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Eucabeth Odhiambo

187: A Book with a Purpose

Gabriela Pereira: Hello, and welcome, word nerds, to DIY MFA Radio, the show that will help you write more, write better, write smarter. I'm Gabriela Pereira, instigator of DIY MFA, and your host for this podcast. Now, let's talk writing.

Hello. Hello, word nerds. Gabriela here, and welcome back to DIY MFA Radio. Our show notes are over at diymfa.com/187, because it's Episode 187. Also, DIY MFA Radio is brought to you by our amazing fans and supporters on Patreon. If you'd like to help support the show, plus, get some exclusive bonus episodes, go to patreon.com/diymfa.

Now, today I have the pleasure of hosting Dr. Eucabeth Odhiambo on the show to talk about her gorgeous middle grade novel Auma's Long Run. I have to say, I read a lot of books for this show, and while I'm not supposed to pick any favorites, I will say this; it's not very often that a book gets me this excited, both about the story, and the meaning and significance behind it.

But before I start gushing, about how much I'm enjoying this book, let me introduce our guest. Eucabeth was born in Kenya, and is now a professor of teacher education at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

Her debut middle grade novel, Auma's Long Run, is inspired by her memories growing up in a Luo village in Kenya and her own work experiences with children and educators affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Welcome, Eucabeth. It is so wonderful to meet you and to be chatting with you today.

Eucabeth Odhiambo: Thank you for having me.

GP: It is so-- I'm loving, loving, loving this book. I'm still in the middle of reading it; so, no spoilers about the ending yet, but I'm dying to know-- I always like to start talking about the story behind the story, whenever I have authors on the show; and I have a feeling there's a pretty epic story behind this book. Can you tell our listeners, what inspired you to write Auma's Long Run?

EO: Well, like maybe most people, you always have an experience that you want to share with people. I want to say that I was inspired towards the end of what had happened in the past.

So, growing up in the village, going to college, getting married; and that period was during the period when HIV/AIDS pandemic was, you know-- It started slowly but increased as the years went by.

And so, I was an active participant in the community, and people's lives and deaths and, you know, everything – my relatives were affected. So, I was in this experience.

And so, you know, being in the experience, you really just take it as part of your day. It was bad times for, I want to say Africa and the world because AIDS was a world phenomenon, right? And so, growing up and just doing what we do in life, until I came to the United States.

And my passion was-- you know, I had been a teacher, and my passion is teaching. I came to do my Master's and doctorate as a teacher, but then, the experience of giving back and just working with

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the HIV/AIDS orphans and women, and, you know, widows and widowers, followed me because my parents worked with the village people.

And I always, you know-- We always sent back money, or we went back home and visited and you could, you always experienced this people. And so, when I wanted to do my research, it was just natural that I was doing my Master's in Curriculum and Instruction. So, I decided to do my research in Curriculum, and it was--

I wanted to be a part of this-- Well, in a small way, a part of the solution to the problem. I always wanted to help people who were suffering in regards to HIV/AIDS.

So, I said, teacher-- I decided, 'Well, if I can understand the curriculum and make sure that we are preparing young people to survive and improve their lifestyle, and understand what this disease could do.' I decided to study the curriculum in Kenya, and where they had reached at that point.

So, I compared HIV/AIDS curriculum in United States and curriculum in Kenya, just to see how well we were implementing the Kenyan curriculum. I went into do my dissertation, but it turned out to be like--

You know, and it's a very deep experience because; I had to interview teachers, I had to interview children, I had to interview community – some community stakeholders.

And I think for the first, for this research, what impacted me was how sad the situation was. Academic knowledge did not seem to make a difference yet. So, there were lots of head knowledge, but people were still suffering. You know, it was around 2003; actually, earlier than that, where the numbers were really high.

So, I went home in 2002, 2003. And I came back with data, but it was so depressing, just interviewing children and they say, you know, that they were – many of them were depressed, many of them were orphans. Their teachers were, you know, 40%, 30% of death among teachers.

So, you find a school where classes are combined; and it was just really sad, you know? And so, fast-forward, I complete my dissertation; and I'm thinking, 'Okay, I'm helping, I'm working with orphans,' and I got a grant from the university.

I still-- Actually, I still wanted to do some more. So, I got a grant from the university to go back, and – do a Needs, like research – do a Needs Assessment in two villages, again, related to the needs as a result of many orphans and lack of resources.

