



Discover. Read. Share.

WHY WE LOVE *Libertie*

Dear Reader,

The Spotlight title we've chosen this quarter is a beautifully written, immersive historical novel. While not strictly biographical, it is inspired by the life and achievements of Dr. Susan Smith McKinney Steward, the first African-American woman to earn a medical degree in the state of New York. Set in a free Black community in Brooklyn during the Reconstruction era, the novel follows Dr. Cathy Sampson and her daughter Libertie.

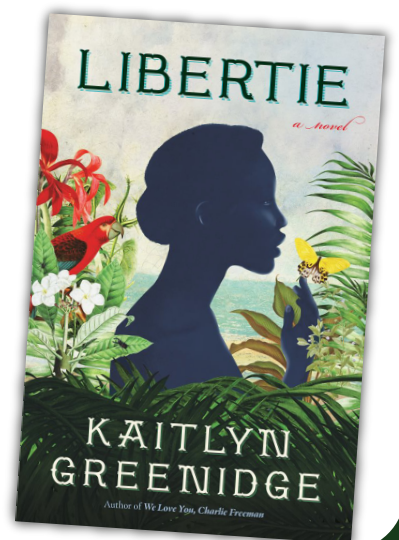
We first experience the Sampsons' story through Libertie's eyes, witnessing how the piercing edge of an unjust world cuts against her childhood innocence. As she ascends into adulthood, we watch her refuse to accept the world as it is or the roles it has carved out for her—daughter, wife, mother—and one of the novel's themes, that of survival versus freedom, begins to take shape. The pressure Libertie faces is further compounded by the expectations she feels as the daughter of a Black female doctor—and by the missteps she makes due to her strained relationship with her mother. The ways in which she pushes back against those expectations and that relationship add complexity to her already rich character, and the secondary characters who round out the book—from Ben Daisy to Libertie's school friends to the members of Emmanuel's household in Haiti—add further depth. Together, their constant yearning for purpose and belonging keeps the novel moving forward and the pages turning.

A profound meditation on what it means to be truly free—whether born free or formerly enslaved, whether in America or Haiti—Kaitlyn Greenidge's remarkable novel explores the complicated struggles that come with grief, sexism, racism, colorism, and classism. Despite being set over a century ago, it is as relevant now as ever.

We hope you will join us in reading and discussing this timely novel. And, as always, please let us know what you think @hoopladigital, and add #hooplabookclub to engage with fellow readers.

Happy reading!

Andi Paris, hoopla digital





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About the Author

Kaitlyn Greenidge's debut novel is *We Love You, Charlie Freeman* (Algonquin Books), one of the *New York Times* Critics' Top 10 Books of 2016. Her writing has appeared in *Vogue*, *Glamour*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Elle.com*, *Buzzfeed*, *Transition Magazine*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *The Believer*, *American Short Fiction*, and other places. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Whiting Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, and other places. She was a contributing editor for *Lenny Letter* and is currently a contributing writer for the *New York Times*. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.



Selected Praise

"Few novels have as strong a sense of place as this fascinating blend of magical realism and African American historical fiction...Greenidge succeeds beautifully at presenting the complexities of an intense mother-daughter bond...Greenidge creates a richly layered tapestry of Black communal life, notably Black female life, and the inevitable contradictions and compromises of 'freedom.'"

—**Booklist**, starred review

"Greenidge (*We Love You, Charlie Freeman*) delivers another genius work of radical historical fiction...This pièce de résistance is so immaculately orchestrated that each character, each setting, and each sentence sings."

—**Publishers Weekly**, starred review

"Pure brilliance. So much will be written about Kaitlyn Greenidge's *Libertie*—how it blends history and magic into a new kind of telling, how it spins the past to draw deft circles around our

present—but none of it will measure up to the singular joy of reading this book."

—**Mira Jacob**, author of *Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations*

"Wielding both her knowledge of our history and her incredible sense of story, Kaitlyn Greenidge further establishes herself as one of the sharpest minds working today. *Libertie* is a novel of epic power and endless grace."

—**Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah**, author of *Friday Black*

"In this singular novel, Kaitlyn Greenidge confronts the anonymizing forces of history with her formidable gifts. *Libertie* is a glorious, piercing song for the ages—fierce, brilliant, and utterly free." —**Brandon Taylor**, author of *Real Life*

"With *Libertie*, Kaitlyn Greenidge adds an indelible new sound to American literature, and confirms her status as one of our most gifted young writers."

—**Garth Greenwell**, author of *What Belongs to You and Cleanness*