



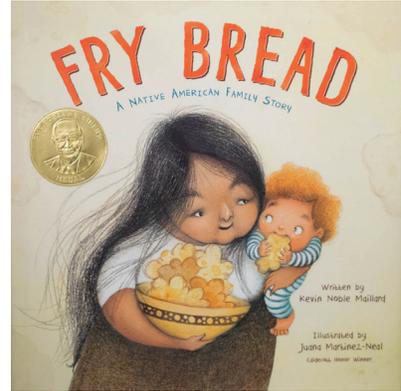
# Sibert

## MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES

### Sibert Medal Acceptance Remarks by Kevin Noble Maillard

I wrote and illustrated my first book in Mrs. Holcumbrink's second grade class at Fulton Elementary School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. It was a jumbled narrative about a block party. And a dog. And a rainbow and probably a bicycle. The dog died in the end. It was illustrated in smudged crayon, stick-legged creatures, spoked, yellow orbs in the sky (the sun), and crude blue skies meeting horizontal stripes of green grass. Just picture a South Park aesthetic, and you'll get the idea.

It was my masterpiece—my *œuvre maitresse*—and I was so proud to enter it into the citywide story competition, where it was sure to win. All the second graders in the district would convene in an auditorium downtown to hear the announcement of the winners. When they called my name, I would stride to the stage in my brand new sneakers (purchased for the occasion) with my chest puffed out, buoyed by the satisfaction that someone had read my story and liked it so much that they just had to give it an award. I was going to be a champion, and my stupendous writing and stunning artwork would be seen, recognized, and validated. I wanted to be, as kids describe, “special.”



Before they announced the winner, a teacher floated up to the podium to read Judith Viorst's *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*. As she recounted the tale of this nebbish, unfortunate child, I listened with acute wonderment. He complained so much! Everything bad happened to him, but he was so funny! Oh, the woes of Alexander and his valhalla of Australia! There he was, a little boy with the worst of luck, situated at the brunt of everything, yet still, he was the protagonist of his very own book. He wasn't perfect. He didn't get the best grades. And he didn't even get to eat his favorite foods. But in this story, he mattered. He was seen.

I didn't win the competition, if you were wondering. But Marsha Berryhill did. Marsha's perfect drawings



Photo Credit (left): Chris Ouyoung  
Photo Credit (right): Jade Beall

**Kevin Noble Maillard and Juana Martinez-Neal** are the winners of the 2020 (Robert F.) Sibert Award for *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* (Roaring Brook/Macmillan). They delivered their acceptance remarks during the ALA Book Award Celebration held Sunday, June 28, 2020, on YouTube.

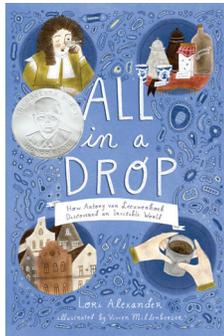
For more information about the Sibert Medal, visit <http://bit.ly/sibert-medal>.



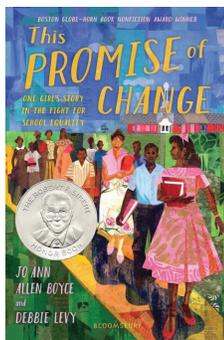
Kevin Noble Maillard is a professor and journalist. A graduate of Duke University and Penn Law School, he is a tenured professor of law at Syracuse University and has appeared as a legal commentator on MSNBC, CNN, and ABC. Maillard also is a writer for *The New York Times* and has written for *The Atlantic*, *Essence*, and *The Week*. *Fry Bread* is his debut children's book. Originally from Oklahoma, Maillard is an enrolled citizen of the Seminole Nation. He currently lives in Manhattan.



## 2020 SIBERT HONOR BOOKS



***All in a Drop:  
How Antony van  
Leeuwenhoek  
Discovered an  
Invisible World***  
Lori Alexander  
Illus. by Vivien  
Mildenberger  
Houghton Mifflin  
Harcourt



***This Promise of  
Change: One Girl's  
Story in the Fight for  
School Equality***  
Jo Ann Allen Boyce  
and Debbie Levy  
Bloomsbury

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of blonde children and perfectly un-lopsided balloons mesmerized the judges, and her artwork had no smears on it. It was at that moment, in all my elementary, steely determination, that I decided that I would write the perfect story that would make teachers leap and weep.

I never wrote that favorite book in school. It was always Marsha. Or Brent. Or Amy. Or Steve. Teachers described their stories and poems with Zagat-like wonder in quoted snippets: “dazzling,” “so darn clever,” stories “that everyone can relate to.” They would read them out loud so the rest of the class could witness these literary manifestations of greatness.

They never read mine.

In 2020, we are witnessing a dynamic transformation in whose stories count and what kinds of narratives receive attention. I take part in this sea change with Traci Sorell, Cynthia Leitich Smith, Katrina Moore, and Kwame Alexander. These multihued stories and lives matter, and establishing the utter importance of this mandate at the earliest age, through literature for children, is in my strongest opinion, the most effective and transformative element of social change.

Picture books are *the* popular culture for young children, and the current dialogue surrounding the importance of representation in Hollywood is only a fraction of the movement. It's no coincidence that these awards are called the “Librarian Oscars.” We

create platforms for imagination and distill everyday life into persuasive vignettes for developing minds. We build worlds for them, and we build worlds where they and others feel the cornerstones of inclusion.