We, just wanted a professor friend of mine, we come from the same village-- We wanted to see what we could still do. So, we went back and that was even more revealing because this is fast-forward 2006. And we are interviewing mostly parents, villagers – you know, young adults, children, old people – and it was just like, really?

So, I left there with increased burden about what was going on, but there wasn't much I could do. So, the writer in me, I had always wanted to write, I just wasn't ready to – you know, life was going on.

I decided I wanted to finally write, and I thought about writing so many things, but then there was just nothing that made sense. I wanted something that was realistic, something that was real or something that I had passion for, something that I could speak about and feel like it was information that people would benefit from.

So, this story, Auma just came to me. You know, this is-- I knew this people; some of them, I had grown up with them. By the time I'd gone back the second time, you know, I had met lots of orphans; and whenever we went home, we were always taking some stuff to help and so on. So, it was very personal.

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I could see those faces. I grew up in that village, so I was able to feel some of it. I wasn't directly impacted in terms of, you know, contracting the disease; but I had friends who died, I had schoolmates who I had met earlier – before I came to the US, went back to visit and met them – and then, I go back the third or fourth time, and they're not there, you know?

So, it was just really-- I was inspired by that, thinking about-- Something else, also, was thinking about women and children, and the struggles they were going through. I would see the level of poverty, starvation. I felt like majority of women were the, I call them the 'silent sufferers', or if it's a word for it; they were--

You know, in our culture, the economic need for husbands to go to the city and work, to earn a leaving for the family, which is a great thing; it's good. But most of the time, they go by themselves and the women are left in the village.

So, this is something I grew up knowing, and I was used to it. But during this period, it was obvious that as the men were dying, the women were dying, of course. You know, the disease being contracted and brought back home.

And of course, I can't say who was the innocent party, but it seemed very obvious that this was a bigger problem than many people can say or want to say. So, I kind of felt like I would identify with the women – by that time, I was already a mother – as a mother. My first child was in 89.

And, at that time, you hardly got any information about the disease. I was educated. I wanted to know, but there wasn't any place you'd go and say, "Okay, this is the information about HIV/AIDS. This is exactly what's happening."

And, you know, literature, it wasn't there. And so, I'm thinking, 'Okay, I'm a mother. I go to the hospital.' A lot of people contracted the disease from needles, you know, in in the hospital or blood transfusion or, you know, medical instrument.

And I'm thinking, 'Oh my goodness, I just got a child and I have a baby, what's going to happen to me?' It just bothered me. And so, you can see those thoughts, those feelings, those emotions come through in the story, as I write about Auma and you know, the questions she had.

You noticed that at the beginning – you know, before the teacher said anything, which is related to the curriculum – before the teacher said anything, Auma was asking so many questions; and nobody wanted to answer.

The stigma of contracting the disease – or even people just didn't talk; they was too scared. At the beginning, they didn't understand, so they were too scared to say anything.

And if they knew anything, they were like, you know, "This is a disease, you know, a sin. You have sex, it's sinful. So, why would you discuss this, especially with children?"

And so, Auma is confused. She's asking, "What is this? Why is this happening? People are dying." I can honestly tell you, I had same questions, you know?

GP: You know, there's so much in there that I want to unpack because there's so much, there's so much to talk about. I mean, one of the things, the themes that came up as you were speaking was, you know, the deep sadness.

And while that certainly comes through in the story, there's also a lot of hope in this story. And so, you know, it's interesting to me like that dichotomy that like, within all of this, you know, very deep, heavy sadness there is, I mean, Auma is almost like an embodiment of hope.

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And her determination, like we're saying, her asking questions and how she's always, kind of, engaging and sort of pushing the envelope, you know? So, can you talk a little bit about this character? Because I mean, she clearly carries the story, even though we've got this amazing cast of supporting characters, this is clearly Auma's story.

Can you talk a little bit about how you crafted her as a character? And really, like, you know, she's not your typical girl. I mean, even from like, I don't know very much about, you know, society in Kenya, but I could tell just from reading the book, that she's not the typical 10, 11-year-old girl in a village at that time.

EO: Yeah. She's not. And the character came to me based on what I was observing from the, you know, 11, 12, 13-year-olds who were in sixth grade, seventh grade.

These were girls and boys, but, you know, girls and boys who had gone through so much trauma. So, here they are, before their parents got sick, everything was fine; they were going to school, life was good.

