

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)

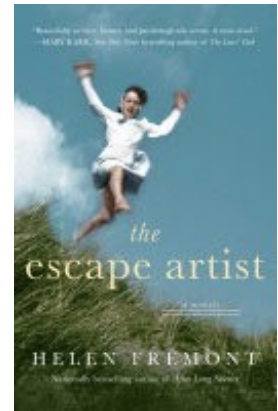
Sadly, a late winter rain/ice/snowstorm prevented the *No-Rules Book Group* from meeting in person in March. We EXPECT to get together again on Thursday, April 17 at 10:30am. We meet at the Richland Center Courthouse in Conference Room #1 in the lobby. In the meantime, here are some reviews of books and other media sent from our readers since our last newsletter.

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ESCAPE ARTIST

by Helen Fremont, Non-Fiction

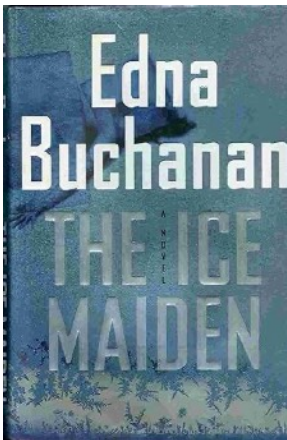
Yes, we reviewed this in March. However, a *Womonscape Times* editor read it since our last newsletter and agrees that it was an excellent, well written and fascinating book, so we thought we'd mention it once more. The author writes about secrets, family relationships, figuring out who you are and how to extract yourself from people who do not enhance your life. This multi-faceted memoir contains references to psychology, history, culture, religion, independence and much more. It is well worth reading.



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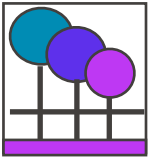
THE ICE MAIDEN

by Edna Buchanan, Fiction



One of our readers stumbled on this mystery novel completely by accident, and was very pleasantly surprised. Buchanan spent many years covering the police and crime beat as a journalist for the *Miami Herald*, where she earned a Pulitzer Prize for reporting. This story reflects her understanding of police work and her experiences following the lives and motives of criminals. Reporter Britt Montero, Buchanan's alter ego, works with the Miami police's cold case squad to solve the mystery behind the fourteen-year-old murder of a promising, affluent teenager. The drama includes the girlfriend of the murder victim (who survived after being left for dead at the scene of the crime), a baby who gets trapped in a well, a romantic liaison that involves a suspect and a police officer, and a group of now-grown teenaged hoodlums. Like any good mystery, the reader is left waiting until the very end to discover the truth of the case.

(Continued on page 2)



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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

(Continued from page 1)



ALL THAT SHE CARRIED:

THE JOURNEY OF ASHLEY'S SACK, A BLACK FAMILY KEEPSAKE

By Tiya Miles, Nonfiction

Historian Tiya Miles carefully reconstructs pieces of the history of American Black women through their needlework, particularly from the 1850s to the present. The main focus of the book is a simple cotton sack, with these carefully embroidered words.

*My great grandmother Rose
mother of Ashley gave her this sack when
she was sold at age 9 in South Carolina
it held a tattered dress 3 handfulls of
pecans a braid of Roses hair. Told her
It be filled with my Love always
she never saw her again
Ashley is my grandmother
Ruth Middleton
1921*



The sack ended up at a flea market in Nashville in the early 2000s, where it was purchased by a woman who was deeply moved by its message. The woman gave it to *Middleton Place*, a slavery-era plantation site, where it resides today. While other historians were able to find out some demographic information about Ruth Middleton, Miles expanded on this data to find out more about Ruth's life, the lives of her foremothers and descendants, and the lives of some of the thousands of unnamed women whose history has been neglected or forgotten.

THAT BIRD HAS MY WINGS:

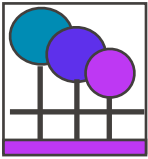
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN INNOCENT MAN ON DEATH ROW

by Jarvis Jay Masters, Nonfiction



As the title implies, writer Jarvis Masters resides in prison, where he has lived for over 40 years. Jarvis admits that he has spent most of his life involved in some sort of criminal activity. Brought up by a drug addicted mother and a violent father ultimately he and his siblings were often left alone while their mother was busy feeding her heroin addiction. Not surprisingly Jarvis got in trouble pretty early in his life and was sent to a series of boys homes and foster homes. While some of these experiences were excellent, others were difficult or even violent. his home was exceptional, loving and kind. Eventually his poor choices landed him at the infamous San Quentin Prison in California. There he was accused of killing prison guard and landed on Death Row. Jarvis claims he had nothing to do with the killing of a prison guard, that the murder chargers are simply based on his being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Jarvis has been trying to get exonerated for many years. This well-written memoir contains some shocking and tragic details, but also many self-reflective, hopeful, and even loving moments.

