



Boston Authors Club

May 2019 Newsletter

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So You Want to Write a Children's Book?



Join the Boston Authors Club and authors Nancy Tupper Ling, Padma Venkatraman, Susan Lynn Meyer, literary agent Elizabeth Bennett (Transatlantic Literary Agency) and our host and author/illustrator Peter H. Reynolds for a lively and informative discussion on writing and publishing children's literature of all genres! Located at **The Blue Bunny Bookstore** (www.bluebunnybooks.com) at 577 High Street, Dedham, MA. Tuesday, **May 14th** at 7:00pm. Free and open to all.

Interview With Peter H. Reynolds

Q: You founded *Blue Bunny Books* and published *The Dot* in the same year – 2003. Could you talk about the bookstore's mission and how that mission connects with your *Creatrilogy* (*The Dot*, *Ish*, *Sky Color*) and other work?



That was a magical year. I often think that it was some kind of call from the Universe for some synchronic magic. The book is about one dot. A start. A beginning. That was how the shop began. As an idea - which I sketched and showed to a friend, Dawn Haley, who helped create a business plan. Months later the door opened and one of the first books on the shelf was *The Dot!* Here we are 16 years later!

Q: Publishing has changed enormously since 2003. What are the biggest changes you have seen as a children's

author and illustrator?

In some ways, nothing has changed. A great story, well crafted, will find its audience. I will say that social media has made the process of sharing new books easier. It also provides a much more honest response from the readership. A publisher's press release shrivels under the glare of real readers unleashing their own thoughts on a book.

Q: When aspiring children's book writers and illustrators ask you for advice on getting published, what do you tell them?

I always encourage anyone with an idea to commit it to paper and share. If they truly are champions of their own story, I urge them to keep pushing and getting the story out there to their audience. I also encourage them to join the Society of [Children's Book Writers and Illustrators](#) an amazing resource for writers.

Q: Among all your creative, entrepreneurial, and community activities, could you share some of your top priorities and goals for this year?

My top goals: take care of my children, find time for me to feel balance, make a drawing just for me, and to help bring people together to celebrate life!

Many thanks to Peter for hosting BAC's spring event at Blue Bunny Books in Dedham. Join us for a terrific panel discussion on May 14!

Featured Author: Steven C. Hatch



Steven C Hatch,MD is a specialist in infectious diseases at the UMass Memorial Medical Center and author of *Inferno: A Doctor's Ebola Story*, a Julia Ward Howe nonfiction Finalist.

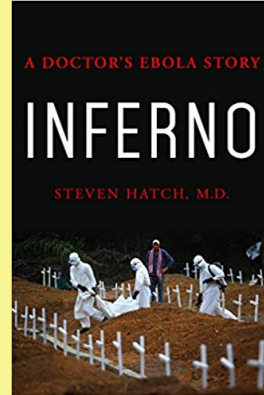
In this interview Dr. Hatch talks about being a caregiver in the heart of an Ebola outbreak in Liberia, his motivation for writing *Inferno*, and what he hopes readers will take away from his book.

Q: *Inferno* recounts your experiences during 2013-2014 when you worked in Liberia during an Ebola outbreak, actively treating patients in collaboration with other caregivers, and helping to establish an Ebola Treatment Unit. Five years on, what are your most lasting memories of that time?

SCH: The part that might seem to people to be the most terrifying part of my job, i.e. caring for patients, was actually quite

routine and in some ways the least memorable part of the experience; it's what I've spent years of training to learn. The routine of doctoring served as an emotional anchor at the time.

Looking back, I think the “communality,” for lack of a more elegant word, was the most singular aspect of my time there. A bunch of very disparate people—Americans, Europeans, East Africans, and most of all, Liberians—came together with a completely shared sense of mission. I worked with people whom I now consider to be my brothers and sisters, and I use those words without irony. We were a hastily-assembled, tight-knit family for a few months, and we shared tragedies and triumphs, sometimes in the course of just one day. I've worked many jobs over the years, but I've never experienced that kind of unity of purpose before, and I doubt I ever will again.



Q: Voluntarily heading into the heart of an outbreak of Ebola is inspiring – but also hard for most people to understand. When you decided to write *Inferno*, what were you hoping that readers would take away from the book?

