

In 2024, the American Library Association will celebrate the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards.

Given annually, the awards serve as a guide for parents, librarians, caregivers, and community members for the most outstanding books for youth by African American authors and illustrators that affirm African American culture and universal human values.

The real story of the history, development, and growth of the Coretta Scott King Book Award is the legacy that has been created.

Teachers and librarians across the nation now look to the CSKBART Award list for quality literature to share with children.

School and public library professionals look to the CSKBART Awards for recommendations to parents and youth readers.

Equally important to the impact on the reading public is the opening of the marketplace gates for countless African American artists and writers. The very existence of the Award gives opportunities to be published and recognized where none existed in the past.

Literacy depends ultimately on children's desire to read; they must have access to and awareness of books that reflect their culture and language. Even though the diversity of our country continues to grow, the percentage of children's books released each year either by a person of color or with a multicultural theme has remained virtually unchanged for more than 20 years.

Experts say a lack of diversity in children's books can be harmful to the social and identity development of children, particularly those representing cultures with untold stories.

It is critical to provide access to and awareness of books that mirror their culture and language.

Coretta Scott King Award titles are intended for readers of all cultures. Significantly, the Award list includes numerous titles that capture the

commemorating the "life and work" of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The selection of Mrs. King as a namesake for the award was based on a profound admiration and respect that the award founders, specifically Glendon Greer, had for Mrs. King and the commitment she made to continue the work of Dr. King after his death.

The Coretta Scott King Author Award was first awarded in May 1970. Lillie Patterson was the first winner for her biography, "Martin Luther King, Jr. Man of Peace."

The first two awards were presented at the New Jersey Library Association conference in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Roger McDonough, President of ALA 1968

In 2010, the committee established the Coretta Scott King – Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement to be given alternately to an author or illustrator and a practitioner.

The Coretta Scott King – Virginia Hamilton Award for Lifetime Achievement is presented in odd years (i.e. 2021, 2023, 2025..), to an African American practitioner for substantial contributions through active engagement with youth using award winning African American literature for children and/or young adults, via implementation of reading and reading related activities/programs.

The recipient may be a public librarian, academic librarian, school librarian (public or private), an educator (pre-K to 12 or any level therein, or higher education), or youth literature advocate whose vocation, work, volunteer service or ongoing promotion of books with and/or on behalf of youth is significant and sustained.

In even years (i.e. 2022, 2024, 2026..), the award honors an African American author, illustrator, or author/illustrator for a body of his or her published books for children and/or young adults who has made a significant and lasting literary contribution.

The Award pays tribute to the late Virginia Hamilton and the quality and magnitude of her exemplary contributions through her literature and advocacy for children and youth, especially in her focus on African American life, history, and consciousness.

The Award is administered by the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Roundtable, with support from the ALA Office for Literacy and Outreach Services. The recipient receives a medal and \$1,500 cash award.