

LIBRARY EVENT KIT

FOR *WE THE INTERWOVEN, VOLUME 2*

CREATING POWERFUL CONVERSATIONS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES





Dear Librarians and Friends,

Released in the summer of 2019, *We the Interwoven, Volume 2*, tells a new story of Iowa, offering a rare perspective into the lives of seven immigrants and bicultural residents right here in our state. It provides a bridge for discussion and understanding into the complex topics surrounding our changing Iowa communities and the impact of our state's changing cultural landscape.

Libraries play an invaluable role in building community and leading conversations. You are the front lines of helping Iowans understand challenging issues and find answers in literature. This book was created for our libraries, our Iowa communities, and all Iowans in order to help us find ways toward a more connected tomorrow. In fact, we at the Iowa Writers' House created the entire Bicultural Iowa Writers' Fellowship so that books like this could exist, sharing stories of unheard Iowa voices across the state.

Last year over 60 Iowa libraries purchased *We the Interwoven, Volume 1*. This summer, *We the Interwoven, Volume 2*, released to preorder, and we are so excited to offer it at the ILA conference and now online. It was also recently featured at the Omaha Lit Fest.

We have created a free kit for event programming at your library using *We the Interwoven* that includes discussion questions, tips for moderators in leading community conversations, and background information about the book and its creation through the Bicultural Iowa Writers' Fellowship. Members of your community can apply this fall to be in Volume 3, which we'll have ready for you next June. For now, enjoy Volume 2, and we hope the event kit helps all libraries create powerful and special programs in your communities.

Sincerely,

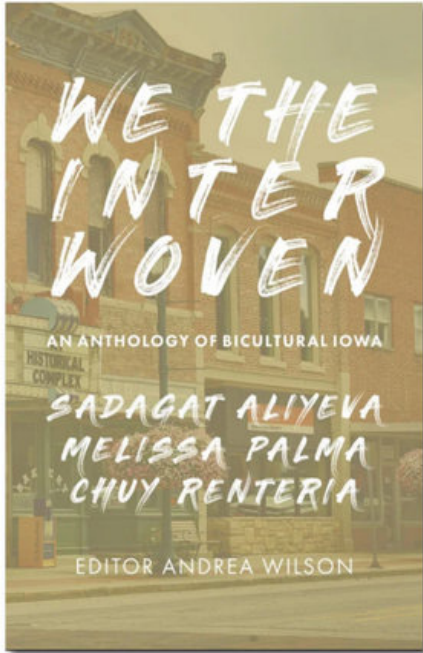
Andrea Wilson

Founder and Executive Director of the Iowa Writers' House

WE THE INTERWOVEN, VOLUME 2 IS AVAILABLE AT INGRAMSPARK. BOOK CLUB PACKAGES OF 6 AND 10 BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT WWW.WETHEINTERWOVEN.COM.

APPLICATIONS FOR BICULTURAL IOWANS TO CONTRIBUTE TO VOLUME 3 ARE OPEN NOW THROUGH NOVEMBER 10.

WHAT LIBRARIANS ARE SAYING ABOUT ***WE THE INTERWOVEN***



“I love that I can’t keep *We the Interwoven* on the shelf. So many people are coming in to ask to read it!”

— Mandy Wykert Grimm,
Columbus Junction Public Library

“This book was brought to me by our community members who said it was absolutely one I had to get. As a librarian I read a lot. I think this book is worthy and should find its way into every Iowan’s hands.”

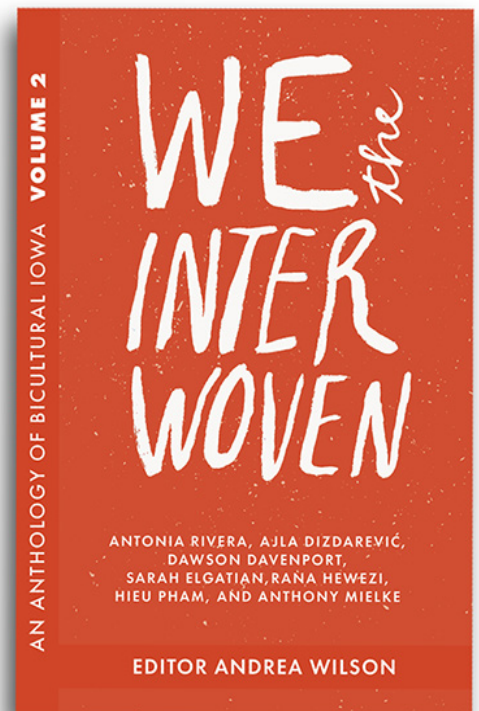
— Debra Lowman, Director of the
West Liberty Public Library

“This book tells the stories of immigrants and bicultural Iowans with backgrounds from the border with Mexico, the Meskwaki nation, Bosnian-Americans, and others. This is an Iowa book that our Iowa libraries will want to know about.”

