



# The Book Buzz

by George Rishel

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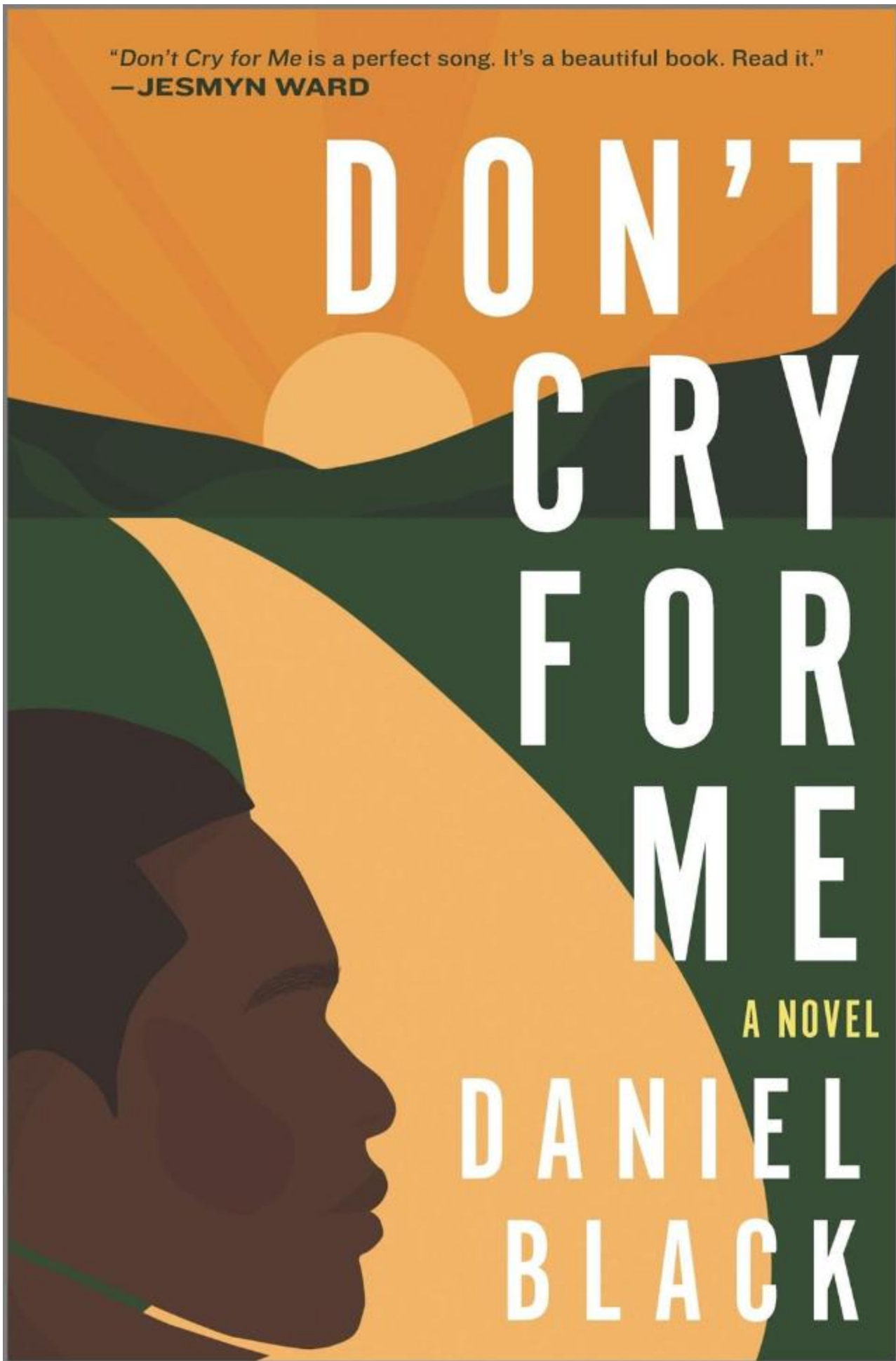
February is the month we celebrate Valentine's Day, Lincoln's Birthday, and Black History, while in the grips of uncertain winter weather. This month's offerings are books that touch on more than one of these anniversaries.

