

## Biography

Born in 1952 in New Haven Connecticut, Karen Lynn Williams is the author of over a dozen books for children, including *Galimoto—a Reading Rainbow* Featured Book and one of the *New York Times* Top Ten Books of the Year.

She was a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi, Africa, which is the setting for *When Africa Was Home—a Booklist* Editors' Choice.

Karen also lived and worked in Haiti, the setting for her highly acclaimed *Circles of Hope* and *TapTap*. Karen writes with an impassioned voice and deep respect for children living in developing countries, and her books capture the details of everyday life with naturalness and poignancy. She has taught writing at the graduate level at Seton Hill University and Chatham University and in several programs including the Institute of Children's Literature. She has been a volunteer for the Pittsburgh Refugee Center helping find homes for Sudanese and Somali refugees in the Pittsburgh area where she was inspired to write *Four Feet Two Sandals* and *My name is Sangoel*.

Most recently Karen has returned to Pittsburgh after living for seven years on the Navajo reservation in Chinle Arizona. There she continued to write, explore the Southwest and learn Navajo weaving as an active member of the community.

Karen writes with equal passion in her chapter books and novels about real life problems faced by children in the United States loosely based on her own childhood and life with her four children. Karen speaks frequently at writers' conferences and travels widely around the country and the world to meet with children in schools and share her books. Karen currently lives in Pittsburgh, PA with her husband Steven and their reservation rescue dog, Reena. She has five grandchildren living around the world. Her website is found at [www.karenlynnwilliams.com](http://www.karenlynnwilliams.com).

## Forthcoming Titles

**Secret Hero, Sacred Weapon: Teddy Draper Sr. Navajo Code Talker** (Lee and Low)

**Facing Fear**(Eerdmans Books for Children)

**A Thousand White Butterflies** (Charlesbridge)

## Published Work

**Beatrice's Dream: Life in Kibera Slum** (Francis Lincoln, 2011) Photos by Wendy Stone.

**A Beach Tale** (Boyd's Mills, 2011) Illustrated by Floyd Cooper.

A starred review from Kirkus

Children will relate to his adventure, which pivots on the moment he realizes he has lost sight of his dad. But a winning combination of good memory and self-reliance lead to a most satisfactory ending. Scoop up this tale for its strength as a unique beach story and for its warm portrayal of an African-American son and father enjoying the outdoors. (*Picture book. 3-6*)

**My Name is Sangoel** (Eerdmans, June 2009) by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed; Illustrated by Catherine Stock

Praise from Publishers Weekly and Kirkus

**Four Feet, Two Sandals** (Eerdmans, 2007) by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed; Illustrated by Doug Chayka

\*\*\*The cities of Bologna and Itabashi have a sister city relationship and are culturally twinned in the promotion of children's books. Each year a translation contest is held in Itabashi, Tokyo in which participants buy selected English or Italian children's books and prepare a translation, which they submit to the competition. This is the 15th year that the Itabashi Translation Contest is being held.

The books that are in the competition are chosen by the committee of the Bologna Book Fair in Itabashi - Picture Book Translation Contest from the picture books that Bologna contributes each year to the city of Itabashi. The committee includes professional translators, picture book authors, and/or teachers. The contest receives support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Embassy, the Italian Embassy, the Chinese Embassy, the Mongolian Embassy, the Japan School Libraries Conference, the Japanese

Libraries Association, and the Japan Book Publishing Association among other domestic, non-profit, book-related organizations.

\*\*\*Four Feet, Two Sandals, was selected as Book of the Month by the Rutgers University Project on Economics and Children. To see this selection, visit the Project's home page at <http://econkids.rutgers.edu>,

**\*\*\**Four Feet, Two Sandals* was selected for the 2008 list of Notable Books for a Global Society, awarded by the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association.**

Each year, this program selects a list of 25 outstanding trade books that enhance student understanding of people and cultures throughout the world.

**\*\*\*\**Four Feet, Two Sandals* was chosen to be a part of the Reading List: Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People — a project presented yearly by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the Children's Book Council (CBC).**

<<http://www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists/notable.html>> .

\*\*\*\**Four Feet Two Sandals* was chosen by Jessica Doyle, the First Lady of Wisconsin for Read On Wisconsin! for the book of the month for March 2008 and was distributed to school and community groups across the state. See <http://readon.wi.gov>

\*\*\*\*A Spring 2008 Horn book Guide recommended book.

\*\*\*\*School Library journal: Double-page acrylic paintings in muted colors enhance the well-written narrative, depicting the desert setting as well as camp conditions and cultural details, such as the character's clothing. The girls' changing emotions are clearly conveyed through the text's understated tone and the realistic pictures. This poignant story of loss, friendship, and sharing introduces readers to the realities of children growing up in refugee camps.

