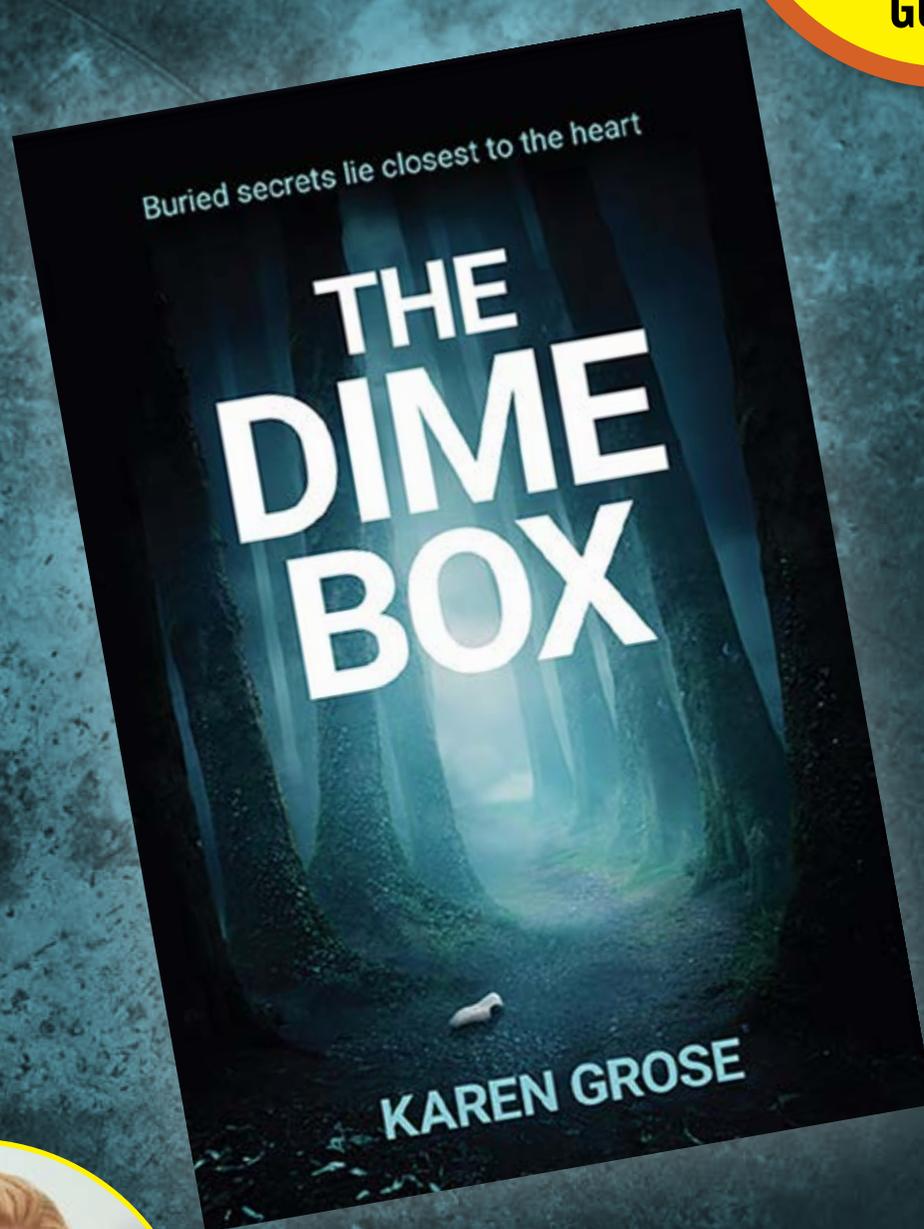


MARCH/APRIL 2021

DISCUSSION GUIDE

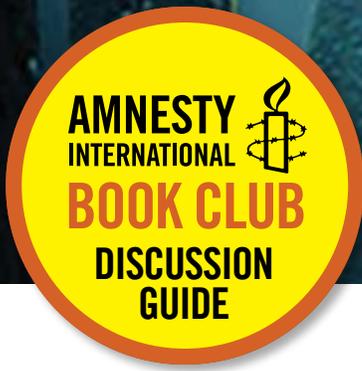
AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL 
BOOK CLUB
DISCUSSION
GUIDE



THE DIME BOX

BY KAREN GROSE

RECOMMENDED BY LAWRENCE HILL



WELCOME

AMNESTY BOOK CLUB MEMBERS

We're thrilled to announce this month's reading selection, *The Dime Box* by Karen Grose. Recommended by author Lawrence Hill, *The Dime Box* is a thrilling crime novel about a young woman who tries to move on from her past.

The novel follows Greta Giffen, who barely escaped being murdered by the man she grew up with. She's not sure who Ian is, or who she is, but she's determined to find out. When she bolts from their secluded cabin in northern Ontario and flees to Toronto, her new life comes at a price. Ian dies under suspicious circumstances and a veteran detective believes eighteen-year-old Greta has the perfect motive.

A prime suspect in a tense police investigation, Greta finds it hard to make Detective Astra Perez believe the details of her dark and appalling story. Digging deep into her sordid history and forced to face the people from her past in a new light, Greta struggles to accept the secrets that have haunted her since childhood. Still, Detective Perez remains doubtful. And until Greta herself confronts the disturbing evidence in front of her, she will never truly escape that cabin in the woods.

