

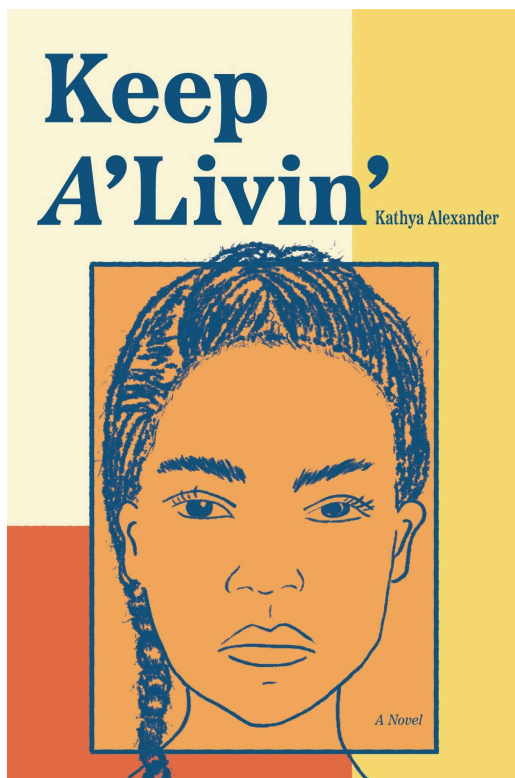
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# Keep A'Livin'

Kathya Alexander

Resource Guide 2024

## Book Description



In the small town of Uz, Arkansas, Mandy Anderson wakes up on July 4th, 1963, her mother's birthday, to the sweltering Southern heat, a pounding headache, and the distinct thumping of her mother, Belle, kneading biscuit dough. In the raw heat, only made worse by Belle's baking, Mandy questions why the white woman her mother works for wouldn't want to give Belle the day off for her birthday. So begins Mandy's journey of questioning the structures that define her world, a path that carries her through tragedy, mystical encounters, and her own spiritual and familial legacy.

Kathya Alexander's debut historical fiction novel-in-verse follows the fiercely passionate, dedicated, and cheeky Mandy as she comes of age during the height of the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. Twelve-year-old Mandy and her mother,

Belle, experience the extraordinary events of the 1960s, finding strength, fearlessness, and faith along the way.

Grappling with grief, ancestral trauma, and a family, community, and society in flux, Mandy dares to dream of a future outside the limitations of racism and patriarchy.

This beautifully lyrical novel explores the reality of activism as more than just a handful of speeches given at protests, the costs to those who dedicate themselves to activist work, and the passion that drives us ever onward to a better, more just future.

## About the Author



Kathya Alexander is an author, playwright, storyteller, and teaching artist. She was a Writer-in-Residence at Hedgebrook Writer's Retreat and won the Fringe First Award for *Black to My Roots: African American Tales from the Head and the Heart* in Edinburgh, Scotland. Other awards include 4Culture, Office of Arts and Culture, Artist Trust, and Seattle Parks and Recreation. She has been published in *The Pitkin Review*, *Arkana Magazine*, *Pontoon Poetry*, *Colors NW Magazine*, the *South Seattle Emerald* and *Native Skin Magazine*, and in anthologies by the African American Writers Alliance and *Raising Lily*

*Ledbetter: Women Poets Occupy the Workplace*. Her playwriting credits include *The Negro Passion Play*; *Black D\*ck Matters*; *David & Jonathan: A Modern Day Retelling of the Biblical Story*; and *emotionalblackmale*. She is the author of *Angel In The Outhouse* and her debut novel, *Keep A'Livin'*, is scheduled for release in 2024.

### Praise for *Keep A'Livin'*

"*Keep A'Livin'* is the earth-rattling, mind-rearranging story of a young woman named Mandy, her mother Belle, and their racial mix of ancestors. Set in 1960s Arkansas during one of the most difficult periods in our long-winding journey toward racial equity in the U.S., Mandy and Belle's lives are shaped by "fire and angels" as each matriarchal generation by backstory experiences extreme tragedy, which thrusts them into navigating a changed world. The book is a timely

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addition to the literary canon, providing a portal through which we are brought to our knees by what is so clearly wrong and not-so-clearly right about the story that is America.”

—Paula Coomer, author of *Dove Creek* and *Somebody Should Have Scolded the Girl*

“Kathya Alexander’s vividly drawn novel-in-verse, *Keep A’Livin’*, traces an intimate, loving circle within an African American family, church and community, while portraying generational divides as the entire community confronts devastating racism in the rural South during the early ‘60s in the early Civil Rights Movement. Alexander brings us into the girl Mandy’s exile of grief after the loss of her father, and her path to re-entering the world. Her mother faces hard choices without the support of her late husband, and the story unpacks fraught tensions and faith between mother and daughter. Their generational differences underline the dangers and triumphs for Black people in this time and point to how oppressive conditions have lifted or pervade today.

