



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
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“From immigrant youth-produced photo exhibits to oral history presentations, from poetry slams to reading and discussion groups, from films and videos to public forums, there’s something for everyone who cares about California and its future.”

-About “California Stories Uncovered,” from the Humanities Network of the California Council for the Humanities.

It’s April again and, among other things, April means National Library Week. Bay Area libraries are celebrating all month with the slogan “Your library card...Get it! Use it!” appearing on the backs of buses and on movie theatre screens throughout the area.

This month, the American Library Association (ALA) also issues a National Library Week proclamation about the importance of libraries. This year’s proclamation includes the words: “Whereas, libraries are part of the American Dream – places for opportunity, education, self-help and life-long learning;” and, “Whereas, more individuals need to be recruited to the profession of librarianship and to work in libraries to maintain their vitality in today’s changing workplace.”

There is more to this document (and you can read the whole thing at the ALA website, ala.org) but these two parts stand out for me. In

particular, the idea all libraries should be actively recruiting – especially reaching out to a diverse population – so the library staff reflects our society more accurately.

Libraries all over California have also joined with the California Council on the Humanities (CCH) – a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities – in a campaign called California Stories Uncovered. This month-long campaign includes a great variety of events, with local programs in San Francisco, Alameda County, Berkeley and Contra Costa County.

Some of these are discussions with writers, like Ji-Li Jiang, author of *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of a Cultural Revolution*, who will be at the Albany Library on April 20 at 7:30 p.m. Her talk will end at 9 and will be followed by a reception co-sponsored by the Friends of the Albany Library and the Albany Library Board. The Berkeley Public Library main branch has

a photography exhibit called Overcoming Faceless Labor, which will run through June 15; the Dublin Library will have a program from 4 to 5 p.m. on April 19, called All Families Have Stories, which will include stories by Olga Loya, who grew up in East Los Angeles; and, the Fremont Library will have a poetry workshop called Writing California, led by local poet and teacher Alison Seevak.

Some libraries, including the Albany Library, will host discussions on the new book jointly published by CCH and Heyday Books: *California Uncovered: Stories for the 21st Century*. Chitra Divakaruni edited this anthology of 25 writers, and it includes poems, essays, stories and memoirs from such writers such as John Steinbeck, Maxine Hong Kingston, Mas Masumoto and Lî Thi Diem Thúy.

Humanities Network,
CCH’s quarterly newsletter,

dedicated a special edition to this campaign. Pictured on the front is Maria Shriver, who is the event’s honorary chair. There is also a quote from CCH’s executive director, Jim Quay, who explains the title of this campaign: “If our official history is in a textbook, *Uncovered* is the letters home, family snapshots, storytelling and personal prose that tells an authentic, intimate story about who we are and where we come from.”

I particularly like the use of the words “our” and “we” in this quote. I think it is important to remember that in California - or in the United States, for that matter - each one of us is part of the community that is our country. This campaign helps us to remember that there is no “them” - only a wonderfully diverse “we.”