

Author's Notes & Research for *The Many Mothers of Ivy Puddingstone*

Randy Susan Meyers

Balancing research and story in a novel that spans fifty-six years is challenging. Nothing matters more than story, character, and plot, and, in the words of Stephen King, you can't capture a reader without "the gotta know." A novel resting on historical events requires grounding the story in solid facts.

Luckily, authors love research. We revel in discoveries of forgotten historical moments and can lose hours, days, and weeks (years?) in piles of books that tempt us to force-feed readers huge information dumps. But we try to keep most of that whale below the surface, allowing it to inform our story without drowning it.

And then we can offer this: a peek at our research, where those who share our geeky need to learn more can enjoy the many books and links that fed our novel.

Early on, I developed a penchant for books rooted in social issues. My earliest favorites were *Karen* and *The Family Nobody Wanted*, quickly moving on to *Jubilee* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. At the age of eleven, I wondered why I couldn't simply walk from house to house (across Brooklyn? America? The world?), explaining why racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of hatred were wrong and horrid.

Much of the time depicted in *The Many Mothers of Ivy Puddingstone* were years I experienced, though I am younger than Annabel and older than Ivy. I had my first daughter at twenty-one, lived in a communal situation in Mission Hill, and marched against the Vietnam War. (The photo below, the girl with the uber-serious face, is lonely me in high school at my first march.)



I shopped at a food coop, participated in endless meetings, and dreamed of living off the land (though I never came close.) I lived on the edges of what took place in this book. *The Many Mothers of Ivy Puddingstone* is my “what if”—what if I’d dived far deeper into my wants to save the world—what if I’d done the real-life equivalent of my nine-year-old dreams? And what if I went too far?

—Randy Susan Meyers, September 2024

Below is a taste of the research that supports *The Many Mothers of Ivy Puddingstone* and informs the writing.

BOOKS

100 African Americans Who Shaped American History by Christine Beckner

50 Years of Ms. Edited by Katherine Spillar

A New People's History of the New Boston by Jim Vrabel America in the 70's edited by Beth

Bailey & David Farber

Angela Davis: An Autobiography

Challenging the Mississippi Firebombers by Jim Dann

Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement: Various authors

Fight Like a Girl by Laura Barcella

Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960's Civil Rights Movement by Mary King

Freedom Summer by Bruce Watson

Going up the Country by Yvonne Daley

Her Sister's Tattoo by Ellen Meeropol

Leaving Atlanta by Tayari Jones

Letter from Mississippi, edited by Elizabeth Martinez

Let's Have Healthy Children by Adelle Davis

Liberated Parents, Liberated Children by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

March (Book One, Book Two, Book Three) by John Lewis

North of Normal by Cea Sunrise Person

People Before Highways by Karilyn Crockett

Power to the People: The Graphic Design of the Radical Press by Geoff Kaplan

Sisterhood is Powerful edited by Robin Morgan

Take My Hand by Dolen Perkins-Valdez

The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond by Timothy Miller

The Art of Protest by Jo Ripon

The Complete Poetry by Maya Angelou

The Growth and Development of Mothers by Angela Barron McBride

The Mother Knot by Jane Lazzare

The Movement Made Us: A Father, a Son, and the Legacy of a Freedom Ride by David J. Dennis Jr and David J. Dennis St.

ONLINE RESEARCH LINKS

[A Chronology of Black Characters in Comics](#)

[A History of Mississippi Burning: FBI History](#)

[A History of Women in Higher Education](#)

[Bread and Roses: A Revolutionary Moment: Women's Liberation, Boston University](#)

[Can artists change the world? MoMA show explores political art from the early 20th century.](#)

[Civil Rights Movement History: Mississippi Freedom Summer Events](#)

[Civil Rights Movement History: Mississippi Voter Applications and Literacy Test](#)

[Fannie Lou Hammer; Murder in Mississippi; The Mississippi Summer Project Photo Essay:](#)

[American Experience: Freedom Summer](#)

[Freedom Summer Curriculum](#)

[How Kids Cope with Communes, The Guardian](#)

[Freedom Summer Flyer: 1964](#)

[Hidden Figures of the Suffrage Movement](#)

[Iconic Protest Posters](#)

[The 25 Most Influential Works of American Protest Art Since World War II](#)

[Mission Hill and the Miracle of Boston](#)

[Mothers for Adequate Welfare Demands](#)

[Narratives and Commentaries Related to the Kent Street Shootings](#)

[Our Bodies Ourselves First Edition and Meeting Notes](#)

[People Before Highways](#)

[Protest Songs from the 1960s](#)

[Red Sun Press \(Influence for 'Sojourner Graphics'\)](#)

[Riots in Boston Footage, Boston TV News Digital Library](#)

[Role-Playing Situations Used in Freedom Summer Trainings](#)

[School of Practical Arts Course Catalog 1966](#)

[Seven Principles Unitarian Universalist Association](#)

[Harvard Student Occupation, April 1969, Harvard Magazine](#)

[Students for a Nonviolent Coordinating Committee \(SNCC\)](#)

[The History of Greenwood Woolworths: Welcome to Greenwood, Mississippi](#)

[The Mothers Who Fought to Radically Reimagine Welfare: Code Switch, NPR](#)

[The Streets of Greenwood: Film by Emmy-winning director, producer, and journalist Jack Willis, John Reavis, and Fred Wardenburg captures the work of voter registration activists as they recruit African American voters in Greenwood, Mississippi.](#)

[Training For Freedom: A PBS Documentary](#)