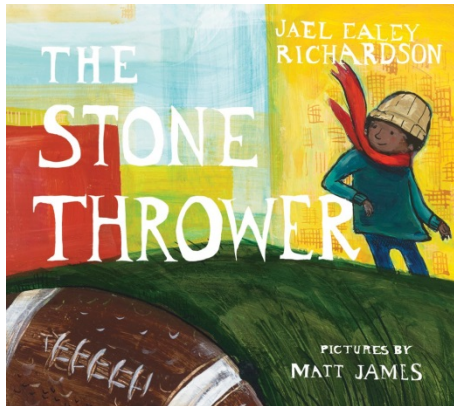


The Stone Thrower

Jael Ealey Richardson

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Groundwood Books, House of Anansi Press, Toronto, Berkeley



Jael Ealey Richardson published the book *The Stone Thrower: A Daughter's Lessons, A Father's Life* in 2012. This new book is written for children and focuses more on the early life of her father, football star Chuck Ealey.

Portsmouth, Ohio, in the 1950s was a place of segregation. Separation of Black people from whites was the norm in washrooms, restaurant seating areas, schools, and even neighbourhoods. Into this divided world, Chuck Ealey was born in 1950. His hard-working mother sought to teach

Chuck to see himself as “passing through” his North End neighbourhood, just as the coal-carrying trains passed through without stopping until they reached their ultimate destination. North End was not going to be a dead end for her son, and education was key.

Living on the wrong side of the tracks was everything we expect that expression to mean for Chuck and his mother. Poverty and hunger were constants. Entertainment was non-existent.

As is often the way with children, when there is no ready source of entertainment, they will find ways to challenge and amuse themselves. And so Chuck began throwing stones at passing Norfolk & Western trains, setting targets for himself and honing his skills of strength and aim.

His stone-throwing game taught him lessons in perseverance that served him in the classroom as well as on the football field. While attending a non-segregated high school, Chuck's attributes of determination and focus were recognized by his football coach, who, bucking the normal exclusion of Black students from important positions, named him quarterback of the team. Thus began Chuck Ealey's journey out of North End.

The book concludes with a telling post-script which delineates Ealey's career successes, culminating in his Grey Cup win with the Hamilton Tiger Cats, as well as the disappointments which are inevitable for one living in an unjust world.

The many emotions that one feels while reading this book are supported most effectively by the illustrations of Matt James. His child-like drawings present feelings ranging from raw despair in some places to heart-felt joy in others.

In her presentation of her father's life, of struggle and determination, and his mother's supportive love, Jael Ealey Richardson not only provides children with a look at the prejudice of the '50s, but also with character-building life lessons.



Mollie Wilson