And then a parent gets sick. And usually, the one parent, maybe if the father is sick, then the mother is taking care of the father – so, Hey, life goes on. And then the father would die; and it's in the village, they are not--

They don't have any income or money to employ somebody, you know, to get good medical care. So, the children are the ones who had to pick the responsibility to take care of the parents and survival, and that is something I cannot--

As a person from a village like that cannot really say I understand, because I've never lived through that. I have lived around those children, I have helped them; but I can't say I can. But you could see in their eyes, the trauma, but at the same time, you would see hope and the determination to survive.

So, these were kids who would be taking care of a parent throughout the afternoon and the evening, and then leave home, go to school – for those who are still able to go, if the parent are still surviving, you know, able to manage, or maybe if there was a grandparent – they'd go to school, but they have to do all the chores, name it. And this is not, it's work. So, they have to do all the chores, go to school, come back and pick up from where they left.

And in fact, one time, I went home; and there was a group of boys who had come to beg my mother – my mother seemed to be the person who was willing to give work. She had, you know, in a sense, had some little money that she could pay.

And these boys were literally-- You know, we wanted to start a garden, and they were cutting the shrubs and working. And I asked my mother, "Who are those? I mean, do you employ young people nowadays?"

She said, "I'm not really employing them." She wanted to give them a sense of work, of not getting free things. So, she'd get them to work, and give them money. And sometimes, honestly, she didn't need that work done, but she created jobs so that they would come do some work; and then get the money, or sometimes she'd give them food, and they'd go.

And she just had-- No, it was a-- They just kept coming. And so, these were children whom had suffered. They were still suffering, but it just kind of, I couldn't understand the hope they had. They were able to smile. They were able to-- You know, you would joke, and they would laugh.

And of course, you know, human beings, we could laugh, but inside we are suffering, but that was survival. And I can tell you that that's survival for most of us in our culture is, you are going to-- If you have to think it, it is probably a natural way of surviving and not keeping problems in your mind, 24/7, you know?

They would, I would be there-- I would be talking to them and, you know, but most of the stories, my mother would tell me, "This is what's happening," because she would visit the homes.

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And whenever I went back home, I would visit, you know, and see who I was helping. In 2007, when we built a community center-- You know, we organized – our church here in the United States – we raised funds, built a community center, and we started feeding orphans to-date.

We feed we feed them Monday to Friday, one meal a day. And so, that was another opportunity for me to see the strength. Those were, at least, getting a meal a day; and the smile in their faces, and the messages they were sending back, and just, you know--

And so, Auma is one of those girls; she is suffering, she's struggling, but she knows, 'You know what? There's no room for giving up because, you know what? Well, if you give up, who cares? You have to survive; you have to be strong. This is what we do.'

And so, Auma, in spite of the questions she has; in spite of, you know, inside her, she has to have some strength. I personally can identify with that. I had to do a few things in life in order to move forward; and not just, you know, just give up and say, "Okay, I can't go to this university. So, well, I'm just going to give up and get married." That was not me. So, I could feed off of that too. [laughs]

GP: You know, what I also thought was so interesting about Auma was that, even though she's in the world that she's in and she's part of the village, she's also, in some ways, she has an ability to kind of step back and question things.

There's this wonderful scene where they're at her cousin's-- I guess her cousin's husband has just died; and it's still very mysterious, nobody knows. It's right at the beginning; so, it's not a huge spoiler, people. And so, she's there; and we can see her kind of looking at--

You know, on one hand, she's sort of editorializing on the situation she's going like, 'Oh, you know, part of this, the tradition is that you're supposed to wail and scream and be very loud about your suffering,' but she doesn't want to do that. And then, but then when she comes to her cousin to like, you know, offer her condolences, she breaks down.

And so, you have that moment of like, it feels so real, but we also get the sense that she has that very real emotion, but she also has that ability to, sort of, see through all of the window dressing on certain things, which I think is just so, so awesome. And it's so great.

I mean, she's what? 12, 13 years old, maybe. So, like, very, like-- It's very like teenagery ability, right? Like the teenagers can like just cut through all the nonsense. And so, it was one of those moments that just really kind of crystallized her character in my mind. So yeah, I really loved that.

