

## Heroes of the Flood on Both Sides of the Black Atlantic

Floods reveal the resources communities have and lack. They can wash away social barriers or provide an excuse to build them higher. This talk compares the social construction of flooded black communities in *Sosu's Call* (1997) by Meshack Asare of Ghana and *Orleans* (2013) by Sherri L. Smith of the United States. Both books feature protagonists with disabilities who save lives during floods. However, one main character becomes the hero of his village while the other dies through state violence. Why the divergent endings? The difference in messages reflects their differing social contexts: a fishing village in Ghana during 1990s political reform and the African American community of New Orleans during the political abandonment of the early 2000s. It also reflects their difference in genre. As a picture book, *Sosu's Call* models for younger child readers how a healthy society can increase access for people with disabilities, while *Orleans* as a YA dystopia models for adolescent readers how to launch a social critique against police brutality, climate change, and urban quarantine zones. The flood in *Sosu's Call* refreshes society, while the flood in *Orleans* creates a landscape of environmental sacrifice. Each book responds to specific borders, barriers, and political discussions in two different parts of the African diaspora.