

# 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

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### NO-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

The NRBG met as usual on Thursday, February 15, then agreed to take a one-month break in March. Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 18, at 10:30am at the Richland County Courthouse. Look for us in Conference Room #1 on the lower level. Come with a book or other media favorite to share, or just come and join us for some always-fascinating conversation.

Here are some brief reviews from the February meeting.

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### 50 Years of Ms.: The Best of the Pathfinding Magazine That Ignited a Revolution

Edited by Katherine Spillar and the staff of Ms.



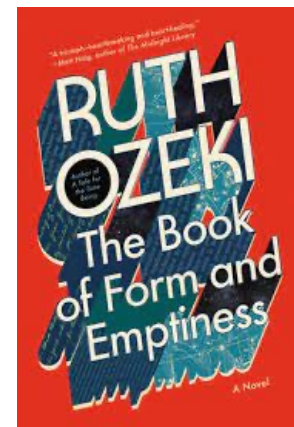
This is a rich, rich collection of articles, over one hundred in all, that trace the concerns of feminist thinkers over the last five decades. Arranged in chronological order, the book includes essays, interviews, reflections, and reports centered on topics ranging from body hair to divorce, and from rap to needlework. Because of the beauty and intensity of the writing, our reviewer found that the book was best read in small doses, an article or two at a time. So many of the ideas presented show how far women have come over the years, but also how important it is to protect these changes, and to continue to push for more.

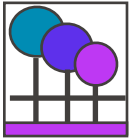
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### The Book of Form and Emptiness

by Ruth Ozeki

Have you ever read a book narrated by...a book? There are several human characters in this book, including a woman, her husband and their son. The book is narrated mostly by the son, Benny, and the book itself, writing about Benny and his life. Ozeki's brilliant and highly unusual novel focuses on such timely subjects as mental illness, drug use, hoarding, homelessness, school, fitting in, hearing voices, and writing. She challenges the reader to think about the concepts of form and emptiness: what the written word can provide, and how we can learn from inanimate objects and people of all kinds. Ozeki's writing stretches the brain by combining beautiful prose with insightful perspectives. Do not be intimidated by the length or unusual nature of this novel: it is well-worth the time invested.





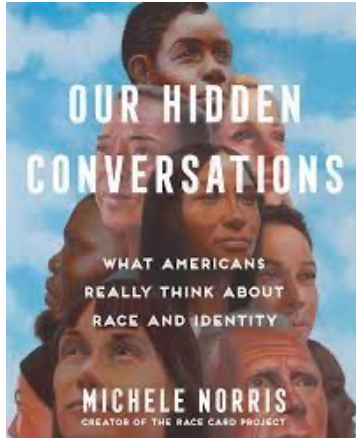
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**NO-RULES BOOK GROUP**

(Continued from page 1)



**Our Hidden Conversations: What Americans Really Think about Race and Identity** by Michele Norris



Over the course of 14 years, Award-winning journalist Norris collected six-word stories about race, submitted by over half a million people, mostly Americans.. She called it *The Race Card Project*, and submissions ranged from serious to comic. Here are some examples:

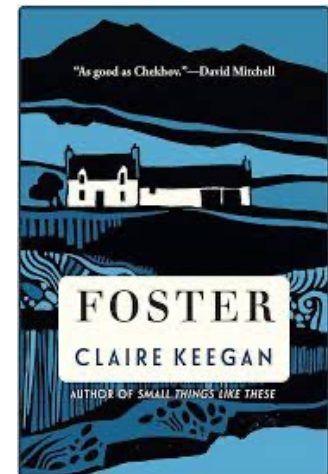
- You're pretty for a Black girl.
- White privilege, enjoy it, earned it.
- I'm only Asian when it's convenient.
- Total non-issue when the aliens arrive.

In her book, Norris has organized many hundreds of these submissions by topic and told the stories behind many of them. The result is a thoughtful, complicated, beautiful listening project by and about identity.

**FOSTER**

by Claire Keegan (The film version of this story, *The Quiet Girl*, is available for streaming on Amazon Prime and Hulu)

This short but beautiful novel is set in rural Ireland in the 1980s. During a summer when her family is stressed at the anticipation of yet another in a series of babies (the 7th? 8th?), introverted nine-year-old Cait is sent to live with her mother's sad but loving cousin, Eibhlin, and Eibhlin's husband, Sean. Here, for the first time in her young life, Cait can count on having enough to eat and plenty of one-on-one attention. Gradually, she begins to thrive, and is able to help Eibhlin and Sean begin to heal. *Foster* won the *Davy Byrnes Award* when it was published in 2010, which at that time was the world's richest prize for any story. It is now a regular part of reading requirements for students in Ireland.



