



Larry Dane Brimner is the winner of the 2018 (Robert F.) Sibert Award for *Twelve Days in May: Freedom Ride 1961* (Calkins Creek/Highlights). He delivered his acceptance remarks at the ALSC Awards Program on Monday, June 25, 2018, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

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



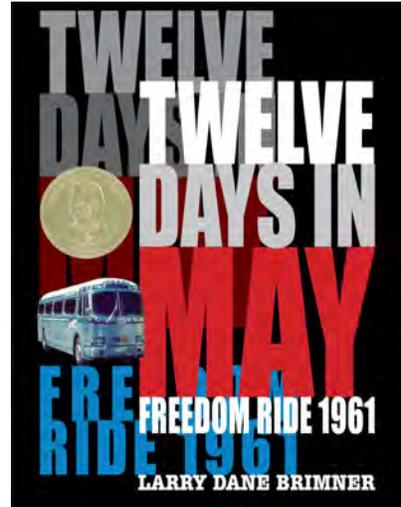
Sibert

MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

I am honored to receive an award that pays tribute to the art of nonfiction, the sometimes forgotten bastard child of children's literature. I am incredibly proud to be in the company of so many great and talented authors and illustrators whose work is also being celebrated today. It is still, all these months later, a pinch-me moment, and I am most grateful to Tali Balas, the Robert F. Sibert committee, and the Association for Library Service to Children. When the committee phoned that Sunday evening in February, I almost didn't answer, assuming it to be a telemarketer or politician requesting a donation. I usually ignore unfamiliar numbers or answer them with a curt, "Tucson Police Department, Homicide," because I've found that stops them before they begin. I'm so happy I answered with a simple, if cautious, "Hello?"

I recall during the early days of my career that an editor suggested I send him some nonfiction ideas. At the time, my thought was, *Yeah, but I write stories*. It took some time to realize that nonfiction is stories—stories wrapped in truth.

Twelve Days in May: Freedom Ride 1961 came about from a request by librarian Cindy Clevenger, who asked Kathleen Krull to write something about the ride for a younger audience. Kathy passed the idea along to



me because she felt it would complement my other civil rights titles. When I begin a project, there are always questions I want to answer for myself, as much as for young readers. I especially wanted to know who, besides John Lewis, participated in the May 1961 ride. This question of who is especially important to me as a writer because I like to shine light on the unknowns of history.

As I researched, I also was trying to find my door into the structure of the story. I found it through an academic account written by Raymond Arsenault, which also included a map that tracked the ride from Washington, DC, to Birmingham. It came to me then to write it as a day-by-day journal or diary in present tense—present

Larry Dane Brimner began writing—poems, stories, and articles—in college. He taught for 20 years at the grade school, high school, and college level, concluding his teaching career at San Diego State University, College of Education to begin writing full-time. Known for his well-researched nonfiction for youth, Brimner has received many awards, including the Jane Addams Book Award for *We Are One: The Story of Bayard Rustin*, a Teacher's Choice Award for *Birmingham Sunday*, and the Carter G. Woodson Award for *Black & White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor*, among other honors. He currently lives in Tucson, Arizona, and San Diego, California.



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tense to help put readers on the ride.

I knew sidebars would interrupt the flow of the present-tense story, the journal, but there were details readers needed knowledge of. My editor has a delicious way of referring to back-matter as “crap at the back.” When I delivered the manuscript, I sent along a note explaining that the book doesn’t really begin until the narrative starts on May 4 (page 16 in the published book). “Everything else,” I wrote, “is either crap at the front or crap at the back.” She got it, and came up with the idea of the calendar to separate the front-matter from the main text. The book’s designer also got it and determined that front-matter and back-matter, both told in past tense, needed to be distinguished by a different font. If it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes one to birth a book.

The Robert F. Sibert Medal—this isn’t something I ever imagined for my own narrative. I want to thank Cindy and Kathy, of course, but also my Calkins Creek/Boyd’s Mills Press family, especially my editor Carolyn Yoder, who

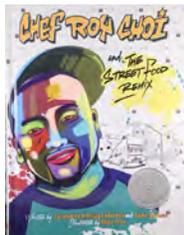
champions history (and who isn’t too upset when I miss a deadline, repeatedly); and Barbara Grzeslo, for the care and attention to detail she gives each book she designs.

I am grateful to my late parents, both Birmingham natives, for filling me with stories of the South and instilling in me a belief that injustice needs to be exposed if it is to be righted; and to Jim for understanding.

The power of nonfiction is that it dares to speak truth. Nonfiction stories show how real people of all genders, colors, and ethnicities have helped build our nation. They also demonstrate that voice is power. A single voice amplified can lead to change. I want young people who read this book to realize that their voices can help shape our national narrative.

Awards like the Robert F. Sibert Medal and Honors go a long way toward helping our books reach their audience. Thank you again to the Sibert committee for this prestigious honor.

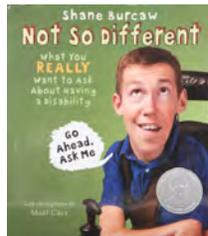
2018 SIBERT HONOR BOOKS



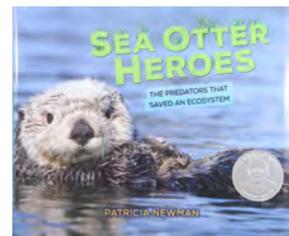
Chef Roy Choi and the Street Food Remix
Jacqueline Briggs Martin
and June Jo Lee
Illus. by Man One
Readers to Eaters



Grand Canyon
Jason Chin
Illus. by the author
Neal Porter/Roaring
Brook/Holtzbrinck



Not So Different: What You Really Want to Ask about Having a Disability
Shane Burcaw
Illus. by Matt Carr
Roaring Brook



Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators That Saved an Ecosystem
Patricia Newman
Millbrook/Lerner

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