

WOMONSCAPE TIMES

~A monthly publication by the Womonscape Center Inc.~



W O M O N S C A P E C E N T E R

No-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

The *No Rules Book Group* (NRBG) met in June, once again in our newly-remodeled location (with windows). Take a look at some of the interesting books and films we discussed in the space below.

Our next *No-Rules Book Group* Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 20 at 10:30 a.m. We'll meet at the Richland County Courthouse, near the lower lobby elevators, and walk to our meeting room.

JUNE BOOK SELECTIONS



BACK TO THE GARDEN by Laurie R. King

Inspector Raquel Laing sets out to solve a fifty-year-old mystery involving several missing persons, a magnificent California estate, a hippy commune, and a reclusive Vietnam veteran. Laurie R. King has won more than seven major awards for her writing, including two *Edgar Awards*. This book, published in September of 2022, is her latest in a long line of successful thrillers.

A GUIDE TO MIDWESTERN CONVERSATION by Taylor Kay Phillips

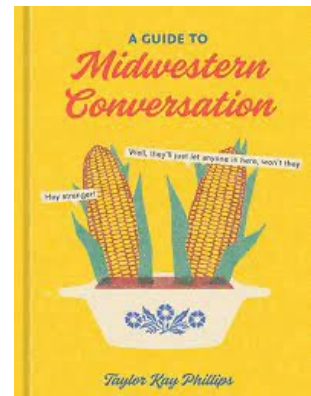
Ms. Phillips is herself a Midwestern native, with a deep affection for her home state of Missouri and for the central area of the country. In this tongue-in-cheek homage to language she has collected some of the most common phrases of what she calls the "land-locked" part of the U.S. She has organized the phrases by category and carefully and humorously explained the meanings behind them. Included is a whole chapter about how to negotiate The Midwestern Good-bye, an analysis of the various types of Finished Basements, and how to understand a Midwestern conversation about The Weather. The result is lighthearted yet informative, particularly for the confused out-of-area visitor.

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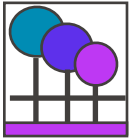
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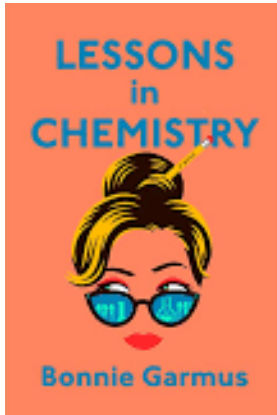
NO-RULES BOOK GROUP

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LESSONS IN CHEMISTRY

by Bonnie Garmus

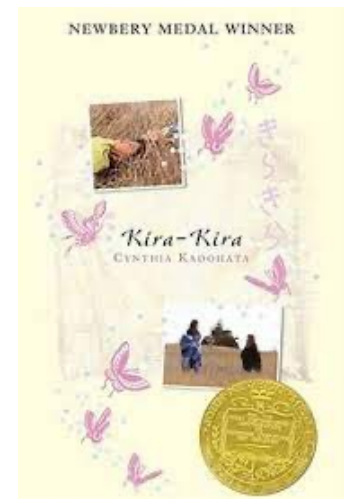


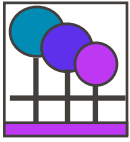
What makes this book so delightful is that the protagonist, Elizabeth Zott, is not only a woman: she is a woman who takes herself seriously, is brilliant, has a great sense of humor, does not back down from her beliefs, is confident, dresses in comfortable clothing, and makes her own rules about her life. Ms. Zott also participates in a non-traditional sport, and has an astonishing relationship with her dog, Six-Thirty. If that isn't enough, this book is set in the 1950s when this kind of woman was an anomaly. The public has been so enamored by this debut novel, that it has been on the *New York Times* best seller list for nearly two years, and it is now set to be a mini tv-series to stream on Apple TV, starring Brie Larson (broadcast time to be announced).

KIRA-KIRA

by Cynthia Kadohata

Sometimes you want a book to push you out of your literary complacency, to introduce you to new ideas, new types of characters, and new ways of living. And sometimes it's a great idea to check out the children's section of the library to find a book that meets this description. *Kira-Kira* is just such a book. Written for young adult readers, this Newbery Medal winner takes a look at the life of a Japanese-American girl, growing up 1960s Georgia. Her parents both work long hours at factory jobs involving poultry: her mother processes chicken for grocery stores and her father is a chicken-sexer, trained to determine the sex of newborn chicks within hours of their birth. The family faces challenges that involve race, poverty, culture, family, and illness. The main character, Katie, a middle child of high school age, reflects on her earliest life decisions and relationships with a mixture of embarrassment and humor, and a dash of regret. The title of the book, *Kira-Kira*, is Japanese for "twinkle" in the way small objects sometimes reflect light and become sparkling or glittering. Katie discovers that, despite her family's challenges, she has still found ways to put some sparkle in her life.