Alexander’s narrative creates a fabric that we can wrap ourselves in—she uses metaphor with blade-like accuracy and tunes into the litanies available in daily speech, sermons, song and joking with a fine-tuned poet’s ear. She knows the life and talk of this time—the whispers, the unspoken, the buried angers and younger generation bursting forth in the rural South of the ‘60s.”

--Beatrix Gates, author of *The Burning Key, New & Selected Poems (1973-2023)*.

## Reviews:

- [Book Reviews From Sara](#)
- [Goodreader user review](#)

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# Resources

## More about Keep A'Livin'

- [Goodreads Review](#)
- [Aunt Lute Asks: Kathya Alexander](#)
- [Kathya Alexander on Influences and Reading](#)
- [Kathya Alexander on Books and Writing](#)
- [Press Release](#)

## More about Civil Rights Movement

- [The Children's Crusade](#) (NMAAHC)
- [60 years since 'The Children's Crusade' changed Birmingham and the nation](#) (NPR)
- [Birmingham Campaign](#) (The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute)
- Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil Rights Days by Sheyann Webb
- We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March by Cynthia Levinson
- [Student Civil Rights Activism](#) (Crash Course)
- [Voices from the Southern Civil Rights Movement](#) (American Archive of Public Broadcasting)
- [Radio Journalism and Civil Rights](#) (African American Intellectual History Society)
- [Southern Christian Leadership Conference \(SCLC\)](#) (The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute)
- [THE 1963 MARCH ON WASHINGTON](#) (NAACP)
- [The Story of SNCC \(Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee\)](#) (SNCC Digital Gateway)
- [The Mississippi Summer Project](#) (PBS)
- [Life of Medgar Evers](#) (City University of New York)
- [The Little Rock Nine](#) (National Museum of African American History & Culture)
- [Congress of Racial Equality \(1942\)](#) (National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum)

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## More about Kathya Alexander

- Official websites [here](#) and [here](#)
- [Seattle Storyteller's Guild](#)
- [Jack Straw Cultural Center](#)
- [Contributor Spotlight: Kathya Alexander](#) (Arkana Blog)
- [Visioning Outside the Parameters of Reality Panel Appearance](#)
- Guest at [Aunt Lute's 40th Anniversary Reading](#)
- [Artist Trust](#)
- [Raising Lily Ledbetter: Women Poets Occupy the Workplace](#)
- [Poets & Writers](#)
- [Food & Celebration | Kathya Alexander](#) (African-American Writers' Alliance)
- [The Creative Advantage](#)
- [Poets & Writers Selects Ten Early Career Fiction Writers for Get the Word Out Publicity Incubator](#)
- [My Daddy Dead](#)
- [Contributor Spotlight: Kathya Alexander](#) (Arkana Blog)
- [South Seattle Emerald](#)

## Keep reading!

Excerpts or different versions of chapters in Keep A'Livin' appear in the publications below:

- Title in publication (Chapter in Keep A'Livin') Publication Name, Publication Date.
  - My Daddy Dead (My Daddy Dead) published in Arkana Magazine Issue 5, Fiction, 2022
  - The Machine (Black Power) published in Pontoon Poetry, March 2022
  - Freedom Spring ('Til Death Do Us Part) published in the South Seattle Emerald, June 2021
  - Fat Plaits And Ashy Knees (School Daze) published in the South Seattle Emerald, April 2021

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- Shakespeare And The Supremes (Demonstrate) published in The Pitkin Review, Spring 2020
- The King's Music (A Long Way From Home) published in The Pitkin Review, Fall 2019
- In The Garden (One Summer Morning) published in Angel In The Outhouse, July 2017
- My Daddy Dead (My Daddy Dead) published in Angel In The Outhouse, July 2017
- Freedom Spring ('Til Death Do Us Part) published in Angel In The Outhouse, July 2017
- Casting Lots (Sunday Coming) published in Angel In The Outhouse, July 2017
- A Gift From A King (A Gift From A King) published in Angel In The Outhouse, July 2017

STORIES PUBLISHED IN ANGEL IN THE OUTHOUSE ARE LISTED BELOW

- Title in publication (Chapter in Keep A'Livin')
- In The Garden (One Summer Morning)
- Angel In The Outhouse (Angel In The Outhouse)
- Casting Lots (Sunday Coming)
- A Gift From A King (A Gift From A King)
- Freedom Spring ('Til Death Do Us Part)
- My Daddy Dead (My Daddy Dead)

## Where to get a copy

- [Keep A'Livin' by Kathya Alexander](#)
  - [Purchase your book from Aunt Lute Books](#) or your local independent bookstore
  - Ebooks
    - [Amazon](#)
    - [B&N Nook](#)
    - [Kobo](#)

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The logo for Aunt Lute, featuring the words "aunt lute" in a lowercase, cursive script font, enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

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**Contact info**

AUNT LUTE BOOKS

PO Box 410687

San Francisco, CA 94141-0697

[auntlute.marketing@gmail.com](mailto:auntlute.marketing@gmail.com)

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