

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Home Grown Talent Published

Jefferson alum writes two children's books

Random House has published Jefferson High School graduate Renée Watson's first children's book to be released in stores June 22.

A Place Where Hurricanes Happen records the voices of four young friends describing their lives before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. They learn that even though the world can change in a heartbeat, it's people who shape the character of a community and offer comfort and hope in the darkest hours.

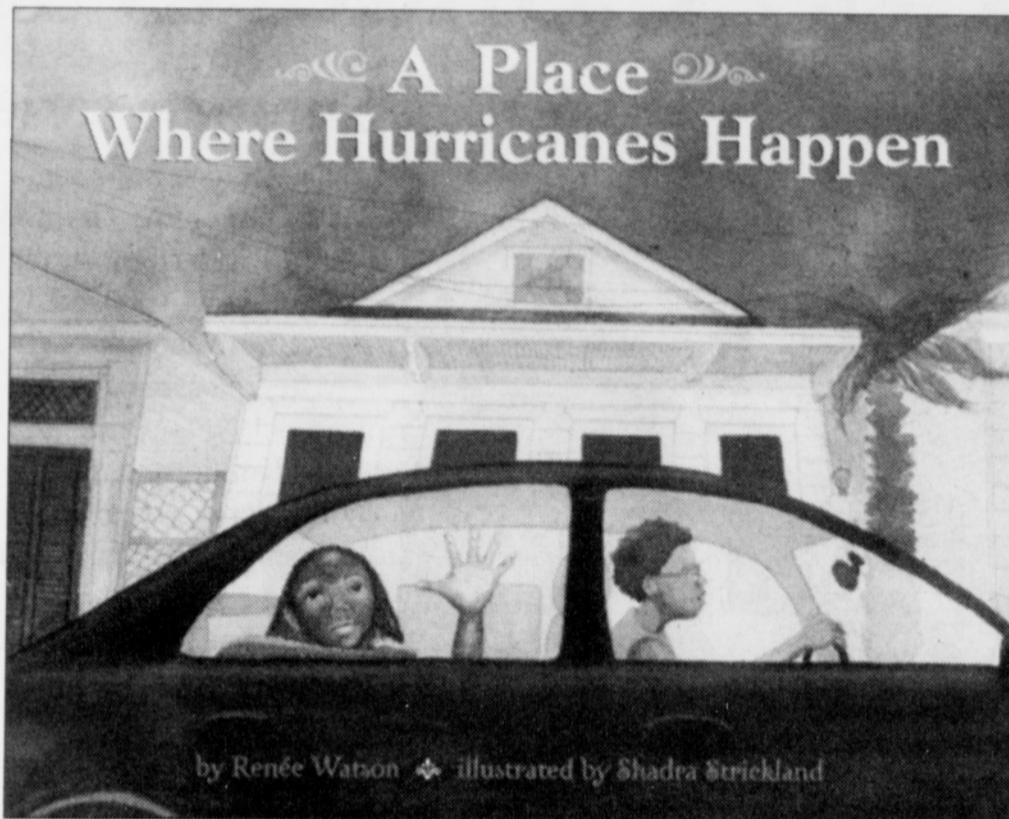
Philanthropist and author Caroline Kennedy writes in the book's forward, "A profound tribute to the power of friendship to heal and give us hope in troubled times. This book explores the impact of a national tragedy in the most personal terms and is engaging and whimsical at the same time — an impressive achievement."

Watson's second book, published by Bloomsbury, will be in stores July 6 and ready for pre-order on June 24: *What Momma Left Me*. After the death of their mother, Serenity Evans and her younger brother go to live with their grandparents, who try to keep them safe from bad influences and help them come to terms with what has happened to their family.

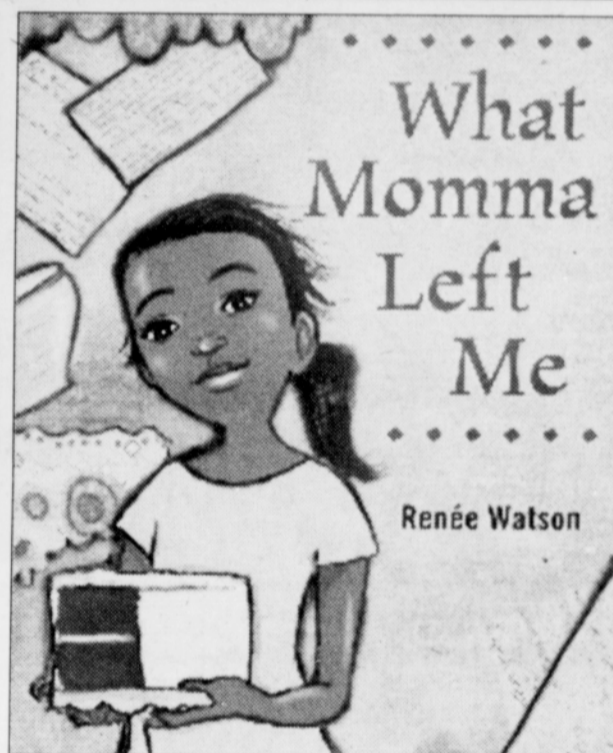
Booklist writes, "Packed with events, details, and revelations, this first-person novel creates a believable portrayal of Serenity, struggling through a difficult time but drawing strength from her wise, loving African American family and their broader community."

Watson, class of 1996, grew up in Portland, where even as a child she was writing and acting. Whether in school or church plays, in the living room with her family or in the privacy of her journal, she has always had a story to tell.

She has worked in public schools



Renée Watson has two new books (pictured above and right).



and community organizations as an artist in residence for several years, teaching poetry, fiction and theater in Oregon, Louisiana, and New York City. Her one woman show, *Roses are Red, Women are Blue*, debuted

at New York City's Lincoln Center at a showcase for emerging artists. Her poetry and articles have been published in *Rethinking Schools*, *Theatre of the Mind* and *With Hearts Ablaze*.

Author Book Signing Thursday

Portland native Renée Watson will be signing her children's book *A Place Where Hurricanes Happen* at a celebration for the release of the book on Thursday, June 24 at 7 p.m. at A Children's Place Bookstore, 4807 N.E. Fremont St.

One of Watson's passions is using the arts to help youth cope with trauma.

She has facilitated poetry and

theatre workshops with young girls coping with sexual and physical abuse, children who have witnessed violence, children coping with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and children who relocated to New York City after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Watson currently lives in New York City.

Recycled Arts to Jam Park

Live entertainment, family-friendly activities and more than 80 vendors selling art made from recycled items will highlight the Recycled Arts Festival on Saturday, June 26, and Sunday, June 27, in Esther Short Park in downtown Vancouver.

The 5th annual event will be open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days. There is no admission charge.

Artists will display and sell art designed and made from reused and reclaimed materials, includ-

ing metal, glass and porcelain garden art, recycled paper books and cards, reclaimed turned wood sculptures, jewelry and clocks made from vinyl records and bicycle tires and gears, and tin can lanterns and birdfeeders.

Live music, ranging from steel drums to Zydeco, will be on stage. A juggling stilt walker, puppets from Mudeye Puppet Co. a children's tent for recycled arts and crafts activities will be open both days. Rain barrels painted by local school groups also will be displayed.

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