

PRESS RELEASE

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Author Bibi Belford's second novel, *Crossing the Line*, about young friends and bravery, is set during historic Chicago Race Riots

CROSSING THE LINE by Bibi Belford (Sky Pony Press, 15 August 2017, Hardcover & eBook, ISBN-13 9781510708006, Price \$15.99 & \$15.19, 304 pages)

(CHICAGO, ILLINOIS) Chicago author Bibi Belford's second novel tackles social issues in a story of an unexpected friendship during a violent time in Chicago's history—the race riots of 1919. The teacher-turned-author creates stories intended to resonate with the issues students face today. Belford says of the book, "I wrote **CROSSING THE LINE** for all those students I've taught that face discrimination and prejudice in their daily lives." Though the middle grade novel is based on a tragic event in history, the author hopes the story will engage today's young readers to personally stand up for justice in their everyday lives—even if doing so means accepting risk. She aims "...to write books that bring kids joy and create stories that motivate readers to be everyday heroes." Belford lives and writes in Chicago in the South Loop neighborhood. She is a retired public school teacher and literacy advocate, who continues to work as an educational consultant focusing on methods for classroom reading instruction.

Having spent time researching Chicago history—after observing the memorial plaque of a victim killed in the race riot—Belford's idea for the book title comes from an archived political cartoon that depicts the community in 1919 angrily divided. "Researching (the race riots from almost one hundred years ago), I decided to write a book about two boys, Billy and Foster, who become friends despite their race differences and build a raft that crosses over the line (where the community is divided)."

CROSSING THE LINE

By Bibi Belford

"A heart-wrenching, heart-pounding read, set almost a hundred years ago but with themes that still resonate strongly today. The characters are unforgettable, and loyal even as their friendship is tested. A story that will leave you thinking about how you can cross the line."

—Lisa Ann Scott, author of *Back on the Map* and *School of Charm*

"'We have stories to tell,' Bibi Belford writes in this powerful novel, 'if we are brave to tell them.' And I'm so glad to have read this brave story. **CROSSING THE LINE** tackles tough issues that didn't make sense in Billy's lifetime, and that don't make sense now—and his journey is infused with hope that even the smallest among us can be a catalyst for big change."

—Beth Vrabel, author of *Pack of Dorks* and *A Blind Guide to Stinkville*

"Readers of all ages will be pulled into this strong, warm, and important coming-of-age story, seen through the eyes of an innocent boy trying to make sense of a racially violent world around him. Blending honesty and humor with history isn't easy, but Bibi Belford has hit all her marks with courage and

conviction.”

—Randall Platt, author of *Incommunicado*

Book Description

Billy’s family has fallen on hard times, what with his da hospitalized after the Great War and his ma barely scraping by. But it’s no hardship for him when there’s not enough money to pay the tuition for Nativity of Our Lord, the private Catholic school everyone in his neighborhood attends. Billy’s not big on education.

When he transfers to James Ward, a Chicago public school, he finds out there’s a big difference at public school: the kids aren’t all Irish—in fact, they aren’t even all white. It isn’t long before Billy’s found a new best friend in Foster, another fifth grader who also doesn’t have any money, loves baseball, and just happens to be black.

Billy is pretty sure skin color doesn’t matter. Not when he and Foster are just horsing around, playing baseball, working on the docks of the canal, and building a raft at their secret hideout near Bridgeport’s Bubbly Creek. But in the Red Summer of 1919, it does matter.

CROSSING THE LINE is Bibi Belford’s second novel and her first historically-based fiction. It combines a fresh-voiced—if naïve—protagonist with a literary, hopeful narration that will capture the attention of readers of many ages. The century-old setting reveals the importance of daring friendships in a story that is aptly honed for modern readers.

About Bibi Belford

Bibi Belford is the author of books for middle grade readers: *CROSSING THE LINE*, *CANNED AND CRUSHED*, *THE GIFT*, and *ANOTHER D FOR DEEDEE* (coming 2018). She lives in the South Loop neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois with her husband. She enjoys books, gardening, beaches, and spending time with her grandchildren. Belford also works as an educational consultant and volunteers in public schools. She is a member of CWA – Chicago Writers Association, SCBWI-Illinois, and has served as a panelist for author Success Stories at the UW-Madison Writers’ Institute. For more information, visit Belford’s author website at bibibelford.com.

Publisher Information

Sky Pony Press is the children's book imprint of Skyhorse Publishing. Following in the footsteps of their parent company, Sky Pony press seeks to publish books for young readers with diverse interests. To learn more about Sky Pony Press, visit skyponypress.com.

Book Information

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