—Dan Chibnall,
Iowa Library Association President

“It was truly an honor and such an incredibly moving experience to participate in an event with the writers of *We the Interwoven, Volume 2*. Consider me a champion of this book.”

—Jennie Garner, Director of the
North Liberty Public Library



A BOOK IN EVERY LIBRARY: OUR GOAL FOR *WE THE INTERWOVEN*

Our dream is to have a copy of Volume 1 and 2 in every library in the state of Iowa. Here's a list of libraries currently carrying Volume 1. This list is available on our website and links out to each of your libraries. We're excited to keep adding to the list—any library with new copies will be added!

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Marion Public Library
West Liberty Public Library
Cedar Rapids Public Library
North Liberty Community
Library
Ruth Suckow Memorial
Library-Earlville
Fort Madison Public Library
Sumner Public Library
West Des Moines Public
Library
Knoxville Public Library
Cherokee Public Library
Council Bluffs Public Library

Cresco Public Library
Coralville Public Library
Iowa City Public Library
Waterloo Public Library
Griswold Public Library
Clive Public Library
Urbandale Public Library
Columbus Junction Public
Library
Stubbs Memorial Library of
Holstein
Burlington Public Library
Orange City Public Library
Des Moines Public Library
Camanche Public Library

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Drake University
Scott Community College
UI Center for Human
Rights

THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO ALL THE LIBRARIES WHO HAVE PURCHASED COPIES OF *WE THE INTERWOVEN, VOLUME 1*.

ALL PROCEEDS OF *WE THE INTERWOVEN* GO TO SUPPORTING THE BICULTURAL IOWA WRITERS' FELLOWSHIP.

“When I shared the idea of having *We the Interwoven* events, all of our branches were very interested. I think a kit and a discussion guide is a fantastic idea.”

—Katie Bliss, Des Moines Public Library

TIPS FOR LIBRARIANS AND MODERATORS ON HOSTING A GROUP

We the Interwoven is helping Iowans and people across the Midwest better understand the challenges and opportunities that living in diverse communities presents, ultimately finding ways toward a more connected tomorrow.

Follow these instructions to organize a discussion on its stories with your library patrons, book clubs, community groups, church groups, students, and all who are interested in talking about the issues it raises.

1. Decide when your library would like to hold its event and how the event can best serve your patrons.
2. Purchase the books for six or more people. These groups work best if there is a librarian or community leader as a moderator.
3. Ask group members to read the book ahead of time. Book club packages of six or more books may be ordered at www.wetheinterwoven.com at a discount.
4. Have group members describe themselves so as to offer some background on the perspective they offer the community in conversation today. People might discuss their life experiences, identity, expertise, known blindspots, or anything else they feel is important.
5. Discussing these kinds of complex issues can be emotional and even challenging with varying views. The goal of a moderator is to ensure everyone gets a chance to speak if they wish and no one dominates the conversation, and that all responses are respected and respectful. It helps to set this expectation up front.
6. Go through the questions in this kit and help group members talk about their experiences. If you can, have someone write down some of the answers.
7. Take a photo of your group and share it on our website with the answers to your questions. We'd love to hear them!





DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOR *WE THE INTERWOVEN, VOLUME 2*



ABOUT THE BOOK



At six years old, Antonia Rivera crossed the border from Mexico with nothing but the doll in her hands. Ajla Dizdarević's family brought traditions across an ocean after leaving a home torn apart by the Bosnian War. Sarah Elgatian's grandmother played cards and spoke of a country her Armenian-American grandchild had never known. Hieu Pham couldn't relate to all of her mother's Vietnamese traditions, but when she became a mother herself, everything changed. Rana Hewezi grappled with tragedy in her Egyptian family's past and the power of a name in determining her fate. Anthony Mielke couldn't shake the feeling that there was more to his birth story than he had been told. A member of the Meskwaki Nation, Dawson Davenport was born into a world that was not told in the history books.

How do we make our way in a society that looks nothing like the one our families once knew? How do we find a sense of belonging in a past and a place we've never been, or in a world that feels as if it's changing faster than we are?

These seven stories take us on a ride through the heart and the moral conscience as they explore how we find identity and make a future in an America that is still deciding its own.

