



## What You Don't Know Will Make a Whole New World: A Memoir

**Dorothy Lazard**

Heyday (May 16, 2023)

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In her memoir *What You Don't Know Will Make a Whole New World*, librarian Dorothy Lazard reflects on her childhood through the neighborhoods of California's Bay Area.

As a girl in St. Louis, Lazard would often wander her neighborhood, taking in the surroundings of her home. "Home" started to look different when she moved to California with her mother and brother. In this new place, Lazard continued exploring her neighborhoods, including the corner newsstands, bookstores, and libraries. The lure of the written word was undeniable, and her dream of being a writer was born. Though there would be setbacks, reading and writing became the main avenues for Lazard to make sense of society and her place in it.

With an unflinching eye, Lazard shares stories about her family, her experiences of her mother's epilepsy, and surviving childhood sexual abuse. Before the age of ten, she developed an understanding of race as "a new, discomfiting" way of seeing herself, necessitating the creation of the "twin identities" of a personal self and a social self. By the time she graduated high school, she'd seen firsthand the realities and effects of gentrification.

Lazard evokes an engaging storyteller's tone throughout. The first three-quarters of the book are home-and-hearth-focused, as Lazard comes to understand her roles at home and school, which grow and shrink following the deaths of her grandmother, father, and mother. Later, the book shifts to encompass a more expanded worldview, with Lazard starting to follow news stories and, to her delight, develop a love of film and Black literature.

Themes of self-discovery and finding one's place are a text constant in *What You Don't Know Will Make a Whole New World*, a moving memoir about the enduring power of words.

DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (May / June 2023)

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