*"Don't Cry for Me is a perfect song. It's a beautiful book. Read it."*  
—JESMYN WARD

# DON'T CRY FOR ME

A NOVEL

DANIEL  
BLACK



*Must Love Books* from debut author Shauna Robinson delves into the all too white publishing industry and what it means to be the only Black woman fighting for a place at the table. Nora Hughes works for one publisher, but moonlights for another to make ends meet. But then the bestselling author at her day job enters her life, and Nora has to decide where her loyalties lie.

Former federal prosecutor at the U.S. Department of Justice, Laura Coates, opens the lid on another industry in *Just Pursuit, A Black Prosecutor's Fight for Fairness*. From the frontlines of our legal system, Coates saw how Black communities are policed differently, Black crimes prosecuted differently, and Black defendants judged differently. Coates expertly uses courtroom scenes to expose the flaws in our legal system.

In *Don't Cry for Me*, Daniel Black looks at the silences between Black gay men and their fathers in a novel in which a Black father seeks to make amends through a series of letters written on his deathbed. Through his letters, the father wants his son to understand the trauma each has inherited and to create the space for their reconciliation.

*The*

# VIOLIN CONSPIRACY

A Novel

BRENDAN

SLOCUMB

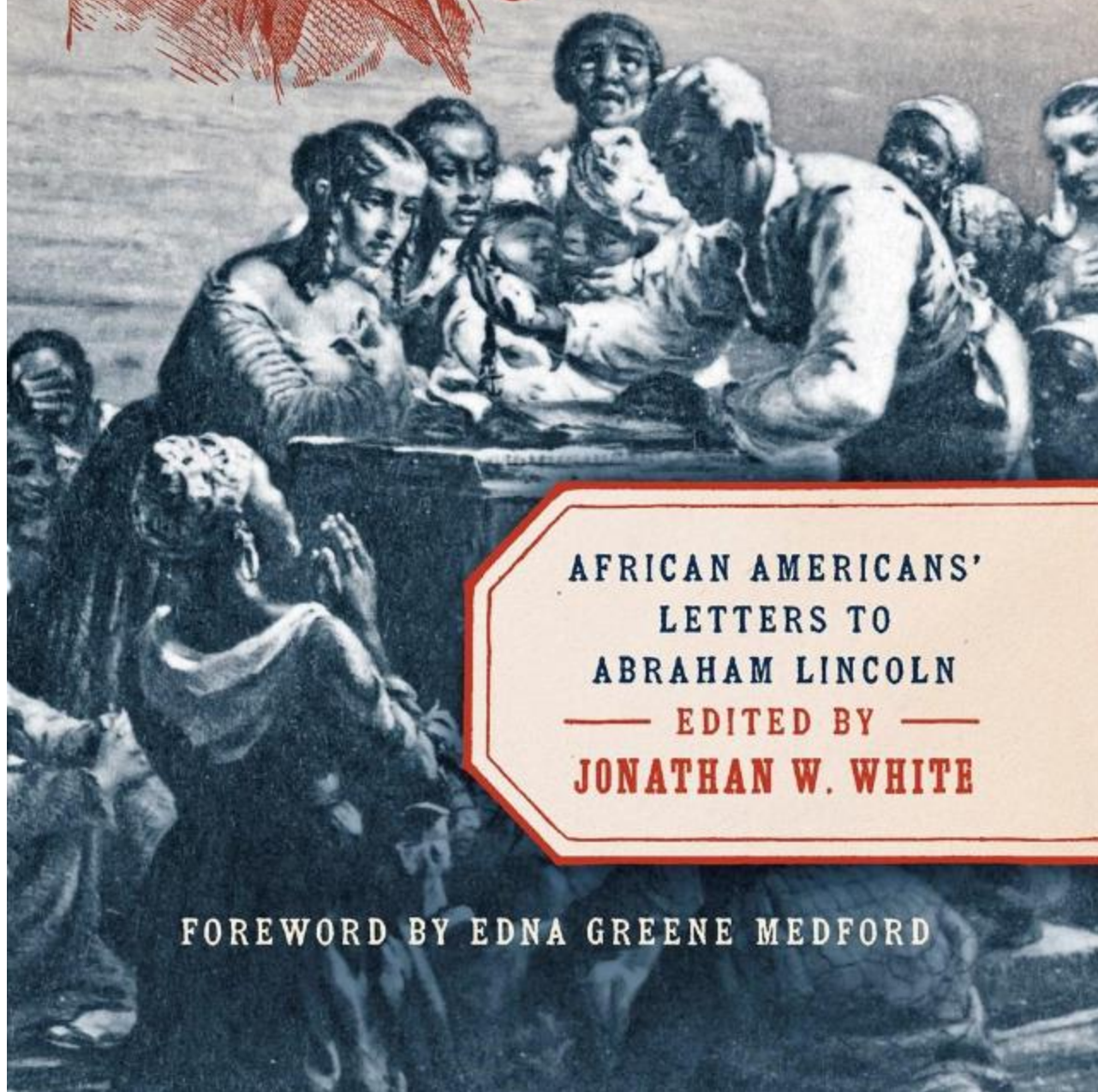


*The Violin Conspiracy* by Brendan Slocumb features a young Black man growing up in rural North Carolina and destined to be a cafeteria worker. But he has plans to be a world-class professional violinist. When he discovers his great-great-great grandfather's beat-up fiddle is actually a priceless Stradivarius, his goal seems to be within reach. But the violin is stolen, a ransom is demanded, and the descendants of the man who once enslaved his ancestor now claim the violin belongs to them. Can this young man sort it all out and achieve his dream?

