

MAINE
HUMANITIES
COUNCIL

Harriet P. Henry
Center for the Book

674 Brighton Avenue
Portland, Maine 04102-1012
(207) 773-5051
info@mainehumanities.org



@MaineHumanities
#MaineHumanities



SUMMER
2023

JOIN THE
DISCUSSION



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For decades, I have associated summer with reading. Like many of you, this association dates back to library summer reading challenges of my youth. Do you remember those? In the late 80s, those challenges involved a score card you would take with you to the library as you checked out and returned books. The library staff would fill your card with stamps for each book you completed, and you would get small prizes as you progressed.

The joy wasn't just in the accomplishment. I loved being able to travel into new contexts and explore lives that were different, or sometimes similar to mine. I remember my first time reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and encountering Cassie, the protagonist who was a nine-year old Black girl, like me. Her life in Mississippi, 50-odd years earlier, was mostly very different from my life, and her heart-wrenching story brought to life so much of what my parents had taught me and what I had only barely learned about in school. In my early teens, when free ice cream no longer moved me, I turned my summertime attention to my parents' collections of books to inspire, delight, and broaden my understanding of the complex world around me. It was during this time that I first encountered Pecola Breedlove from Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and the poetry of Audre Lorde, which I found on my mother's bookshelf and read with her support and guidance.

Having access to these worlds and these words forever impacted and changed me. They helped shape me into the person I am today. I am indebted to the librarians, educators, and my parents who encouraged me and didn't restrict or limit my age-appropriate explorations through literature. Here at Maine Humanities, we believe in the expansive benefits of exposure to worlds beyond our immediate context, and we know that books are a great tool for that exposure. We are so pleased that you also share in that belief.

What are you reading this summer? I already devoured Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*, when it came out last year. The short story collection is one of Maine Humanities' featured reads this summer and it is fantastic. If you haven't read it yet, you should. I'm currently reading Louise Erdrich's *Future Home of the Living God*, one of the books that was on our Readers Retreat book ballot. After I finish Erdrich's novel, I'll be turning my attention to Tommy Orange's *There There*—the book you all voted to be our read at next year's Readers Retreat.



Samaa Abdurraqib
Executive Director



Marcela Peres and Samara Cole Doyon (L-R) participating in a Discussion Project hosted by Lewiston Public Library. Photo: Molly Haley

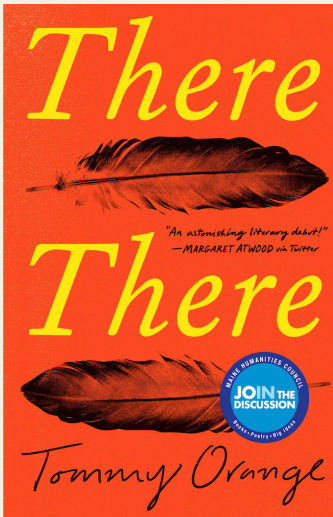
A CHORUS OF VOICES

Tommy Orange's *There There* is our ballot-winning book for the coming year and Readers Retreat 2024

We can't wait to spend the next year with this astonishingly wide-ranging novel that follows 12 characters on their way to the Big Oakland Powwow. Together, this chorus of urban Native American voices grapples with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism.

Tommy Orange's award-winning novel was joined on Maine Humanities' book ballot with three other titles—*Black Sun* by Rebecca Roan Horse, *Future Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich, and *Jonny Appleseed* by Joshua Whitehead—indigenous authors from Turtle Island whose books resonate with our Big Question for 2024 "What do we hold onto? What do we let go?"

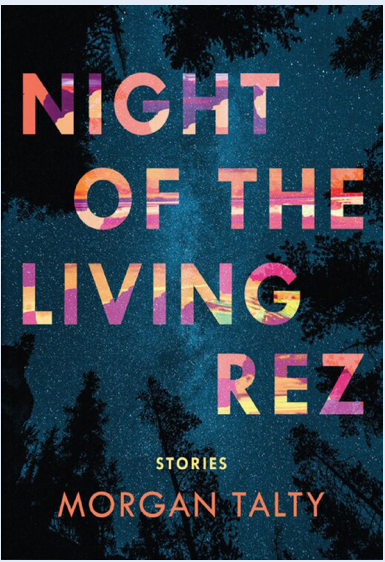
In addition to anchoring Readers Retreat, *There There* will be featured prominently in Discussion Projects and other programs across Maine. Stay tuned for all the ways we'll be engaging with this exquisite novel in the coming year.



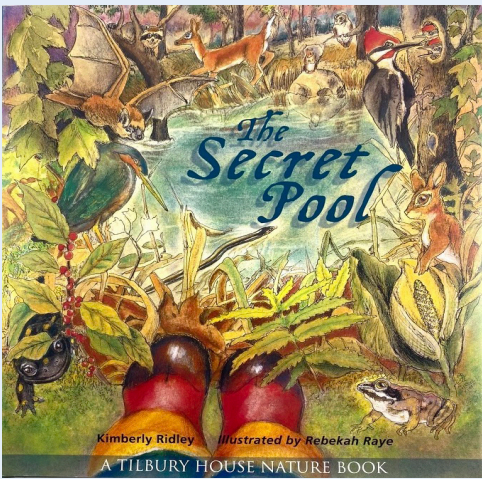
BOOKS FOR SUMMER...and beyond

We kicked-off our summer programming with three beautiful, affecting books set in Maine and by Maine authors—Morgan Talty's *Night of the Living Rez*, Meghan Gilliss's *Lungfish*, and Kimberly Ridley & Rebecca Raye's *The Secret Pool*. Because we like these books so much, we're featuring them in as many ways as we can—as summer reading in libraries with Read ME, representing Maine at the National Book Festival, and available for any Discussion Project in the coming year. **How will you join the discussion?**

All Featured Reads available for Discussion Projects in the coming year



Read ME



Library of Congress
National Book Festival