**TELEVISION REVIEW**

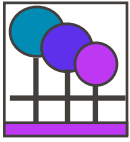


**DEADLOCH**

now streaming on Amazon Prime

Hold on to your hats! This is one heck of a series—a combination of comedy, drama, social commentary, and murder mystery—peppered with some of the worst language our reviewers had ever heard. But wow, what a story line! Set in the fictional town of Deadloch, Tasmania, the story follows two very mismatched female detectives as they work to solve a series of gruesome murders. Written and created by Kate McCartney and Kate McLennan and starring Kate Box and Madeleine Sami.

**\* NOTE: WE WILL NOT BE HAVING A NO-RULES BOOK GROUP IN MARCH \***  
**APRIL 18 IS OUR NEXT MEETING**



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**HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?**

### **ALMA M. KARLIN: SLOVENIAN WANDERER**



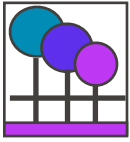
There are those who like to travel, and then there are those who can't seem to stop traveling. Alma Maximiliana Karlin traveled, and traveled, and then traveled some more. Born in 1889, Alma was the only daughter in her family. Her father, an army officer, died when Alma was nine, which meant that she was raised primarily by her strict mother, who was a teacher in a German school. Alma was born with some minor disabilities. For example, her left eye drooped slightly and she had some paralysis on the left side of her body. Alma's mother obsessed about her daughter's appearance, and forced 13-year-old Alma to wear "torture devices:" special braces to correct a raised shoulder. Fortunately, Alma realized that learning and knowledge could free her from her mother's control, so she

became a dedicated language student. Because of her mother's job, Alma grew up with German as her first language, but she also learned to communicate in French, English, and Italian as well as in basic Slovenian.

At nineteen, Alma decided to go to London, where she got a job as a translator and added the study of Japanese, Spanish, Chinese, Sanskrit, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Russian to her regimen (yes, that's a total of THIRTEEN languages!). By 1914, at the age of 25, Alma knew English, French, Italian, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish so well that she was able to pass exams at the Royal Society of Arts in *each* of these languages, and had begun creating a ten-language dictionary. While in London, she met many international students, sparking an interest in world travel. At the start of World War I, Alma was forced to leave England and moved to Sweden, then Norway, and finally Lapland before returning to Slovenia in 1918.

Back in Slovenia, Alma opened a private language school for about a year, in order to earn money for a trip to Asia; by 1919, she was all set to go. She began her journey with 130 U.S. dollars, 950 German marks, a small suitcase, and a typewriter. Her plan was to support herself through work as an interpreter and journalist, but she also willingly took other jobs. Over the course of the next eight years, Alma wrote for more than thirty different newspapers and magazines, completed several novels, and worked on a three-volume travelogue entitled *Einsame Weltreise* (*Around the World Alone*). She also collected a variety of objects, took photographs, and completed watercolor paintings that reflected the scope of her travels. She spent a year in Japan, working at the German embassy and teaching languages at the University of Tokyo. Over the course of her eight year journey, she visited forty-five different countries, spanning every continent except Antarctica.

(Continued on next page)



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***HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?***

***ALMA M. KARLIN***

(Continued from page 3)



Alma sent home thousands of items during her years of travel, including seeds, plants, wedding and funeral garments, jewelry, baskets, statues, and weapons. Her life on the road opened her eyes to parts of the world that few people had ever heard of, let alone seen.

However, traveling as a woman alone was not always easy. Along the way, Alma survived an attempted rape in Peru, an attempted poisoning in Panama, public humiliation in the United States, police interrogation in Taiwan, a failed love affair in Japan, poverty in the Pacific Islands, and a serious case of malaria.

After eight years of travel, Alma returned home, opened a private museum, and completed her series of travelogues.