Gary Phillips, an adept urban crime fiction writer, takes us to 1963 Los Angeles in *One-Shot Harry*, about an African American forensic photographer seeking justice for a white friend. When Harry develops his photographs of a seemingly accidental, but deadly, car accident involving a vehicle belonging to his good friend and army buddy, Harry sees signs of foul play. Armed with his wits, his camera, and his Colt .45, Harry delves into the seamy underbelly of LA society, tangling with racists, leftists, gangsters, zealots, and lovers, hoping to find justice for his friend.



# *To Address You as My Friend*



AFRICAN AMERICANS'  
LETTERS TO  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
— EDITED BY —  
**JONATHAN W. WHITE**

FOREWORD BY EDNA GREENE MEDFORD

Kai Harris tells the coming-of-age story of an 11-year-old girl, KB, in *What the Fireflies Knew*. KB and her slightly older sister try to make sense of their new life with their estranged grandfather after their father's death and their mother's disappearance. Her grandfather is grumpy, her sister seems like a stranger, and the white kids across the street are friendly—sometimes. KB vacillates between resentment, abandonment, and loneliness as she is forced to carve out a different identity for herself and find her own voice.

Nancy Johnson's *The Kindest Lie* highlights both the commonalities and struggles between struggling black and white families and the deep chasm between them. Ruth Tuttle, an Ivy-League educated engineer, wrestles with her husband's desire to start a family and her own inability to forget about the child she gave up as a teenager. Returning to her hometown, now plagued by unemployment, racism, and despair, Ruth befriends a young white boy, who is also adrift. Then, a traumatic incident strains the town's racial tensions, putting Ruth and the boy on a fateful collision course.

Two new books about Lincoln address his personal relationship with Black Americans while he was in the White House. For many Black Americans during the Civil War era, Lincoln was the first occupant of the White House who seemed concerned about their welfare. Many had the confidence to write him letters and seek redress of their grievances. Editor Jonathan W. White has assembled more than 120 of these letters in *To Address You As My Friend: African Americans' Letters to Abraham Lincoln*.



