

First Opinion: The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes

Julia Finley Mosca. *The Doctor with an Eye for Eyes*. Seattle, WA: The Innovation Press, 2017. Print.

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“Representation matters.” Whether it comes to movies, comics, or TV shows, this is a widely spread quote on the internet nowadays, supporting the appearance of ethnically and physically diverse characters. Perceiving the information inside media as a reflection of the world, thus causing them to naturally expect various characters’ attitude, role, and level of importance to appear the same inside a real society (Botelho & Rudman, 2009). This increasing exposure of main characters in media with various traits can work as a positive motivation for a wider group of people. In this aspect, representation in children’s literature has great influence (Cardullo & Burton, 2022). During the active stage of socialization, books provoke both the internal and external development of children. So, whether there exists a model that a young reader can reflect oneself upon and learn from is an essential point for their emotional and intellectual development.

The doctor with an eye for eyes, written by Julia Finely Mosca, is one attempt to enrich the diversity of main characters in children's books. It illustrates the journey of Patricia E. Bath, an American ophthalmologist who devoted her life to help others as a physician, despite the hardships she faced as a black woman born in the 1940s.

Patricia Bath was born in Harlem. The Baths were economically unstable, but that didn't stop Patricia's parents from providing her and her brother with love and care. Patricia grew up to be a confident girl who believed "anything boys can do, girls can do to." Her desire for learning ignited after receiving a toy chemistry set from her mother. From this she developed a dream to help the world's sick and poor with science. Her dreams specified after being inspired by Dr. Cecil Marques, a rare professional physician in her neighborhood. She wanted to be a doctor. Although the job was dominated by men at the time, she didn't hesitate to become a pioneer.

It is notable that this book did not overlook the absurdity and discrimination Dr. Bath had to overcome. Discuss critical topics such as race, poverty, and gender can create great opportunities for classroom discussions and critical consciousness (Nguyen, 2019). For instance, this book illustrates the injustice that followed Patricia since high school. She couldn't attend to any of the nearby high schools who only accepted white students, so she had to take a train to school. The medical school she got accepted to didn't allow her to sit in the front row because she was a female. She was even designated an office in a basement when she started a career as a professor. Despite the discriminatory treatments, she pursued her academic career. She became the first full-time female ophthalmologist.

During her experience as a doctor, she notices something significant; among her patients, twice the number of blacks were suffering from cataracts compared to the number of her white patients. She researched to eliminate this disease, and eventually invented the Laserphaco Probe

in 1986. With the technology she invented, she cured millions of people around the globe. Her accomplishment as a physician is truly outstanding; she was the first woman to chair the ophthalmology residency program, elected for the Hunter Hall of fame, and named a Howard University Pioneer for Academic Medicine. What makes it shine even more is the fact that her motivation was based on her will to become a help to the world. She was able to maintain her kind heart and her wide insight although she had to deal with a dozen day-to-day vestiges of inequality and injustice.

As part of my service learning, I introduced this book to 21 Korean Middle school students on April 9th, 2023, through a 2-hour-long class through Zoom. I was initially concerned. My worry was that the students might not fully understand the message of the book based on their lack of knowledge in the cultural context. But the students proved me wrong by actively suggesting their opinions on the story.

The class started from drawing familiar memories that can be linked to the book's key events and themes. Students shared their experience; from a childhood memory of visiting an eye doctor to a discouraging moment of discrimination. Expanding from this personal experience, they interpreted the story of Patricia E. Bath. During the discussion session, I asked students several questions regarding Patricia's attitude. Many students picked persistence, hard work, and courage as reasons of her success. They not only captured Patricia's endeavor for academic achievement but also her sight to identify injustice in daily life, and how to rebel against it when needed. The page where she refused to work in a poor working environment especially seemed to have left a strong impression to the students. She was depicted as a figure with an active voice. This made it possible for students to perceive Patricia as a role model and apply her approaches to their situation. Students used their creativity to imagine what advice Patricia might give to them. Their ideas

mostly focused on the virtue of persistence, or the courage to fight against unjust situations. It was amazing to see students learning how to identify their challenges and being encouraged by Patricia's life. The book effectively evoked students' curiosity and enhanced learning engagement. I highly recommend this book to create a safe space for students to embark on the social justice perspective, as well as building a global citizenship by broadening their awareness about social justice issues around the world.

Works Cited

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About the author

Haeun Lee is a senior student at Korean Minjok Leadership Academy. She is a member of almost every club that involves writing. She is currently struggling to save some time to work on a novel idea. Fun Fact: She loves Hamilton the musical.