EO: Yeah. Auma, she questions, because Auma is a character who has-- It's like she has had a glimpse of things outside of the village. And so, it's like, she's looking ahead and hoping that all these things that are taking place, she's part of them, but she's hoping that one day, she'll not have to succumb to this defeated, sad situation.

When you look at it at the beginning, it's almost like, 'You know what? This just looks hopeless. I mean, where are you going? What do you know?' But she's introspective in-- Her personality is very thoughtful and thinks deep, and you know?

GP: You know, it's also interesting. I mean, I love that you chose a girl as the protagonist. You know, especially given that, like the story, I mean, it's titled, Auma's Long Run. Clearly, running and sports is like a big central part of the story, and all of these things; and it's meaningful.

Obviously, her running is meaningful to her as well. And yet, when we think about a lot of middle grade novels, and I don't know-- I mean, I'm thinking mostly back to the middle grade novels I read as a child. I haven't read a whole lot of sports novels recently. My middle grade reading tends towards other areas.

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But usually, these stories that have like a sport of some sort at the center tend to be very boy-dominated. So, I love that you chose her, that you made her a girl. Can you talk a little bit about like that decision to make the-- I mean, it could have easily had been one of her brothers, for example, as the main character instead of her. Why did you choose her as the main character of thestory?

EO: Well, I'm a girl.

GP: Well, yeah, of course.

[laughter]

EO: I have a soft spot for girls, in terms of my interest as a teacher. I think as a person, I feel like the culture – not 'I feel' – it's true that it's male-dominated. Growing up, I always wanted to do things that the boys would do, like be taken seriously.

And, it's not for my family; it's what I saw in other families. My family was very exceptional and different; the girls in my family-- I think that's also fits into the girls in my family; my father looked at us the same way he looked at my brothers.

And he told us-- I remember very well back when I was very young, he brought us together. At that point, it was only one brother and several girls; I mean we are seven of us. And he said, "I expect you to do everything, go to school and everything, just like I expect your brother to do and be."

And for me, that was just like permission. And so, as much as the surrounding culture did not necessarily support my voice-- And I say 'voice' because I was able to go to school, I was able to do different things, but there are certain aspects of the culture that I was not privileged to participate in or my voice was-- I just always felt like my voice was not being heard.

And so, given a chance to bring out a voice of a girl, a strong girl, I did it; Auma is strong, she is in sports, boys-dominated, but I wanted to bring out the other side of Kenya, as a country. You know, we are long-distance runners; and there are quite a number of women who have done amazingly well in the world, you know, scene of athletics and other sports.

And also, in Kenya, women play sports at all levels. They may not be out there and their names out there, but we are given equal chance. So, in a way, that was also something that I wanted to bring, because I don't know that people really know that, but in elementary school, we had sports for both boys and girls – high schools and college.

And actually, organizations and companies, they always have, let's say, a basketball team. They have men and women; volleyball, men and women. So, it's not-- It's not that in my country or in my culture, women never play sports, we do, and that is pretty much what I wanted to draw from.

There's this young girl, there's this person; she is strong, she's a good runner. And that they're good runners in Kenya; they're good runners out there. We just don't know them, and here is one of them.

GP: I love that. And I mean, as a woman in a long line of ardent feminists, I am right there with you. Like my mother and my grandmother, and like going back, however many generations-- My own family is, I'm first-generation American.

So, as you were talking about a lot of the issues of poverty, I would be thinking about, you know, what I've seen in my family's, my parents' home country of Brazil, and a lot of—

You know, obviously, it's not exactly the same, but there are certainly a lot of those same common themes, like what you were saying about giving the boys, your mother, giving the boys like this work so that she would have an excuse to pay them.

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And in Brazil, you see that all the time, like, you know, kids who will like, you know, in parking lots, they'll sit and watch the cars to keep thieves away from the cars and the people who park their cars there, will pay the kids. And it's sort of a way for you to give them charity, without giving them charity; like, they're doing a job for you.

And so, it's a lot of those same common themes. But so, it's interesting thinking back though, because Brazil, even though it's part of the Western hemisphere, but it's got, sometimes, very sexist vibes in that country as well.

And so, I definitely relate to the idea of having a strong female character to give girls someone to relate to. And let's face it, even now – in current, like modern-day – in the United States, we're having a lot of women whose voices are not being heard about many things, not to get ubber-political, but it's not like it's something that's completely not part of our current cultural existence, even here in the United States. So, I totally agree with everything you were saying.