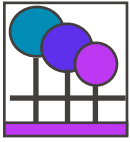
The books became very popular in Europe and garnered the interest of a German journalist, Thea Schreiber Gamelin. Thea came to Slovenia to write an article about Alma, and eventually moved to Celje where the two women lived together. When Nazi soldiers began their occupation of Slovenia, Alma spoke out against the fascist regime and ended up in prison. Thea was able to negotiate Alma's release; however, Alma never was able to do any significant world travel again. After World War II, Slovenian authorities confiscated most of Alma's property, and she spent the last years of her life in a small cottage with Thea, on very limited income. In 1950, at the age of 61, Alma died from a combination of tuberculosis and breast cancer.

While her life was not fully appreciated by her home country during her lifetime, today Alma is regarded for what she was: a truly exceptional Slovenian. Today, the Celje Regional Museum in Slovenia has 1,392 items in its Karlin collection of ethnological and art objects, donated by Thea Schreiber Gamelin after Alma's death. And a statue of Alma, suitcase in hand, can be found on the cobblestone streets of downtown Celje, as if awaiting her next adventure.

***ALMA M. KARLIN QUOTE:***

- I must go. Something inside me forces me to do this, and I will not find peace if I do not follow this force.





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***HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?***

### **MARIA LORENA RAMIREZ, LIGHT-FOOTED WOMAN**

As many athletes of the world are preparing for this summer's olympic games, we thought it might be interesting to write about one you may not have heard mentioned: Maria Lorena Ramirez, or "Lorena the light-footed woman." Lorena might not attend this year's olympics or any olympics, for that matter, but there is no doubt that she is an exceptional, world-class long-distance runner.

Lorena comes from rural Chihuahua, Mexico, and is part of the Raramuri group of indigenous people. Living in a mountainous, sparsely-populated area, the Raramuri have been able to retain much of their original culture, including their language, their style of clothing, their religion, their farming techniques, and their long-distance running traditions. Indeed, the word Raramuri means "runners on foot" or "those who run fast."



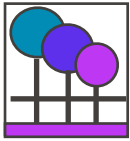
A typical day at home for Lorena may include starting a fire in the family's cast iron stove, grinding corn to make tortillas, herding goats, collecting eggs, hauling water, chopping firewood, sewing clothes and walking. There is no form of modern transportation in Lorena's world, so all work, all errands, all visiting with neighbors, and all shopping is done on foot. While her brothers are encouraged to make the five hour trip to attend school; for Lorena and her sisters there are too many home responsibilities to allow for formal education. But girls *are* allowed to run, just like boys, and Lorena has quite a reputation for being swift, even among a community that is known for its running ability.



Lorena's father is also a runner, and has himself won the Mexican ultra-marathon three times. He is clearly proud of his daughter's running ability. When Lorena won this 63-mile race at the age of 22, the world noticed: she received invitations to participate in similar races in Spain, Argentina, and Japan. With her trademark sandals and colorful skirts, Lorena is easy to identify. Yet she is realistic about the fleeting nature of fame.

"Who knows if they'll keep taking pictures of me when I stop?"

The money she earns from winning races helps her family, and the medals tell a story of her success, even if Lorena herself is not one to brag about her accomplishments. She looks effortless as she runs, hair pulled back and seemingly never tired. After one race, she admitted to feeling "really tired" at the 40 mile mark, so apparently she is human after all. When will she stop? Smiling humbly, Lorena says, "I'll keep running as long as I have the strength."



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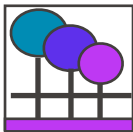
TO:



•WOMONSCAPE  
CENTER, Inc.•  
  
APRIL 18— is our  
next scheduled  
*No-Rules Book Group*  
in Richland Center.  
See Page 1 for details.

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**MARCH IS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH**

International Women's Day is March 8

***Match these women with the dates and events***

- |                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| March 12, 1993 | The Martha Washington                                    | Sworn in as the first woman U.S. Attorney General   |
| March 4, 1933  | Frances Perkins  | First female member of Congress took her seat this day                                    |
|                | Jeannette Rankin   |   |
| March 4, 1917  | Janet Reno   | The first hotel exclusively for women opens in NY   |
| March 2, 1903  | Over 8000 women gathered here to demand a                | First observed in Sonoma County, California   |
| March 8, 1978  | constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to vote. |   |
| March 3, 1913  | Lucy Hobbs Taylor  | First African American woman wins the World Figure Skating Championship                   |
| March 21, 1986 | Women's History Week                                     | First American woman to graduate from dental school was born on this day                  |
| March 14 1833  | Debi Thomas  | Became the first female member of the United States Cabinet, as the US Secretary of Labor |