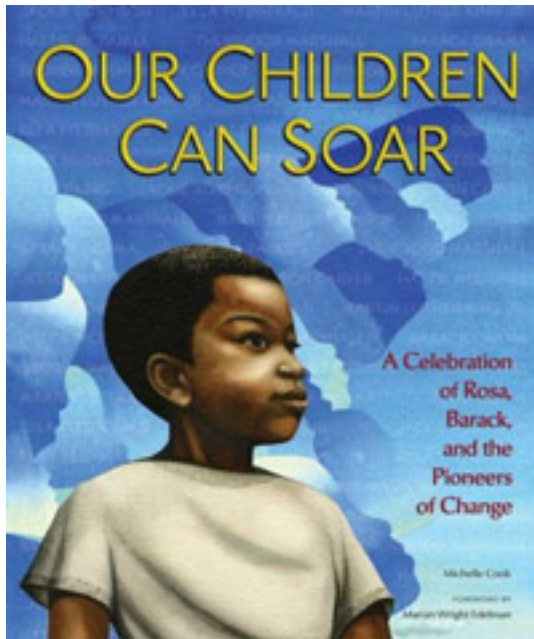


## Book review: “Our Children Can Soar” by Michelle Cook

Written by Terri Schlichenmeyer

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If you could change anything in the world, what would you fix?

Would you change it so your parents are home with you more, or would you take them on a far-away vacation? Maybe you'd make the sky green and the grass red or you'd make a No-Bedtime Before Nine O'Clock rule. Perhaps you'd give everyone jobs and food, or you'd be sure that there was no war, ever again.

You may be just a kid, but there are lots of things you can do to make change. In the new book “Our Children Can Soar” by Michelle Cook, illustrations by various artists, you'll see that anyone can make a difference and that people have been doing it for a long time.

Years ago, some of your ancestors may have fought in the Civil War. Many people didn't want them to fight, but they did. They fought so others would have the freedom to invent new things and run swift races.

Once, it was almost unheard-of for African Americans to be in movies or to sing in certain public places. But Hattie McDaniel changed all that when she won an award for a movie in which she starred. She opened the doors so that others could sing and dance for all audiences.

Before Jackie Robinson, African American baseball players had to play separately from white players. It took courage for Robinson to be the first Black baseball player in the Major Leagues, but he did it by standing up for his abilities and rights. Why? So that others would have the courage to stand up, too.

Or, in Rosa Parks' case, to sit down.

And when Rosa refused to get up and get off that bus, it started a chain of events in which a little girl went to school. She, in turn, gave Martin Luther King another reason to march for Civil Rights. And because these people worked to change the world, you have the freedom to make a difference, too.

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“Rosa sat so Martin could walk...” Those six words were the beginning of a thought that raced around the country last fall, pre-election. “Our Children Can Soar” is that sentiment, expanded.

Editor and author Michelle Cook (a pseudonym) reached a hundred-fifty years back to start this book at a courageous beginning, and the story doesn’t stop until it emboldens and inspires children. Marian Wright Edelman offers a foreword that encourages parents to explore their own families in search of difference-making forebears.

But, because your kids will be looking at the illustrations, I like to check them out, too. What I found here is a treasure-trove: each featured person is honored through a portrait done by a different artist. Kids might not notice, but that’s a nice twist for any grown-up assigned to read aloud.

While you can present this book to any child, its simple text is better suited for those ages 2-to-8. If you’re looking for a beautiful book with which to entertain your (smaller) kids, “Our Children Can Soar” will fly quite nicely.

**“Our Children Can Soar” by Michelle Cook,  
foreword by Marian Wright Edelman**

Illustrated by various artists

c.2009, Bloomsbury USA

\$16.99 / \$21.00 Canada

32 pages