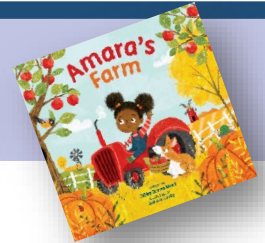
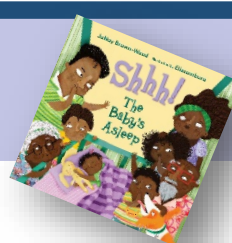
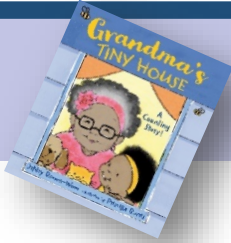
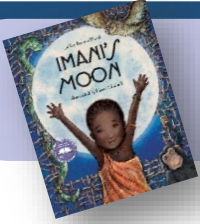


# JaNay Brown-Wood, PhD

CHILDREN'S AUTHOR & EDUCATOR

## Words on the World: A Newsletter



## April has Sprung!



### Some Words on *Words*

Since April is National Poetry Month, it felt apropos to spend some time thinking about words. **What is a word?** Have you ever sat back and truly thought about it? Unless you're a linguist, literacy or English teacher, or a writer of some sort, you probably have not—at least not lately. How would YOU define the word “word”?

[Oxford's Dictionary](#) says a word is “a single unit of language that means something and can be spoken or written,” while [Merriam-Webster](#) states that a word is “a speech sound or series of speech sounds that symbolize and communicates a meaning.” Of course, words can be signed as well, but if we were to boil it down, a word is used as a reference—a string of letters/sounds that represent something else. When you hear the word “apple” it brings something to your mind, like an image. When you hear the word “happy” it can make you think of the emotion, or what it feels like to be happy, etc. It really is amazing to think about how a string of seemingly arbitrary symbols (such as letters) can be put together to evoke a change within your mind.

Words are complex themselves. They come with meanings, sometimes multiple meanings, as well as spellings, histories or origins that created or modified them. They can have prefixes, suffixes, roots. They have vowels, consonants, syllables, and more! And not to mention the variety across languages. Yes! Words are very, very complex. And...

**Words are powerful!**

As an author, an educator, a scholar—words play such an important role in everything I do. They are vehicles for communication, but also miscommunication. They can be used to spread love, but also hate. They can ignite passion and create a lasting impact. I still think about the emotional impact I felt when listening to the words of Amanda Gorman as she recited her poem “The Hill We Climb” in front of an international audience.



Especially the last lines of her poem where she stated:

*When day comes we step out of the shade,  
afame and unafraid  
The new dawn blooms as we free it  
For there is always light,  
if only we're brave enough to see it  
If only we're brave enough to be it.*

(from Amanda Gorman's Inauguration Poem, 2021)



# A Feature on Good Day Sacramento



I was so fortunate to have a chance to talk with Good Day Sacramento's Courtney Dempsey about my books, my Colbert surprise, and my daughter Vivian.

I also had a chance to reiterate the importance of the publication of diverse books since all children deserve to be represented on the pages of literature.

Here is the link here:

<https://gooddaysacramento.cbslocal.com/video/5385559-imanis-moon/>

It was so much fun!

Her recitation resonated with me. It reminded me, again, of the *power* of words. Thus, through the lens of April and National Poetry Month, I would ask you to take a moment to reflect on words. The words you use, you write, you share. The many ways words bloom within and from you. This is just a reminder that through your own pen and voice, you have power to make an impact, so think about the number of ways that you can; that you do.

I use my words to play with language, but also to try to influence the future for the better. Through the stories and poetry I write. Through my research and my attempts to move my fields of education, child development, and children's literature forward. Through teaching my students, who will become teachers, too.

In what ways do **you** use your words for better? What ways do you use the power of your pen and your voice for good? To spread beauty? To inform?

Remember, too, that there are many cases where you may not even realize it, but someone else is listening and taking your words to heart—what messages are you planting in your listener's or reader's heart?

With so much hate spreading globally, during a time of pain and fear and uncertainty; during a time of violence against others, I implore you, just as a poet does when crafting a poem, to:

## Pick. Your. Words. With. Care.

And perhaps, choose to select words that share love and love and love—words that spread that everlasting light Amanda Gorman's poem describes.

Here's a quick and quirky poem about...poetry.

### **Puzzle of Poetry** By JaNay Brown-Wood

Picking perfect pieces  
to portray a poignant point.  
Pulling, tugging, stretching words—  
forcing feeling.  
Force a fit.

Turning words over and over  
grasping blindly for a feel.

Is it flat?

Does it flow like summer rivers  
or fall down like autumn leaves?  
Can it spring from fruitful pages  
or sting cold like winter's breeze?