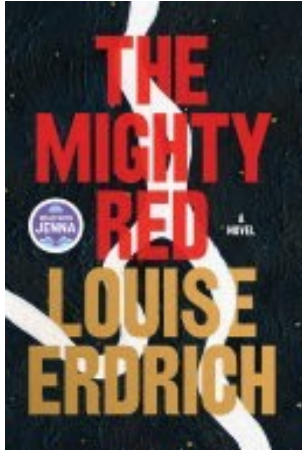
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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP (NRBG)

(Continued from page 2)



THE MIGHTY RED

Lousie Erdrich, Fiction

Prolific, award-winning writer Erdrich takes readers to the sugar beet farming area near North Dakota's side of the Red River for her latest novel. The story focuses on Kismet, a free-spirited high school senior, who has agreed to marry Gary, a handsome, high school jock with some serious emotional issues following the recent deaths of several friends. Kismet's mother, Gary's mother, and the extended community of family, friends, and lovers weigh in on the couple's decisions against a backdrop of the economic challenges and agribusiness realities of 2008. The story is engaging, mysterious, poignant, surprising, comical, and satisfying.

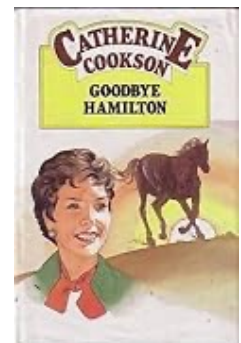
HAMILTON and GOODBYE HAMILTON

by Catherine Cookson, Fiction

These two novels are part of Cookson's three—part Hamilton series. Our reviewer read Hamilton, based on the recommendation of a long-time reader of the *Womonscape Times* who is a big fan of Cookson's

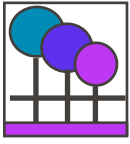


books. Here's what she said: *I've heard of Catherine Cookson for decades but thought her work might be formulaic and dated, so I was pleasantly surprised at how thoroughly these books held my interest. Maisie, the protagonist of the series, invents an imaginary horse named Hamilton as a way of coping with her life during a particularly brutal marriage to a controlling and abusive husband. The first book in the trilogy introduces the reader to Maisie and Hamilton and chronicles the series of events that help Maisie liberate herself from her dreadful marriage. In the second book, Goodbye Hamilton, Maisie, now divorced, marries a wonderful man who treats her well, and supports her relationship with Hamilton.*



Unfortunately her ex-husband enters the picture again as an evil part of her life. Now Hamilton has his own horse-partner and from time to time he and his partner prance in and out of the story. By the end, when Maisie is on her own, she finally says goodbye to Hamilton and starts her life yet again. I'm looking forward to the third book, Harold, in the series to see how Cookson ties up all the details of Maisie's life.

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NO-RULES BOOK GROUP

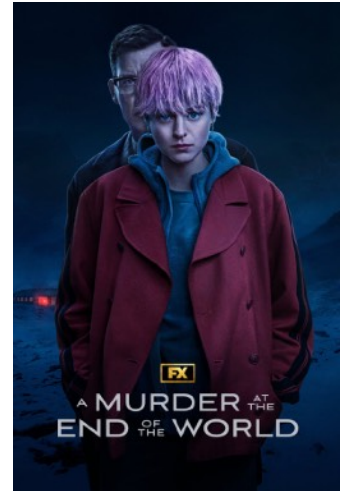
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FILM/TV REVIEWS

MURDER AT THE END OF THE WORLD,
Limited Series, Murder mystery/thriller, Hulu

Murder at the End of the World is a seven episode mystery set in the present or not-too-distant future with elements that reminded our viewers of Agatha Christie's famous novel, *And Then There Were None*. Darby (Emma Corrin) is a twenty-something writer and very effective amateur detective who has become famous for using the internet and in-person interviews to track down a serial killer with her partner, Bill. Now, some five years later, she has been invited to a special international conference of brilliant experts in Iceland, including her now-estranged former partner. During the first night of the conference, one of the guests dies, and the rest of the series is dedicated to the who, how, and why of this death, and possibly others. Co-written by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij, the story examines the interplay of wealth, power, fear and the internet as it tells its spell-binding story.