Another thing that came up and, you know, obviously, people have mentioned that this is very much a #OwnVoices. You know, there's that whole OwnVoices Movement in children's books – and the, sort of, the follow-up to people who are not up to speed and, you know, listeners who are not quite up to speed in all the KidLit stuff.

After the We Need Diverse Books Movement sort of picked up momentum, there was then sort of an accompanying movement of OwnVoices that like, it's not enough to have books representing diversity; they also need to be representing the voices of people who've had those experiences.

So, this is clearly, your voice telling a story that's drawn from your experience, an OwnVoices novel. And so, it's always fascinated me, when one writes an OwnVoices book, the responsibility that comes with it – because I've often thought, like there are certain things in my own experience that I don't want to go near those with a 10-foot pole.

[laughter]

GP: Like, I would much rather write about, you know, fairies and pixie dust than bring that stuff up.

EO: Exactly.

GP: : So, what is that like, because there is-- Obviously, on one hand, there's a good, like a positive, like empowering side of the OwnVoices idea, giving people whose voices might not be heard at a venue to be heard, but there's also a responsibility that comes with that. Can you talk a little bit about the two sides of this concept?

EO: Yeah, that's true. It was very, very difficult to write this, before-- I had to go through deciding and wondering, why I was doing this. Was I willing-- My question was, was I willing to let people know my thoughts, my experiences?

And when I realized that, you know, somebody was going to read this, I just backed off. I said, "You know what? Maybe not."

[laughter]

EO: It was hard. I even-- Well, the story was there. I had the whole story in my head, ready to go. In fact, the night I would wake up to write and I couldn't write fast enough; it was just like, all this coming. It was just like, I always wondered, you know, 'Could I just say these things, and then somebody would type them up?' So, the story was there, but I was too scared.

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I said, "No way, I am not letting people think that I've been there, and think this and that." And so that kind of slowed the process; it slowed the process of getting it out. So, when I was writing, when I finally decided, "Yes, do it, and this is the story you're writing," it was amazing. It was the most amazing experience.

I went through all the emotions, you know, but then every time I stopped to think somebody's going to read this, I froze. So that was hard. And then I said, "Okay, fine. What I was going to do was to write the book, publish it, and keep it to myself because my goal was write a book, you know?" So, I actually fulfilled that

GP: As you described that, I have an image of like Gollum from The Lord of the Rings, sort of holding onto the ring, like "My precious…" You know? [laughs]

EO: It's mine, and it's my thoughts, and I am happy I put them on paper – great. And so, I didn't tell anybody my fears, but I finished writing – and I had it edited several times, and paid people to write.

And my second editor, God bless her, Miranda – she is amazing. She's also an author, Miranda Paul, I have to say that. She's just-- She actually got me out there.I kept-- I finished the book; and she kept on emailing and said, "What have you done over the book? Are you trying this?"

And I I'll be like, "Yeah, I'm trying." But you know, in me, I was like, "Yeah, I'm trying. I hope nobody will like it." And years would pass by, I'll go one only year, and I'll be like, write to a publisher, but hoping that the publisher would say no. And when don't say, no, I'll say like, "Yeah, this is good. I am not-- This thing is not going out there." [laughs]

GP: Our listeners are probably thinking that you're nuts. Like you, yep, you're happy a publisher says, no, but I totally relate to that feeling because the minute they say, yes, it's like, this book will be a thing.

EO: Yes, that really scared me. So, she kept on bugging me and bugging me, and introducing me to this, and try this because she felt I needed it out there; and I was, okay. I was reluctantly going along.

But you know, so after writing it five years went by, six years, seven years. And also, the fact that I felt it was not perfect yet, but a lot of it was the fear of taking the responsibility. HIV/AIDS is a huge thing; I was going to be talking on behalf of people who actually experienced it. Who was I to say anything?

Many, many women in Kenya, girls survived, and as strong as Auma. There are many-- I mean, there's so many programs that you will meet these women – you know, now they're women and girls – and what they went through. So, who was I to speak, to bring their voices out? So that really scared me.

But finally, when-- You know, when I got an agent, my agent Ruben, there was no way I was going to-- I could not-- That was over; I was going to let it go. And so, I did. So, that side of OwnVoice is very difficult; it is. For me, it's much easier to write stuff like that because that's what I know, that's what I want to write.

But every time-- I'm working on another book now, which is very close-- It's, a lot of it is OwnVoice and experiences my family has gone through.