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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP

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FILM REVIEWS

HELP! WE BOUGHT A VILLAGE (streaming on PBS)

In this docu-series, interested British investors with a sense of history, community and plain old curiosity are paired with villages in need of rejuvenation. The investors agree to buy an old European village in England, France, or Italy and restore the homes and businesses for new use.



LITTLE RICHARD: I AM EVERYTHING (streaming on PBS)



Richard Wayne Penniman (a.k.a. Little Richard) was a complicated and controversial entertainer who nevertheless had a huge influence on rock 'n roll music and LGBTQ+ culture. This documentary combines interviews with celebrities such as John Waters, Mick Jagger, and Billy Porter along with clips of performances and other moments from the life of Little Richard himself. The result is a tribute that will engage everyone from ardent fans to those who are just discovering this musical legend.

ANGELAH JOHNSON-REYES: SAY I WON'T (streaming on YouTube)

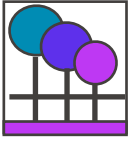
Looking for the kind of comedy that allows you to laugh freely, without wondering if you'll be uncomfortable or offended in the next moment? This comedy special is an excellent choice. Ms. Johnson-Reyes uses PG language to discuss everyday topics such as Costco, aging, tornados, studio apartments, and the various meanings of the expression "bless your heart."



JUDY BLUME FOREVER (streaming on Amazon Prime)

Incredibly, the acclaimed writer Judy Blume is now in her eighties; not surprisingly, she's still actively in love with books and writing. In this documentary, directed by Davina Pardo and Leah Wolchok, Ms. Blume talks about her early life, her gradual evolution as a writer, and the ways in which her personal life and writer's life complemented each other and became intertwined. We find out the story behind the story of characters such as "Fudge" and "Blubber." We also hear from her friends, family, and fans about how her life and writing choices changed the way we look at children's literature.





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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN? Fela Warschau

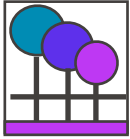
This month in the *Womonscape Times* we're featuring Fela Warschau, whose name is honored in a special room at the *Mead Public Library* of Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Unfortunately, much of Fela's early story is not unique. She was born Fela Jakubowicz in Ozorkow, a medium-sized town in Poland in 1926. Her family practiced Orthodox Judaism, and were part of a Hassidic sect. Her father was a jeweler who made gold and silver jewelry to order, and supplemented this work with engraving and watch repair. Her mother was a homemaker. Fela and her grandmother, father, mother, sister, and two brothers lived in an apartment above a grocery store. In the fall of 1939, when she was not quite 13 years old, Fela had graduated from primary school and was working as an apprentice in a textile factory when the German army invaded Poland during World War II. The soldiers shot dozens of Jewish people, took over Jewish businesses, and looted household goods in Jewish homes. German martial law was imposed on the Jewish citizens of Ozorkow, which meant that the German authorities gradually took away more and more freedom of movement and economic activity. This continued until 1942, when the entire Jewish community of Ozorkow was taken to the Jewish ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Two years later, in 1944, the remaining Jews, including Fela and her family, were herded onto cattle cars and taken by train to concentration camps. Fela and her sister, Helen, went to work at camps in Auschwitz, Hamburg and Bergen-Belsen. By 1945 the two girls were near death. Here is a transcript of her experience in the last days of the war.



But we got weaker every day because there was nothing to eat. Finally, the last day when we had nothing, I could barely drag myself. I said to my sister, "I'm going to lie down and just die in there. I do not want to die and people should just step over me like others do." They followed me. We all lie down there and just about said goodbye to life. One of our friends—she was even younger than I was, the youngest—she was always searching, trying to find a way. So she said she has to take the last look outside and see what's going on. When she came back she said to me, "There's something funny going out there. People are running all over the place" and it's, it's unusual. It's not what usually happen. And I told her to just lay down and die in peace. She must be hallucinating. She insisted, so my sister walked out with her. When my sister came back, I don't know with what strength she came back, grabbed me by my arm, and she says, "Get up, get up. Guess what, everybody's running, and the gates are open. There's a man sitting, is it a tank or whatever"—we couldn't distinguish at that time one thing from the other—"he is speaking through a loudspeaker. His words are being translated. I think we were liberated." When I got up and walked outside, my eyes couldn't comprehend. It just didn't register. It's unbelievable. I couldn't believe this was really true, so I said to my sister that she has to grab me by my arm and do something physical so I realize I am really alive and we were liberated. It was the English army that liberated us.

(Continued on page 5)



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?



(Continued from page 4)

Fela Warschau

Fela and her sister were sent to a Displaced Person (DP) camp where they learned that most of their extended family had been killed during the war. Out of approximately sixty relatives, only Fela, Helen, and two of their cousins survived.