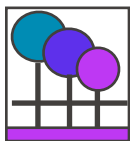


HAPPY BIRTHDAY GLORIA STEINEM

91 YEARS OLD ON MARCH 25



Thank you, Gloria, for all that you do!



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APRIL CRYPTOQUOTE

Each letter below stands for a completely different letter. Hints: R = N T = E
 The decoded quotation comes from one of the women mentioned in this newsletter.
 The solution will be available in next month's *Womonscape Times*.

XPSTR SQB FT JMT PRWB
 YNPZD JMQJ YNPXH SPNT
 NQKVGQW XVJM QYT.
 —YWPNVQ HJTVRTS
 (XMP JZNR TK 91 PR SQNGM 25)

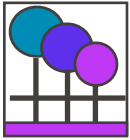
ANSWER TO MARCH'S CRYPTOQUOTE:

History is a card table full of illusions, and we must sort through and pick the ones we wish to believe. —Helen Fremont

ANSWER TO MARCH'S SCRAMBLERS:

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. DRGAE | Gerda |
| 2. OEMRTFN | Fremont |
| 3. CRYDA | Darcy |
| 4. IISNMTFE | Feminist |
| 5. TXABRE | Baxter |
| 6. COSPANMOWE | Womonscape |
| 7. NLTKSCBEUSOIG | Bluestockings |
| 7. IOMMRE | Memoir |

Answers to the April cryptoquote in the May edition of the *Womonscape Times*.



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

DAWN MUSSALLEM

At first glance, Dawn Mussallem looks like someone who just walked out of a 1970s toothpaste commercial, with her wide, cheerful smile, long blonde hair, and clear skin. But don't be fooled by appearances—this is one tough woman. A *Womonscape Times* reader described her as someone who is “an inspiration to many; bubbly and ridiculously happy.” Here's why....



Dawn was raised in a family that was very big on healthy eating. She remembers going to whole food stores where her parents purchased lots of grains and fresh vegetables. They also got meat from a local butcher and ate fresh fish and chicken. In high school she switched to being a vegetarian, and by college age was a vegan.

As a college student, Dawn studied nutrition, exercise physiology, and osteopathic medicine, with the goal of becoming a holistic doctor. She eventually transitioned to the Mayo Clinic in Florida to complete her clinical training. At the same time, Dawn was exercising regularly and seemed to be on her way to a perfect life.

But then disaster struck. In November of 2000, at the age of 26, Dawn collapsed on her way up a flight of stairs. She was rushed into surgery where doctors discovered that she had a huge tumor and stage 4 diffuse B cell non-Hodgkins lymphoma.

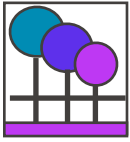
What? Cancer? After living for only 26 years with a very healthy lifestyle? How did that happen?

Dawn explained her thoughts on the origin of her cancer on a radio interview in 2022.

I'm sure a lot of listeners are like, okay, maybe this isn't the best person to have on here. She lives healthy her whole life and she ends up with cancer. But I'll tell you I've had people say, how do you think you got cancer? And I think I know how I got cancer. As a little girl, maybe not little, but when I was in elementary school, there was a creek behind our house that I would play in all the time, like hours I would be in this creek. And it was runoff from corn. Where I'm quite certain there were probably pesticides.

But the origin of Dawn's cancer doesn't seem to matter to her. What matters is how she chose to deal with it. Her attitude is truly incredible. Dawn had intense chemotherapy and radiation and a bone marrow transplant and, even though she was given about three months to live, she defied the odds and kept right on living. And to this very day she expresses gratitude for her cancer.

...we don't know in life. I mean, things happen. I meant quite frankly for me, cancer was the biggest teacher of life. I mean the post traumatic growth I experienced for this was immense. It's phenomenal. I would never trade in what I went through...there is such an opportunity to learn from adversity.



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

(Continued from page 6)

DAWN MUSSALLEM

Dawn's cancer diagnosis was cleared and she continued in medical school, got married and, to her great surprise, became pregnant in 2003 and had a healthy daughter. But then her life was upended again.

First, her doctors discovered during childbirth that her heart had been damaged by her cancer treatments, so she took a break from her medical residency and started on a regimen of cardiac medications and rehab. She got stronger and started feeling better. Then, in 2008, when her daughter was five years old, her husband unexpectedly died in his sleep.

Dawn credits her family with her survival during this part of her life. Her family helped her take some time off to grieve, to find a new place to live, and to nurture herself and her daughter.