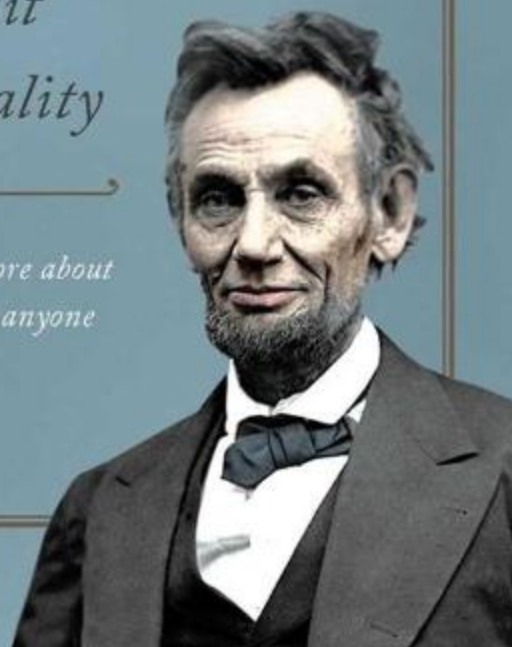
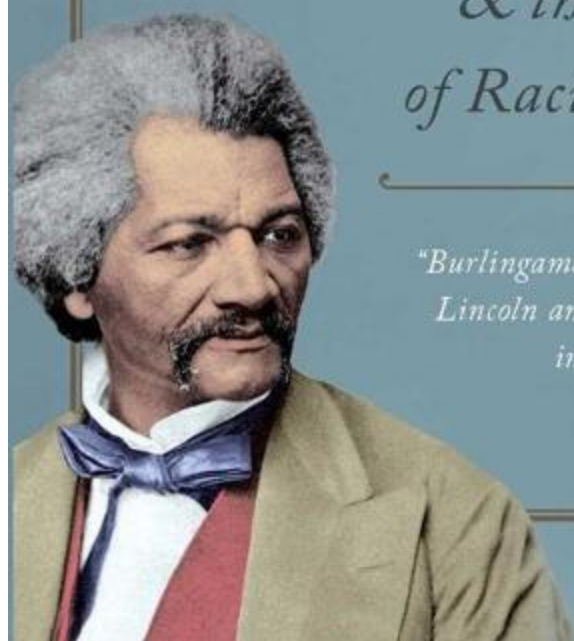
MICHAEL BURLINGAME

*The*  
**BLACK MAN'S  
PRESIDENT**

*Abraham Lincoln, African Americans,  
& the Pursuit  
of Racial Equality*

*"Burlingame may know more about  
Lincoln and his era than anyone  
in the world."*

-TIME





Michael Burlingame also focuses on Lincoln's relationship with Black Americans in *The Black Man's President: Abraham Lincoln, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Equality*. Frederick Douglass called Lincoln "emphatically the black man's president." His assessment was based on more than Lincoln's cordiality to Douglass, but also his willingness to meet with blacks in the White House, honor their requests, consult them on public policy, and invite them to attend receptions. Sojourner Truth said, "I never was treated by anyone with more kindness and cordiality than were shown to me by that great and good man, Abraham Lincoln."

Amanda Gorman, whose stirring poem "The Hill We Climb" she read at the inauguration a year ago, has released her debut collection of poetry in *Call Us What We Carry*. With these poems, Gorman captures a shipwrecked moment in time and transforms it into a lyric of hope and healing. She explores history, language, identity, and erasure through imagination and intimacy, using many inventive styles and structures.

For the kids, author Kathy Z. Price and illustrator Carl Joe Williams created a gorgeous and lyrical picture book, *Mardi Gras Almost Didn't Come this Year*, about a family finding hope and healing in a Mardi Gras celebration after Hurricane Katrina changed their world. It is a story of a family struggling to rebuild their home and their spirits and find hope in one very special Mardi Gras.

February 14 is not only Valentine's Day. It is also the birthday for *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. Lots to celebrate in February, despite whatever weather we may have.

*This story originally ran in the February issue of The Prairie Land Buzz Magazine. The Buzz Magazine is distributed free each month to over 400 locations, in 60 cities, in 11 Illinois counties. For more information visit <http://www.thebuzzmonthly.com>.*