Each feature includes a translation published alongside the story in order to provide accessibility to the bicultural language communities and to honor the language. The book also includes cultural glossaries and artist statements to help readers contextualize the work and connect with the writers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



OPENING QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to be in community with others?
- What is the value of culture and cultural identity to you?
- What do you know about your own culture or your family's heritage that reading this book made you remember?
- What do you believe America's culture is?
- What is your experience of Iowa and of being Iowan?
- What do you hope we might gain from conversation today?
- What do you want to discuss about what you read in the book today?

STORY QUESTIONS



"I, ANTONIA" AND "DEAR CIEL" BY ANTONIA RIVERA

- What did you learn from "I, Antonia"?
- What did you feel when you read about Antonia's experiences as an undocumented immigrant?
- How did the poem "Dear Ciel" influence your reading experience of "I, Antonia"?
- What does it mean that a changing federal policy can affect a person's family stability?

"A DRINK TO END ALL DRINKS" **AND "ŠTA DA VAM KAŽEM"**

BY AJLA DIZDAREVIĆ

- What did you learn from "A Drink to End All Drinks"?
- What did you feel when you read about Ajla's family tradition?
- How did the poem "Šta Da Vam Kažem" influence your reading experience of "A Drink to End All Drinks"?
- How do cultural and family traditions impact younger generations?





“WHAT WE OWE OUR MOTHERS”

BY HIEU PHAM

- What did you learn from “What We Owe Our Mothers”?
- What did you feel when you read about Hieu’s experiences as a new mother?
- What do we owe our parents?
Our children?



“A NEW DIASPORA”

BY SARAH ELGATIAN

- What did you learn from “A New Diaspora”?
- What impact do you believe surviving the Armenian genocide had on Annig as a person?
As a grandmother?
- What did you feel when you read about Sarah’s relationship with her grandmother?
- What role do grandparents play in passing on a family’s culture?



“A GATEWAY TO JENNA”

BY RANA HEWEZI

- What did you learn from “A Gateway to Jenna”?
- What did you feel when you read about the death of Issam and how it affected the entire family, including Rana’s mother and Rana herself?
- How do names and language impact who we are?



"STRANGER IN MY OWN WORLD" BY ANTHONY MIELKE

- What did you learn from "Stranger in My Own World"?
- What did you feel when you read about Anthony meeting his Puerto Rican family for the first time?
- Why do you think Anthony's mother didn't tell him about his father?
- How do shame and family secrets affect one's personal and cultural identity?

"BLACK THUNDER: A MESWAKI STORY" BY DAWSON DAVENPORT

- What did you learn from "Black Thunder"?
- What did this story teach you about the experience of indigenous people in America?
- What did you feel when you read about Dawson's struggles with anger and addiction? His recovery?
- What has your experience been with crime? How does this impact your perspective?
- What does Dawson's hope for his own people and their future make you think about your people and your own future?



CONCLUDING QUESTIONS



- When you read the artist statements and lines like “I am afraid I might lose everything” (Dawson) or “Sharing my story may have consequences” (Antonia), how did you feel? What risks have you taken by telling your truths to others?
- Do the issues raised in these stories affect your life? If so, in what ways?
- What perspective or assumption did the text disrupt for you?
- What did you learn from the glossaries?
- How did seeing the translated pieces affect you? What do you believe about the importance of people maintaining literacy in their native language?
- What do you think our state or our community could do as a result of what we have learned through these stories?
- What step might you take, whether big or small, as a result of what you have learned through these stories?
- What is a wish you have for our shared future?
- What do we hope for in the story of America?



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Bicultural Iowa Writers' Fellowship (BIWF) is the state's first fully funded residency for emerging writers who are immigrant, first-generation, or second-generation Iowans. It provides education, support, and resources in the renowned UNESCO City of Literature, Iowa City, and it offers space and time for writers to explore their multilayered identities. Each fellow gets the opportunity of a lifetime to study and grow in their writing and ultimately to have their work published and supported by the Iowa Writers' House in *We the Interwoven*.



ABOUT THE IOWA WRITERS' HOUSE



The Iowa Writers' House (IWH) is a nonprofit literary center whose mission is to centralize access to Iowa's literary resources in a single organization that provides programming, workshops, and a welcoming community for all. Since its founding in 2015, the Writers' House has built a community of over 3,000

writers; delivered cross-genre programs to writers of diverse ages, races, and life situations; and founded the Bicultural Iowa Writers' Fellowship. Today it has become an integral part of the beautiful ecosystem of Iowa lit.