Everything was getting back on track in Dawn's life until about 2015, when her heart started to act up again. She was put on a list for a heart transplant and went back to her life as best she could. She was told by her doctors to quit medical school. She refused. Dawn eventually finished her medical residency, began practicing medicine, started dating again, and got remarried in 2010. In the meantime she was waiting for the heart transplant for six years. And, during those six years she survived a case of Covid. Ridiculous; how much can one body take? But true.

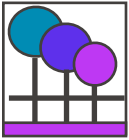
Fortunately, in 2021 Dawn's life started to come together again.
 She got a heart transplant.
 She got healthy again.
 Four months after her transplant she climbed a mountain.
 A year and a day after her transplant she ran a marathon.

Who knows what will happen next in Dawn's life.
 But whatever it is, she's probably up for the challenge.

I would say the biggest part of this is gratitude. And it sounds crazy, but I am so grateful for what I went through. And I'm so grateful for the loving support I had from my family, from my friends, from my colleagues,when we have gratitude, it really takes us from this place of deficit or nothing, to this place of abundance. And this, those are really, I think the things that helped me get through this.



(Continued on page 8)



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS WOMAN?

BETTY SWINT

One of our *Womonscape Times* readers recently took a trip to Austin, Texas, where she learned about a woman firefighter named Betty Swint. The *Times* editors were pleased to hear about Betty and to learn more about women firefighters in the Texas capital.

As of 2023, women represented only seven percent of Austin's firefighters, which, while low, is commendable. Not only is the U.S. national average for women firefighters half that of Austin's, the Austin department is distinctive in that they have hired white, Asian, Latinx, and Black women, and that women have served at every rank in the department. While women have been firefighters in the U.S. for over 200 years, it is only in about the last fifty years that this history has been recognized and recorded. In Austin, this began in 1976, with the hiring of Lucinda Hough, followed by Laura Matau in 1977 and Becky Brooks in 1978. These women balanced other important life commitments, such as parenting young children and attending college while advancing in their careers as firefighters.



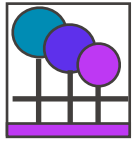
Then along came Betty Swint, the first woman of color to be hired as an Austin firefighter. Betty's background seemed to make her an ideal candidate for firefighting. She worked hard as a child, farming vegetables with her family before and after school on the family's sharecropping acres in Georgia. It was common for sharecroppers to use prescribed burns to help manage crops, so she had firsthand experience with methods for managing fires. Even though her family included seven children and were not financially well-off, Betty managed to go to college, where she earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in health and physical education. Betty explained, "In the South, there are two kinds of wealth: education and money. If you don't have money, you can get an education." She moved to Austin for a job at the University of Texas; after two years with UT, she applied to be a fire cadet.

Betty was the only woman in her cadet class, along with 39 men. "She was pretty determined to prove she could do anything, and she did just that without bringing much attention to herself," said firefighter Ray Hendricks, who went through fire academy training with Betty in 1979. "She pulled her own weight." When she was hired in the fall of that year, Betty was not only the first African American woman firefighter to be hired by the Austin Fire Department, she was only the third African American woman firefighter hired in the whole state of Texas. Sometimes she admitted to feeling isolated as the only Black woman in the department, but the excitement of the job kept her going. "As far as I can remember, I had a can-do attitude...I fit in pretty good with the good old boys."

Betty served as a firefighter, cadet academy instructor, and fire specialist in fighting grass fires during her career. "There was nobody that worked harder on a grass fire than Betty," firefighter Lt. Jan Wesson said. "She would tackle it like a bulldozer." Betty also enjoyed being an engine driver. She served for 27 years in all, retiring in 2006 at the age of 55.

In honor of her service, the City of Austin declared February 23, 2023 *Betty Swint Day*. Today Betty lives in Austin where she spends her time visiting with family and friends, working outdoors, and enjoying nature.





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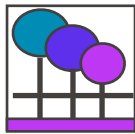
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APRIL 17 is our next
scheduled
No-Rules Book Group
in Richland Center.
See Page 1 for details.

**Womonscape
Times**

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Quotes by Women

- Being a firefighter is not about gender. It's about dedication, strength, and the will to serve and protect.— Firefighter Sarah Johnson
- Firefighting is not for the faint of heart, but being a female firefighter brings its own set of challenges. We have to work twice as hard to prove ourselves, but it only makes us stronger. – Firefighter Jessica Martinez
- I'm not a damsel in distress. I'm a firefighter. – Anonymous Firefighter

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