I thank the ALSC and the Sibert committee for their hard work and for seeing, recognizing, and validating the people and history of *Fry Bread* and giving it this platform that allows others to see it.

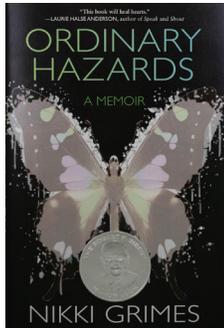
I am grateful to Connie Hsu at Roaring Brook for taking a chance on my story about the food of an indigenous family, and to Megan Abbate for encouraging me to inquire more. My agent, Gillian Mackenzie, who started working with me after this book, pushes me to believe in my own ideas and talent. Elise McMullen, our outside reader, asked tough, dissertation-level questions about the back matter.

This book about food and family would not be possible without that of my own. My partner Iris, and children Hampton and Peregrine, served as substantive and artistic inspiration. Old ladies in my Oklahoma family: my Aunt Fannie, Aunt Maggie, and also my own mother, taught me how to cook food and how to share it. And lastly, I have a message for the second grade boy at Fulton Elementary in 1979: I see you, we see you, and your story and your life matters.

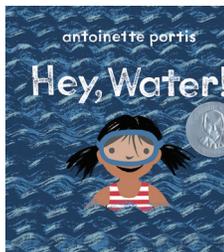
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## 2020 SIBERT HONOR BOOKS



**Ordinary Hazards:**  
*A Memoir*  
Nikki Grimes  
WordSong/  
Highlights



**Hey, Water!**  
Antoinette Portis  
Illus. by the author  
Neal Porter/Holiday

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## MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES

### Sibert Medal Acceptance Remarks by Juana Martinez-Neal

I felt an immediate bond to Kevin and his words when I first read *Fry Bread*. As soon as I was done reading it, I went back to the beginning and read it again, and then again for a third time. While I was reading Kevin's words, I came to the profound realization that I had to illustrate this book.

Weeks and then months went by until it was time to dedicate myself to work fully on *Fry Bread*. And with that came doubt. What does it take to tell someone else's story? How could I illustrate this story if I am not a Native American? I would be lying if I say that I did not struggle with these questions throughout every step of the making of this book.

Every time doubt overtook me, I reminded myself of the reason why I wanted to illustrate this book at the beginning. It was because of what Kevin and I had in common and shared: the big family get-togethers; the sharing of the kitchen with our elders; the large mixed race families filled with love; and, being born and raised in Peru, the understanding of how Indigenous people are treated and mistreated. But most importantly, it was the pride to continue to carry on our traditions and pass them along to our children.

It was clear at this point that the best

way to illustrate this book was letting Kevin guide me. I made sketches and asked questions. Lots of questions. I tormented myself really.

After constant back and forth and with Kevin's help, the right details started to appear.

A simple bowl would turn into the bowl grandma uses to mix the dough.

A simple skirt would become a traditional Seminole skirt worn by the family's auntie.

A boy with glasses would become Kevin's boy, and his dog.

Just like in a recipe, there were many, many details discussed, tweaked, added, and removed in the process of making *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*. Yet there is one more I must include: its endpapers, which were created as a way to include all Nations and Tribes that currently are in what is now the United States in a Seminole-specific book. An attempt to embrace and include them all in one book was very important.

This is the last piece I painted for the book, and it encompasses what I am poorly trying to communicate here with words. In here, I am sitting at the table, present without interruptions; bringing a bit of my own culture to the table with my chamomile tea and a very Peruvian pan francés; enjoying my time seeing the family enjoying their time spent together.

Juana Martinez-Neal was born in Lima, Peru, where she studied painting and began illustrating as a teenager. In 2012, she won the Portfolio Showcase grand prize from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Her artwork for *La Princesa and the Pea*, written by Susan Middleton Elya, won the 2018 Pura Belpré Medal. Martinez-Neal's debut picture book as author-illustrator, *Alma and How She Got Her Name*, was a 2019 Caldecott Honor Book. She currently lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.



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So to conclude, my approach to illustrating *Fry Bread* was to bring ideas to our team while asking many more questions. It was to consciously let others help me make choices, so that I could best honor a culture that is not mine, yet one that I deeply respect and admire.

My most profound thanks to the Robert F. Sibert committee for choosing to honor *Fry Bread: A Na-*

*tive American Family Story*. My thanks to ALSC and ALA. My infinite gratitude to Kevin for writing this book, and Connie Hsu for entrusting me with telling this story; to my agent, Stefanie Sanchez Von Borstel for being my left hand and right foot. You help me stand, Stefanie. Thank you to Jen Kennan, Aram Kim, Megan Abbate, and Elise McMullen-Ciotti. Without your help, *Fry Bread* wouldn't be the book that it is. And,

to Roaring Brook Press and Macmillan for the immense support to *Fry Bread* since the very beginning. Thank you to all who embraced and shared *Fry Bread*. This book wouldn't be in the hands of readers if it wasn't for each one of you.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Mis gracias infinitas.

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For more information about the Sibert Medal, visit <http://bit.ly/sibert-medal>.

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