

**YOUNG ADULT NOVELS FROM WESTSIDE BOOKS
TACKLE ISSUES OF RACE AND FAMILY**

Chappaqua, NY - Two new young adult novels from WestSide Books blend coming-of-age stories with historical fiction to shed new light on race relations and young people's experiences in mid-twentieth century America. In ***Between Us Baxters***, by Bethany Hegedus, the friendship between two girls—one white, one black—reveals a 1950s Southern town torn apart by racism in the Jim Crow South. In ***Seattle Blues***, by Michael Wenberg, a young black teen spends the summer of 1969 with her estranged grandmother and worries about her father, MIA in Vietnam. The novel explores how family bonds once broken now may heal.

Between Us Baxters tells the story of twelve-year-old Polly, a poor white Southern girl whose close friendship with Timbre Ann, a middle-class black teen, puts both families in danger. As white supremacists set fire to black businesses, Polly struggles to cope with the implications for her family and to understand the true meaning of friendship. Polly's sense of justice threatens to upset the status quo in her small town.

In *Seattle Blues*, thirteen-year-old Maya is sent to spend the summer in Seattle with the grandmother she's never met. Maya's father is missing in action in Vietnam, and the angry, resentful teen plans to run away. But as she gets to know her grandmother, secrets are revealed that help Maya see her life and family from a new perspective. A friendship with the autistic little boy (and piano prodigy) next door, and the discovery of a trombone in her grandmother's attic, lead to some surprising realizations.

Debut author Bethany Hegedus (*Between Us Baxters*) grew up in Georgia. A former high school English and theatre teacher, she earned an M.F.A. in Writing for Children and Young Adults at Vermont College. She lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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Michael Wenberg (*Seattle Blues*), a classical and jazz trombonist nominated for the 2004 Kentucky Bluegrass Award, is CEO of the Walla Walla (Washington) Symphony. His picture book, *Elizabeth's Song*, was recommended by the African American Literary Book Club. *Seattle Blues* is his first young adult novel.

WestSide Books, www.westside-books.com, is dedicated to publishing edgy, realistic, contemporary fiction for teenagers. It launches a debut list of seven young adult novels in Spring 2009.

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