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Dear Friends,

Hello! It's been a while. So much has been happening in the world, both beautiful and ugly -- and isn't that the intersection where poetry lives? Thank you for meeting me in that space. And now, let's talk about this lovely month *O September!* which, in spite of hurricanes and other madness, is round and juicy as the last watermelon on the vine.

## September is for LISTENING.

... for listening to school buses squealing to a stop and football fans cheering and backyard bonfires crackling and for singing "Happy Birthday" -- did you know that according to [Reader's Digest](#), more people are born in America in September than any other month? Indeed, both my parents were September babies, our first son was born in September (though he was due to arrive in August), and I have a slew of family members with September birthday. If you are a September baby, HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

This September, for me, is also for listening to the easy lap of water against the boat as the lure plunks into the lake. Yes, Paul and I have been boating and fishing a lot -- not catching much - but trying and laughing and having fun. And isn't that the way it is with most things? Lots of throwing out lines, not necessarily a lot of pulling in the big fish! Sometimes it is not about the fish at all.

And sometimes the sound of September is sad and hopeful at the same time -- like in son Eric(ErBeeko)'s latest song "[One Voice](#)," which was inspired by the recent death of a classmate. Give it a listen. You'll be glad you did.

And now for a little challenge: create something (poem! music! art! quilt!

photograph! whatever!) on what September sounds like to you! Tell me about it, and if you'd like, I'd love to feature your responses on my blog!

## September is for REMEMBERING.

This September would have been my father's 71st birthday. As a way to celebrate and remember him, we have coordinated with the [Corinne Costin Gibson Gulf County Public Library](#) in his hometown of Port St. Joe, Florida to create a special rocker to be used in the Children's Department. We are thrilled with the one-of-a-kind rocker artist June at [Poppy Cottage](#) created! All I did was give her some sea-related quotes from some of Papa's favorite poems and a couple of requests (mermaids! blue! oysters!), and *voila!* she made something beautiful and meaningful and magical.



"if you are dreamer come in..."

Another challenge: Look at the photo of the chair seat. It has a quote "If you are a dreamer come in..." Do YOU know from which poem this line is taken? Answer at the bottom of this newsletter!

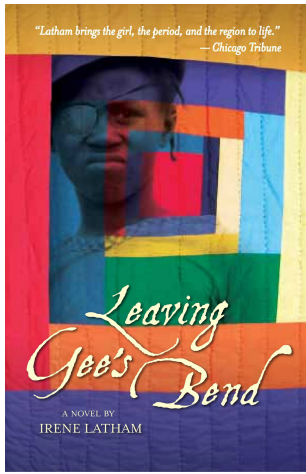
To celebrate, the public is invited to a "**Blessing of the Rocker**" event at the library, **10:30 am, Friday, September 15**. Free!

We'll be reading some of Papa's favorite poems and sharing book-related stories... his dream was to retire to Port St. Joe where he would create a library with walls of shelves for his book collection, a peaceful place for him to sit and read, by himself, and to the children in his life. Unfortunately he died before that could happen. This library rocking chair is one small way to make his dream come true.

*The night before the Blessing of the Rocker, I will be giving an **author talk** to the community, also at [Corinne Costin Gibson Gulf County Public Library](#), **4:30-6:00 pm, Thursday, September 14**. Free!*

## September is for ADVENTURING.

In addition to my Florida travels, I will also be touring



across the state of Alabama as a featured author for [Alabama Library Expo](#). All events are free, and librarians can earn CEUs! I'd love to see you! I'll be signing books and am happy to personalize a copy for you or a special reader in your life. Here is my speaking schedule:

11:00 am, Monday, September 18 - [Daphne Civic Center](#) (Daphne, AL)

1:45 pm, Tuesday, September 19 - [Taylor Road Baptist Church](#) (Montgomery, AL)

1:00 pm, Wednesday, September 20 - [Gardendale Civic Center](#) (Gardendale, AL)

11:00 am, Thursday, September 21 - [Calhoun Community College](#) (Decatur, AL)

Also in September, I will be signing books as part of the [MidSouth SCBWI conference](#) Dessert & Autograph Party Friday, September 29, 7:30-9:30, [Embassy Suites Nashville - Cool Springs](#).

And don't miss the 12th annual [MY FAVORITE POEM](#), Friday, September 22, 7 pm, Alabama School of Fine Arts. This is one of my favorite events ever - and it's free!

In other not-too-distant news, [Charles Waters](#) and I will be signing and sharing in November about our forthcoming book [CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR? Poems of Race, Mistakes and Friendship](#) ([Carolrhoda/Lerner](#)):

[AASL](#) (Phoenix, AZ)

"Mirror Mirror: Reading all Readers" panel

[NCTE](#) (St. Louis, MO)

"Wonder as a Starting Place for Teaching Tolerance" roundtable (part of a [Wonderopolis](#) session with some wonderful wonder-ers) & "How Studying Poetry Can Strengthen Writing in All Genres" panel (along with a bevy of amazing authors and educators!)

Hope to see you there!



**CAN I TOUCH YOUR HAIR?** releases January 1, 2018 from [Carolrhoda/Lerner Publishing](#) with illustrations by [Selina Alko](#) and [Sean Qualls](#). It's a very personal book that includes quite a few of mine and Charles' real-life experiences related to race. Talking honestly and respectfully about race can be difficult, and it is our hope that this book will make it a little bit easier for parents, teachers and librarians to talk with children about race.

Shop at your local indie bookseller, or click here to pre-order your copy from Amazon! Thank you for your support!

## Good reads.

[Mr. Jim's last vegetable plate.](#)

[Inspiration comes from many sources.](#)

[How to rewire your brain to be more kind to others.](#)

[Meet the godfather of environmentalism.](#)

[Why read poetry?](#)

[International Day of Peace \(September 21\) padlet of books, poems, activities and other resources.](#)

And that's all I have to share with you today! Thank you for allowing me to be part of your September. Whatever listening, remembering and adventuring you're doing, I hope it's lovely and inspiring! I'll be back in 2018. Until then... thank you so much for reading!

Love,  
Irene

p.s. "If you are a dreamer come in..." is the first line in "[Invitation](#)" by [Shel Silverstein](#). If you got it right, reward yourself by sharing a poem with a friend. And if you missed it, now you know! Reward yourself by sharing a poem with a friend. :)

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