We were weak enough to get along with everybody, we were all happy just to be alive and be liberated. But you see, um, reading the lists from other camps—from the survivors that lived through this—we did not find anybody which...at this point, what kept me going was all this, and I was fine, but when I didn't find anybody, this is the time we almost...I caved in. I only lived with that hope that I will meet my family.

In the DP camp Fela met and married Ansel Warschau. The couple had a daughter, Martha, and immigrated to the United States. They eventually had another daughter, Sally, and settled in Sheboygan in 1951, where Fela's sister Helen was already living. Fela worked for many years in a plastics factory in Sheboygan, and was a member of the local synagogue and active in her new community.

It was upon her retirement from the plastics factory, however, that Fela really began her most important career, as a speaker and educator about the Holocaust. After a story about her experiences appeared in *The Sheboygan Press* in 1985, Fela began getting requests to tell her story to school children and others. She spoke at schools, churches, colleges, universities, and other religious and civic organizations in Sheboygan and throughout Wisconsin. Her story became archived at the *National Holocaust Museum* in Washington, DC. And Fela and her husband, Ansel, established Sheboygan's Jewish Holocaust Collection, housed in the Fela and Ansel Warschau Room of the city's *Mead Public Library*.



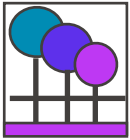
Whether we are talking about the Holocaust or any history, it is for everyone. History is not just the past—it is our present and our future. It is not just a way to learn facts; it is a way to learn who we are, how we make choices, how we can determine our future. It is a way to understand each other and to share our world.

During the 1985 interview with *The Sheboygan Press*, reporter Dawn Belleau asked Fela what she wanted people to remember from her interviews and presentations. She replied somberly.

Please beware of too-easy schemes. Beware of someone promising you an easy life. Please think that it might come at someone else's pain and misery. Don't get caught up in a current of evil. Try to make the right decisions—not just about your life, but your fellow man.

In case a trip to Sheboygan is not on your calendar, you can find out more information, including video interviews of Ms. Warschau, by checking out the *Mead Library* website, www.meadpl.org/warschau.





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WOMEN'S SYMBOLS

Most of us are familiar with the universal women's symbol used in the logo of this newsletter, from a biology class or a feminist poster. But where did this symbol originate? And are there other women's symbols that are important, even if less well-known? We decided to see what we could find out. Here is some information about two of these symbols. Other symbols will be featured in forthcoming newsletters.

The Venus Symbol



The women's symbol we use so often in this newsletter is actually called the Venus Symbol and dates from the 4th century. Since Venus is the name of a planet as well as the Roman goddess of love, the meaning of this symbol is a bit complicated. From a mythology standpoint, Venus and the Venus Symbol represent love, prosperity, desire, fertility, and beauty. The design of the symbol has been interpreted as representing the hand-mirror of the goddess. Since ancient mirrors were originally made of polished copper, the Venus Symbol is also used to represent copper. In the 1750s the Venus Symbol was first used to represent the female sex in biology, a convention introduced by the scientist Linnaeus. During the 1960s, the Venus Symbol became associated with modern feminism and women's civil rights.

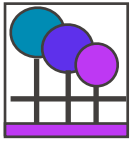
The Spiral Goddess

The Spiral Goddess looks like a silhouette of a woman with both hands raised in the air and features a spiral in her belly. This symbol comes from the Pagan and Wiccan traditions and can be seen on ancient Celtic structures dating back thousands of years. The spiral part of this symbol is significant in that it represents the constant cycles and evolution of nature and life. Since the spiral is drawn on the image of a woman's body, it can be said to represent the menstrual cycle or birth/new life. And the flow of the spiral should be seen as outward, toward creativity, progress, and growth rather than inward, toward implosion and surrender. The other significant part of this symbol is the way the hands are held above the head rather than in the usual depiction of women holding their hands clasped down in front in order to conceal their bodies. The hand position of the Spiral Goddess allows her to be fully exposed, to reclaim herself as powerful.



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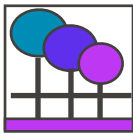
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JULY 20— is our next
scheduled
No-Rules Book Group
in Richland Center.
See Page 1 for details.

**Womonscape
Times**

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~Here are the women featured in the JUNE CHALLENGE
whose pictures you were asked to guess~

JUNE 11: SHERINA MUNAF

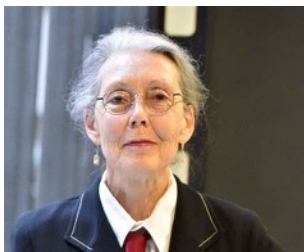


**JUNE 14: HARRIET
BEECHER STOWE**



JUNE 28: BELGIN DORUK

JUNE 21: ANNE CARSON



JUNE 23: MARIJA NAUMOVA



* Listed are birthdates and names for the mystery photos