***Circles of Hope* by Karen Lynn Williams; illustrated by Linda Saport (Eerdmans, 2005)**

—Society of Illustrators: "The Original Art" Annual Exhibition (2005) —ReadBoston: Best Read Aloud Book, runner-up (2005)- -Green Earth Book Award: Honorable Mention, Children's Books (2006)

(for a book that promotes appreciation, respect, and responsibility for the natural environment, given by the Newton Marasco foundation) —*Skipping Stones*

*Magazine*: *Skipping Stones* Honor Award (2006)

(for promoting respect for ecological richness and cultural diversity) --Bank Street College: Best Children's Books of the Year (2006)—Peace Corps Writers Association: Best Children's Writing (2006)

“A story of sibling love and responsibility, written without didacticism or sentimentalism.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

“In this hopeful, gentle account, Williams frames the tale of a Haitian boy's struggle to keep a tree alive against the larger story of his country's struggle against poverty.... This

uplifting tale suggests that one child can make a difference — a powerful message for readers.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“This heartfelt story is supplemented by a glossary of Creole words and an author’s note explaining the Haitian custom of planting a fruit tree at the birth of a child. The vibrant charcoal-and-pastel full-spread illustrations are rich with color and add an exotic, dreamlike quality to the story.... [A] hopeful tale of family unity.” —*School Library Journal*

***One Thing I’m Good At*** (Lothrop, 1999)

“Williams has created a cast of realistic characters that includes a crabby teenager, a frustrated substitute, and a teacher’s pet. A satisfying story with an important message about self-image.” --*School Library Journal*

***Painted Dreams*** (Lothrop, 1998) Illustrated by Catherine Stock

“As they did in *Galimoto*, this author and illustrator gently and deftly portray a child with few material goods but with plenty of hope, dreams, and ingenuity.”

— Starred review, *School Library Journal*

***A Real Christmas This Year*** (Clarion, 1995)- -Mark Twain Award nominee (Missouri Association of School Librarians)

“Williams has written an eye-opener about life with the handicapped. The straight-forward writing is always empathetic, never pitying...a compelling novel about the real meaning of Christmas.” —*Kirkus*

***Tap Tap*** (Clarion, 1994) Illustrated by Catherine Stock

—A Junior Library Guild Selection: “This satisfying story of a memorable market day, accompanied by vivid watercolor paintings, is filled with the bustle and color of Haitian village life. Based on Williams experience living in Haiti with brilliant and accurate illustrations by Stock.”

“As they did in *Galimoto*, Williams and Stock here bring a cultural tradition to life for young readers. Children will enjoy the rollicking ride almost as much as Sasifi herself.” —*Publishers Weekly*

***Applebaum’s Garage*** (Clarion, 1993) —A Junior Library Guild Selection

“Applebaum’s social withdrawal following a child’s accident in his yard is well portrayed, and the three plot strands involving Robbie, the mouse, and Applebaum are tied together neatly into a satisfying ending.” --*Booklist*

***First Grade King*** (Clarion, 1992) Illustrated by Lena Shiffman

“Williams exhibits an understanding for the concerns and sentiments of young children in this amusing story.” —*The Horn Book Guide*

***When Africa Was Home*** (Orchard, 1991) — Illustrated by Floyd Cooper — Editor's Choice, *Booklist*

"The joyful text and Cooper's boldly drawn, glowing oil-wash pictures evoke the intensely physical experience of the small child, his delight in the place and culture, what it feels like to belong there. — Hazel Rochman, *Booklist* starred review

"In a warmly nostalgic story based on Williams family's experience in the Peace Corps...A book that persuasively presents a world that may seem especially alien as welcoming and nurturing." —*Kirkus*

"Williams lived in Africa for several years and obviously has strong emotional ties to that land and its people." —*Publishers Weekly*

"In the rush to fill the need for multicultural books, it is wonderful to find one that is so rich in feeling as well as story and setting." —American *Booksellers* Pick of the List

***Baseball and Butterflies*** (Lothrop, 1990) Illustrated by Linda Shepard "Sure to strike a chord with young readers." —*Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* "An expertly done early chapter book." —*Kirkus*

***Galimoto*** (Lothrop, 1990) Illustrated by Catherine Stock

—A *Reading Rainbow* Featured Book —*New York Times Book Review* - Top Ten Books for Children, Summer Reading Selection —Martin Luther King "Living the Dream" Book Award - *ParentsChoice* Honor Book, *ParentsChoice* Foundation

"Ms. Williams is a skillful story teller and uses language nimbly...Her text, while precise, is smooth and lyrical--a joy to read aloud. The story's strength is in the subtly stated message that persistence and creativity can make dreams come true in spite of the odds" —Patricia McKissack, *New York Times Book Review*

"Children from all corners of the world will warm to this tale of a boy's persistence." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Not only an authentic picture of present-day Africa, this is also an attractive portrayal of self-reliant children who know how to meet their own needs through good-humored bargaining and ingenuity, happily absorbed in imaginative play." —*Kirkus*

"Kondi's perseverance and the pleasure he takes in his accomplishments are just two of the delights of this appealing story." —*The Horn Book Magazine*