SCH: *What was most important to me was to introduce readers to Liberia and its history—which as I came to learn is a history inextricably linked to the United States, and especially of slavery. I wanted readers to be able to draw a straight line (or at least a dotted line) between our own national story and this alien, horrifying thing happening halfway across the world, to bring those two things into proximity. That meant making my personal story the “window frame” but not the main focus of attention. I was less concerned with inspiration and more with understanding how this horror came to be.*

Q: Have there been any comments from readers or reviewers of *Inferno* that surprised you, or that made you feel your message came through?

SCH: *I think the most gratifying feedback I've received has come from nurses. I really wanted to convey the critical importance of nursing in the functioning of an Ebola Treatment Unit. They took huge risks, worked in physically brutal conditions, and like nurses here, had the closest contact with the patients. I am not a nurse, but I have a mighty respect for what they do, and I wanted to make sure I portrayed their work without sounding condescending. So hearing their positive feedback was a relief.*

Q: Have you returned to Liberia or kept in contact with any of the caregivers and others you met in the course of your work fighting Ebola?

SCH: *Yes! I have been to Liberia many times since. I have some funding from USAID to help enhance the infrastructure for research and resident-level medical education. One of the people I mention in the book, Dr. Phil Ireland, is someone I met before the outbreak, and then he became infected and nearly died. Now he is on faculty at the main teaching hospital in Monrovia. It's been amazing to watch the arc of his career.*

The international aid workers I worked with, mainly Europeans and Americans, have gone on to jobs all over the globe. I keep in touch with several of them on Facebook, and most of them continue to work in resource-limited or disaster settings.

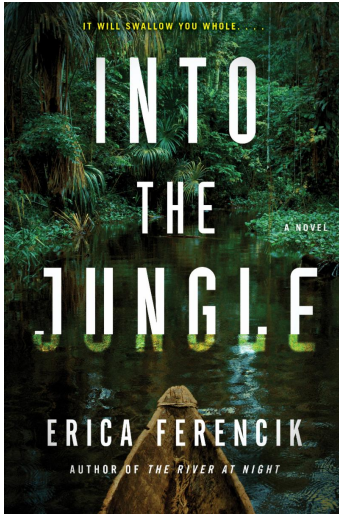
Q: Do you think that the public health and treatment options for Ebola in Africa and in other parts of the world have improved since your time in Liberia?

SCH: *I think there's been a positive difference in Liberia but I wouldn't describe it as a triumph. There is this great opinion piece in The New England Journal of Medicine by a doctor named Vinh-Kim Nguyen who works for Doctors Without Borders in the current outbreak in the Congo, and she noted that international groups can't “just” treat Ebola without expecting locals to be skeptical about the self-serving nature of their intentions. Meaning: the international community pours millions of dollars into Ebola control efforts, but it is perceived—often correctly—as not caring much about the people dying of tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV in the midst of an Ebola outbreak. Ebola Treatment Units aren't set up to treat patients who don't have Ebola, but from the perspective of the locals, a death's a death, whether from Ebola or TB, and thus we're really not taking care of their needs.*

In this current outbreak the level of trust is much lower than it was when I was working in Liberia, and the only way to earn that trust is to hear them about their needs and respond to it. But that response requires being engaged for the long haul, not just dropping in with a parachute when things go bad, and that requires a level of international cooperation that at present is under attack.

Q: Was *Inferno* the book of a lifetime for you, or are you thinking about possible books on other health issues or completely different book topics in the future?

SCH: *Inferno is my third book. Since I got involved in medicine (it's a second career) I have always loved writing about it, explaining it to people. I am currently working on a book about what makes modern medicine modern, and how it gets used and misused in the age of the internet.*



Brookline Booksmith Reading on May 31st

[Erica Ferencik](#) is celebrating the release of her new novel, *Into the Jungle*, on **Friday, May 31st, 7pm at Brookline Booksmith**. Erica will give a both book talk and slide show featuring book research in the Peruvian Amazon.

Publisher's Weekly gives the book a starred review and calls it, "[A] ferocious fever dream of a thriller... Ferencik delivers an alternately terrifying and exhilarating tale."

Amazon link:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1501168924/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_bibl_vppi_i1

James Thibeault's new book, *Michael's Black Dress*, is set to be published on July 1st.



The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month, except during the summer. Please send news about your activities, speaking, and new books (along with related pictures) to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by JUNE 10 for publication in the combined June-July Summer newsletter.

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Full membership dues are \$50 annually and Associate memberships are \$25 annually for the calendar year. If you renew or join any time during 2019, you will be a paid up member through December 2019. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:

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