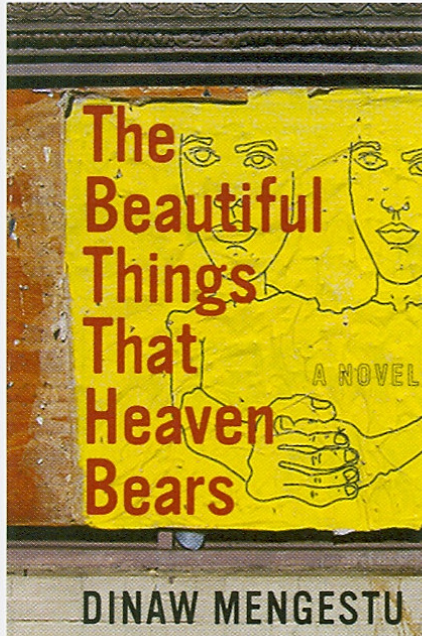


Man in the Middle

“The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears”
by Dinaw Mengestu



It happens all over the country. A neglected neighborhood suddenly becomes prime development property. Lifelong residents are expelled to make room for new homes and businesses. It also happens in Dinaw Mengestu's latest novel, which chronicles the complexity of a changing neighborhood through the eyes of a man on the margins.

As the Logan Circle neighborhood gets divided, Sepha Stephanos is caught in between. A quiet man who fled Ethiopia as a teenager (after watching soldiers beat his father), Stephanos has separated from the insular community of Ethiopian im-

migrants and opened a forgettable shop in a rundown neighborhood in Washington, D.C. Though his ethnicity affords him marginal acceptance among his neighbors, the racial tensions that surface when a white woman moves in next door reawakens his social isolation.

Through his troubled involvement with the controversial new neighbor and long drinking conversations with his friends Kenneth from Kenya and Joseph from the Congo, Stephanos realizes that a man caught between two worlds is consequently alone. But, maybe, in being caught between two worlds, like Dante emerging from the Inferno, he might glimpse the “beautiful things heaven bears.”

Born in Ethiopia and raised in the United States, Mengestu brings sharp insight and descriptive finesse to his novel, “The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears,” which was chosen by the Seattle Public Library for its Seattle Reads, 2008 series. With Seattle's rich Ethiopian heritage and a record of gentrification to scrutinize, Mengestu's book offers great opportunity for community dialogue.

■ Kristianne HUNTSBERGER

around the Northwest.

Check out library programming for a chance to meet the author or get involved in community events. Visit Seattle Reads Quick Link on the Seattle Public Library webpage www.spl.org for details.



Author Dinaw Mengestu

MEET THE AUTHOR: DINAW MENGESTU

May 9, 7 p.m.

Seattle Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 1 – Microsoft Auditorium

OTHER CHANCES TO MEET MENGESTU:

May 7, Douglass-Truth and Green Lake Branches,

May 8, Seattle Central Community College

May 10, Columbia and Queen Anne Branches

Reading groups around the city: www.spl.org

IMMIGRATION, GENTRIFICATION AND SMALL BUSINESS: A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE PANEL DISCUSSION

April 9, 7 p.m.

Douglass-Truth Branch
2300 E. Yesler Way, Seattle

HORN OF AFRICA CULTURAL DAY

Celebrate Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean cultures with stories, music, arts and food.

April 26, 1-4 p.m.

New Holly Gathering Hall
7054 32nd Ave. S., Seattle

SEATTLE READS FILM SERIES

“Adwa: An African Victory”

(Ethiopia, 1999, 97 min.), directed by Haile Gerima

April 19, 2 p.m.

Seattle Central Library, 1000 Fourth Ave., Level 1 – Microsoft Auditorium

“Imperfect Journey”

(Ethiopia, 1994, 88 min.), directed by Haile Gerima with Richard Kapuscinski

April 30, 6:30 p.m.

Lake City Branch, 12501 28th Ave. N.E., Seattle