Does it fit?

Dragging desperate details  
into dumb deflated deals.  
Smashing, thrashing, pushing phrases—  
play on words.  
Pray for poem.

# Where has JaNay been? Check out these features of me and my books...

 AMERICAN LIFESTYLE



**reaching for the moon**  
Illustrated by Haad Mitchell

Author and educator **Dr. JaNay Brown-Wood** discusses the importance of diversity in children's books to support lifelong learning.

What is your background as an educator? I have a bachelor's in psychology with a minor in applied developmental psychology, a master's in child development, and a doctorate in education. I currently teach at the college level and have been a professor of early childhood education and child development for many years.

Have you always been a writer? Yes. In fact, my sixth grade teacher Mrs. Wickly predicted I'd be a best-selling author! My love for story comes from my parents being avid readers and always engaging me and my sisters in literacy.

Will you talk about your first book, *Imani's Moon*, and why you chose to center a story around a Maasai girl? Initially, this story did not take place in Africa, and it was not about a young girl. When I wrote the first draft, I shared it with my older sister, Erin, who reminded me of the beautiful Maasai people. From there, I came across


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["Reaching for the Moon" Article](#)

*The*  
**STATE HORNET**  
*The voice of Sacramento State since 1942.*

Sac State professor's book gets plugged on 'The Late Show'



JaNay Brown-Wood, Sac State Child and Adolescent Development professor, shares her love of writing with *The State Hornet* on March 8, 2021. Brown-Wood said love for children's literature has been her strongest motivation. Photo courtesy of JaNay Brown-Wood.

Mengting Tian ([https://statehornet.com/staff\\_name/mengting-tian/](https://statehornet.com/staff_name/mengting-tian/))  
April 1, 2021

Sacramento State's child and adolescent development professor JaNay Brown-Wood's children's book was shown by the comedian and television host Stephen Colbert to millions of viewers of "The Late Show."

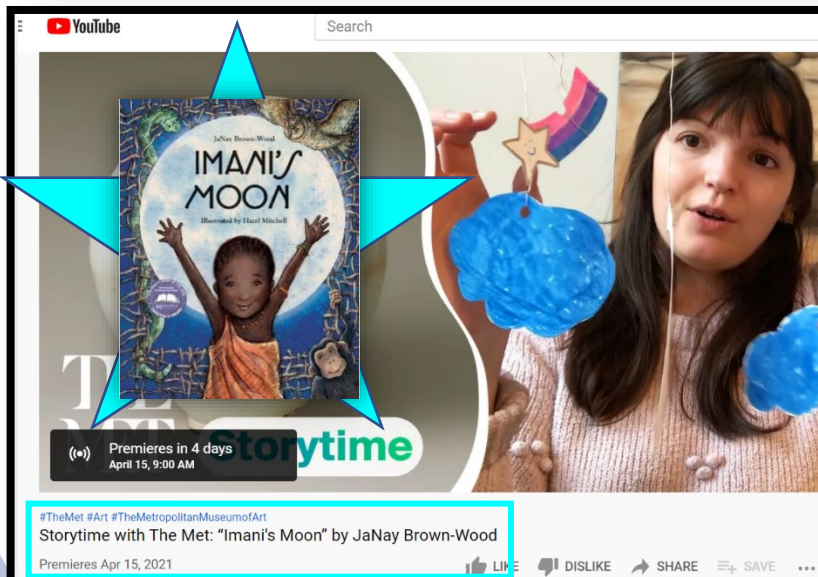
Colbert shared a mock Dr. Seuss book called "Oh the books you can read" and shared a few kid's books written by people of color starting with "Imani's Moon"

**CRIME MAP: 2 crimes occur on campus over the past week** (<https://statehornet.com/2021/04/state-crime-log-apr-3/>)  
Only two crimes were reported at Sacramento State this week March 29 - April 3.

**Samantha Elizalde wins Sac State ASI presidency** (<https://statehornet.com/2021/04/election-winners-2021-board-of-directors/>)

[The Sacramento State Hornet Interview](#)

## Check this out: Storytime with The Metropolitan Museum of Art



YouTube Search

**IMANI'S MOON**  
Illustrated by Haad Mitchell

Premieres in 4 days  
April 15, 9:00 AM

#TheMet #Art #TheMetropolitanMuseumofArt  
Storytime with The Met: "Imani's Moon" by JaNay Brown-Wood  
Premieres Apr 15, 2021

Chloe, an educator from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has selected *Imani's Moon* for the next "Storytime with the Met" which will air later this month on YouTube.

I don't know what to expect but can't wait to check it out myself!

Here's the link where you can find the episode:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCPCBRFit8>

**The episode will air on April 15<sup>th</sup>!**

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