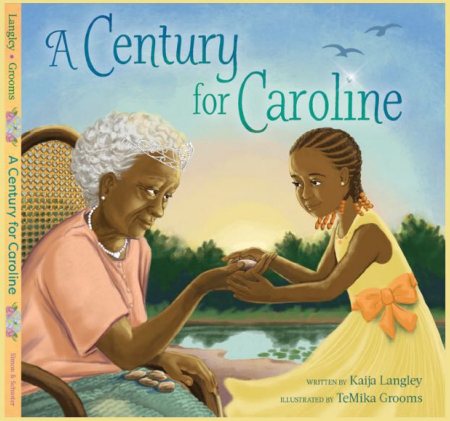
A Century for Caroline

written by Kaija Langley
Denene Millner Books
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers
(May 2025)

A Century for Caroline allowed me to use landscapes to visually tell a story. I used inspiration from roadtrips, my family members, and the feeling of hot summers in south Georgia. The main characters resemble my mother and my oldest daughter.

Within my immediate family, I am the keeper of family photos. I used those photos, memories, and observed environments around me to imagine the world of Caroine and Jasmine. As I sketched, I imagined what a young child would feel as she looked at a photo of a great-grandparent she was excited to meet.



painted words
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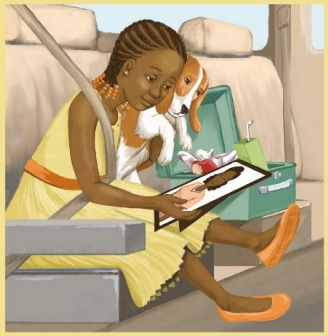
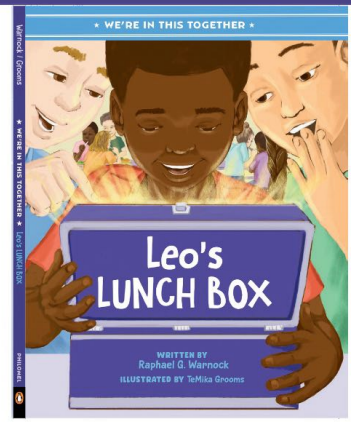


AN INSTANT NEW YORK TIME BEST SELLER!



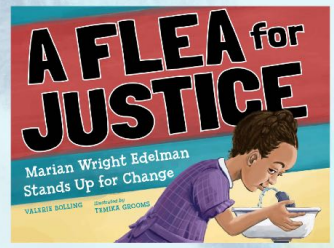
We're In This Together: Leo's Lunch Box

written by Raphael G. Warnock
Philomel Books / Penguin Random House (April 2025)

Illustrating this story allowed me to create a variety of characters...and the number of characters multiplied! Warnock created a fun, contemporary version of a classic, biblical story reminding readers of the empathy, compassion, and generosity that can be shared in our community. We all have enough to share so no one goes without.

A Flea for Justice:
Marian Wright Edelman
Stands Up for Change

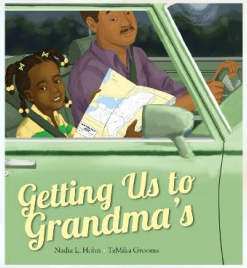
written by Valerie Bolling
Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc.
(September 2025)



I used "light" as a metaphor throughout to represent our ability to create positive change.

The perspective makes them feel powerful as Marian plans her next move under the guidance of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bayard Rustin.

The contribution of women in the civil rights movement is often overshadowed and I chose to add an undefined female character opposite of Marian. After completing the illustrations, I continued to do more research on Bayard Rustin and discovered how influencial Ella Baker was on the movement. Ironically, the female character bares a slight resemblance to Ella Baker. Researching Marian Wright Edelman's life taught me so much that I look forward to sharing with young readers.



Getting Us to Grandma's

written by Nadia L. Hohn
Groundwood Books
(October 2024)

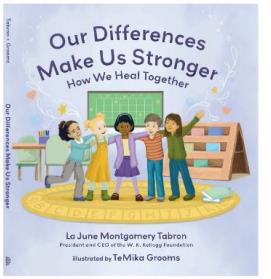
Even though I grew up in the 1980s, I had to do so much research for this project! The art is full of old school toys and tech like rubics cubes, Cabbage Patch dolls, Battleship, a walkman, floor TVs, globes, and paper map books - all things that were common before the smartphone technology of today.

The internet and personal photos sparked my memory of 1980s New York landscapes, fashion, and popular music. Creating a playlist with Nadia was a walk down memory lane. Young readers and GenXers will all have fun looking back on how much things have changed.

Our Differences Make Us Stronger:
How We Heal Together

written by La June Montgomery Tabron,
President and CEO of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Disruption Books

As a child growing up on a military base, I had the benefit of meeting children from all over the world. We played together, ate together, and were friends despite our differences. When I came back to the United States, I remember feeling the disconnect of communities within a small southern city. La June's story gives us a practical example of how to teach tolerance and respect. It reminded me of how important it is for us to be curious about others while appreciating the things that make us different and special.



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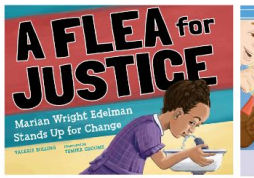
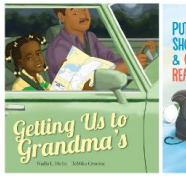
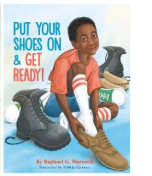
TeMika Grooms

New York Times Best Selling Illustrator

I am a Georgia-based writer and illustrator inspired by many forms of storytelling and I am always looking around me for the story in an experience. That practice shows up in the characters, histories, and the environments I create in my illustrations.

Playing with color, perspective, and light makes me feel like a movie director as I illustrate a book (maybe I'll do work with film someday). I gravitate towards written narratives that allow me to tell my own story in both nonfiction and fiction projects. I am interested in Black contemporary nonfiction, as well as, stories of active children discovering their freedom and personal power. Anything that allows me to express action and energy in illustration is my jam.

I create a variety of art forms, but I primarily write and illustrate books for young readers. When I'm not working on a children's book, you will likely find me watching some sci-fi, mystery, thriller movie or somewhere outside, on a bike, on a trail, or tinkering in my garden developing my green thumb for the benefit of the squirrels, rabbits, and deer near my home.