read, my child, read,’ and I tried to read everything” (p. 83).

Each *Inspiring Storyteller* and *Inspiring Profile* includes titles written by and about the featured person. *Profiles in Resilience* also boasts four appendices of book lists and resources featuring several of the profiled authors and illustrators and additional stories of resilient individuals. Dorr has selected a wide range of authors and illustrators, who write about generational poverty. Although, Coco Chanel is an unusual choice because youth readers of today may not readily be aware of Chanel’s historic impacts, aside from her contributions to the fashion industry. Also, the coverage in the *Inspiring Profiles* section presented many political figures and could be more balanced in future editions with a stronger focus on sociocultural icons from diverse cultures.

Overall, *Profiles in Resilience* is an introduction for librarians, teachers, and community-

based information professionals to learn how authors, illustrators, and historical figures have led lives of resilience in response to generational poverty. While this book is a start for developing resources, for future editions, it will be important to continue to find and share stories from a wide variety of cultures (i.e., globally), immigrant/refugee voices, and perhaps, teen authors. As author and poet Jason Reynolds said in his profile, “Children don’t need your salvation, they need you to see them, and thank them for coming to the library” (p. xxxii). It is in this spirit that librarians, educators, and community-based information professionals can make the highest use of Christina H. Dorr’s unique resource guide.

References

Chenoweth, R. (2019, September 5). Rudine Sims Bishop: ‘Mother’ of multicultural children’s literature. <https://ehe.osu.edu/news/listing/rudine-sims-bishop-diverse-childrens-books>

KE Hones (kayhones@yahoo.com) worked in K-12 San Francisco (USA) school libraries from 1987-2020. In 2013 she became the librarian at three San Francisco County high schools: Downtown Continuation High School, Civic Center Secondary School (7-12), and Hilltop Pregnant Minors High School. She established the first libraries at Civic Center and Hilltop. Hones is a National Board Credentialed Librarian. She has supported teachers, counselors, and librarians who are National Board Candidates. She has tutored new teachers taking required state credentialing tests. She writes grants to support the school libraries and also has presented several workshops on grant writing. KE presents workshops locally, at state and national libraries, teacher conferences, and internationally with the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL).