



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING




GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 19, 2021

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors  
Michigan Pre-K-12 Educators

**FROM:** Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent   
Sheila A. Alles, Chief Deputy Superintendent   
Randy J. Riley, State Librarian 

**SUBJECT:** Celebrating Outstanding African American Authors – Week Four

As the African American History Month enters its fourth and final week, the Michigan Department of Education and the Library of Michigan continue the month-long celebration and recognition of outstanding African American authors and their noted literary works, nominated by educators across the state, by releasing another week of literature by African American authors.

The fourth week includes another seven African American authors and their writings, along with information about the nominator and a brief description of the nominator's use of the work with students. The [weekly calendar](#) is featured on MDE's [Equity in Literacy website](#).

Week four's selections include: the play *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry; the non-fiction book *Revolutionary Girls* by Michigan author Torie J. Anderson; and the novel *The Bluest Eye* by Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison.

The 28 titles and authors showcased during the month-long recognition provide a snapshot of the volume of literary work by an expansive number of African American authors. Additional literature by outstanding African American authors can be found on the MDE website at [Authors of Color—A Living List of Literature](#). It is our hope and desire that educators continue to use and recognize African American authors and to showcase their literature in classrooms throughout the school year to create conditions for greater engagement with literature among Michigan students.

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In addition to celebrating outstanding African American authors throughout this month, MDE will host a free virtual conference next Thursday, February 25, for educators and administrators titled: **Building Mirrors and Windows: Children Seeing Themselves and Others in the Literature that We Teach**. The conference will provide participants with ideas to increase the diversity of literature available to students and ways to use the materials for instruction and student engagement.

The conference will run from 9:00 a.m.—noon. Participants can view the conference flyer, register for the conference, and sign up for updates by visiting [MDE's Literacy website](#).

For more information on the conference or the African American authors project, please contact [mde-earlyliteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-earlyliteracy@michigan.gov).

Thank you for your consideration of these important initiatives.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Directors