And I feel there are days, I wake up, especially in this political climate where we are talking about #MeToo, and we are talking about racism and all that stuff, I'm going like, 'Oh my goodness, there I go again, am I going to be trying to speak on behalf of, who else?' You know, so yeah, that was not easy.

GP: You know, there's so much there that I-- Again, from a different perspective, but totally relate to. So, one of my-- My own sort of OwnVoices thoughts that I kick around – and I've mentioned it on the show before – the fact that I have bipolar disorder.

And so, people have often asked me, like, 'You should write about that experience, you should make that into a novel.' And there is that part of me that, first of all, I still feel like it's way too close.

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But second, there is that part of me that wonders, you know, that OwnVoices, what really constitutes an OwnVoice. I can speak about my experience with an illness, but I can't speak about everyone else's.

And given mental illness can play out so different ways for different people, how does one speak, like you said, speak on behalf?

And then, you know, as people, as you really beautifully explained, while this is an OwnVoices story – in that, you know, it's about a girl in Kenya and you were from a village just like that, and you have a lot of that same own experience, when it comes to the actually being someone who experienced firsthand what Auma is experiencing, that's where the fiction comes in.

And there's a reason it's called fiction, you know? And so, then it kind of-- That's one of the things I've often struggled with, with the whole question around OwnVoices. I think, on one hand, it's a wonderful way to give space for voices that need to be represented.

But on the other hand, is it putting so much responsibility that suddenly we're pigeonholing writers into only writing about things that they've directly experienced, and how does that land for fiction writers?

I mean, I don't know about you, I've never experienced, you know, superpowers or invisibility or other things that I write about. So, you know, how does fiction play in? It's definitely something I ponder a lot.

EO: Yeah. I think the fiction part is the best thing in OwnVoice. Actually, the reason why it was so much easier for me to be in and out, you know, there are places where; I know this, I experienced this, and I'm writing it now.

But the fiction part is, 'You know what, I can imagine what that other person felt when I looked at them, when I spoke to them. And I can add this, and I can say this, and I will not have to-- You know, I don't have to say that this is exactly what I experienced.'

So, for me, fictionalizing it was the best part for me. It made it so much easier, because I can tell you, I would not like, I don't think I will ever. And let me say 'never', but it will be so difficult to say exactly my personal experiences in certain things and my deep thought would be kind of difficult, I have to say.

I find it easier to put it through somebody else and things that I, you know? So, fictionalizing it to me was the saving thing.

[laughter]

GP: So, you hinted that you had something else in the works. Can you talk a little bit about it? What's next for you? You mentioned another novel. Is there anything else that's coming down the pike that you want to tell our listeners?

EO: Well, I don't want to give too much, but it's basically, it relates to immigration this time. And so, it's experience here.

GP: Ooh, that's timely.

[laughter]

EO: Yes. So, that's why I'm scared.

[laughter]

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GP: Well, as the daughter of immigrants, I cannot wait to get my hands on that book. And I have to say, I'm reading, I'm still reading Auma's Long Run – and I've been reading a lot of middle grade to my six year old son; this book is definitely on the list.

I mean, I think he's a little young for it right now, but it is definitely on the list for him, when he gets a little bit older for us to read it together.

EO: Awesome. Thanks.

GP: Because it's really, I'm just, yeah, it's a really-- It brings kids into and opens a world up for kids. And I think it's just really wonderful. I always end with the same question, what is your number one tip for writers?

EO: I think based on my experience, it is, just write. I was the person who, apart from my fear of sharing this deep information and deep issues and prices and disease and so on – and I was really scared, but I realized I had to write.

So, writing it was the first step. It took me 8 to 9 years to finally get it out. But see, because I wrote it, I was able to overcome those fears. So, the thing is just write, it's your story. You know, so I felt at times--

There's times when I felt like, 'Oh, this is similar to that story – Oh, this is exactly the same.' But then, at the end of the day, I realized it's my story. I'm the only person who could say it the way I said it. So, just write; and if you have to go through over certain things and-- It's going to take time, just write; and eventually, you'll get where you want to be.

GP: I love it. I could not have said it better myself. Thank you so much for being on the show, Eucabeth. It was wonderful speaking with you.

EO: Thank you so much.

GP: All right, word nerds. Thanks so much for listening. Keep writing and keep being awesome.

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