About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than ten million supporters, members and activists in over 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Our vision is for all people to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion, and are funded mainly by our membership.

Until everyone can enjoy all of their rights, we will continue our efforts. We will not stop until everyone can live in dignity; until every person's voice can be heard; until no one is tortured or executed.

Our members are the cornerstone of these efforts. They take up human rights issues through letter-writing, online and off line campaigning, demonstrations, vigils and direct lobbying of those with power and influence.

Locally, nationally and globally, we join together to mobilize public pressure and show international solidarity.

Together, we make a difference.

For more information about Amnesty International visit www.amnesty.ca or write to us at: Amnesty International, 312 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa, ON K1N 1H9.

ABOUT THIS MONTH'S AUTHOR, **Karen Grose**



Karen Grose was born in Canada and lives with her family in Toronto. After a long career as a teacher, principal and superintendent, she turned her attention to writing. *The Dime Box* is her debut novel and she is currently working on a second. Karen is a member of Crime Writers of Canada, Sisters in Crime-National, and Sisters in Crime-Toronto Chapter.

When she isn't writing, she consults in the global EdTech sector and walks her high-strung French bulldog, Ruby, on the boardwalk of Lake Ontario.

You can learn more at: karengrose.ca
Or on Twitter [@kgrose2](https://twitter.com/kgrose2)

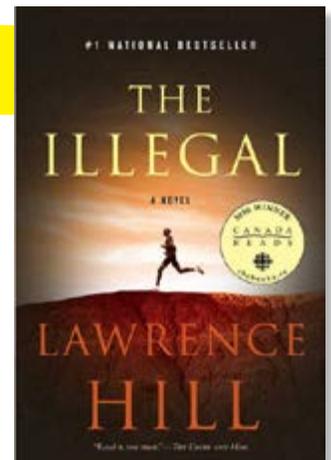


ABOUT THIS MONTH'S GUEST READER, **Lawrence Hill**



Lawrence Hill is the author of ten books of fiction and non-fiction. In 2005, he won his first literary honour: a National Magazine Award for the article "Is Africa's Pain Black America's Burden?" published in *The Walrus*. His first two novels were *Some Great Thing* and *Any Known Blood*, and his first non-fiction work to attract national attention was the memoir *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*. But it was his third novel, *The Book of Negroes*—published in some countries as *Someone Knows My Name* and in French as *Aminata*—that attracted widespread attention in Canada and other countries.

Hill is currently writing a new novel and a children's book and co-writing a television miniseries adaptation of *The Illegal*. He is a professor of creative writing at the University of Guelph, in Ontario



Amnesty International covered Lawrence Hill's book *The Illegal* in 2016. Check out the discussion guide for the *The Illegal* on our website, found here: <http://www.amnestybookclub.ca/books/the-illegal/>



Lawrence Hill's Reflection on *The Dime Box*

“The Dime Box embodies the human rights issue of domestic violence”

I've had the honour of seeing two of my novels featured in the Amnesty International Book Club. Sometimes, the greatest way to live with good fortune is to pass it along.

As it happens, I am so delighted to have recommended the wonderful debut novel *The Dime Box* to Amnesty's book club. Today, I'd like to share a story about Karen Grose, author of *The Dime Box*.

I first met Karen in 1978. She was a 12-year-old spending part of the summer in a camp in Algonquin Park, Ontario, and I was a 21-year-old canoe guide whose summer job was to take children and their counsellors out on three-day canoe trips. Barely taller than a gopher, Karen announced to me that she wanted – for 20 minutes – to take over my job, which was to carry her 85-pound waterlogged canoe over a rough, rocky, tree-rooted, kilometer-long portage. That was my responsibility, and I told her so. And she told me that she wanted to carry it. I said she wouldn't be able to do so. Warning: don't ever tell Karen Grose what she's not able to do. She insisted that she could. So I relented. And this girl flipped a canoe that was close to her own body weight, hoisted it over her head and carried it single-handedly over the portage. At the end of the long trek, she set it down gently with a huge grin.

Fast forward 36 years. Karen was an executive with TVO, a major digital learning and educational television network in Ontario, Canada. I had become a writer, and had developed a friendship with Karen, her husband John and daughter Jaime. Karen told me that she was thinking of writing a novel. Do you think that I told her what she couldn't do? Absolutely not. Lesson Learned. Over the next few years, as she wrote the book and revised it over and over again, showing me a number of drafts as she carried on, I was stunned to see how

fast she learned the craft of novel writing, and what an amazing story she was unearthing.

It may have been her first novel, but Karen carried it as capably as she had that canoe nearly four decades earlier. Set in Ontario, *The Dime Box* is the story of a young woman accused of murdering her father-figure. It is a compelling novel, with a strong and feisty female protagonist and is grounded in two of Canada's most significant public institutions—the justice system and the education system.

The Dime Box embodies the human rights issue of domestic violence. A quintessential book club novel, it reveals the complexity of domestic violence from the perspective of the person being abused, and also



creates a vivid and memorable character in the form of the parental figure who is meting out the abuse.

Karen's writing is engaging, realistic and empathetic. Themes in the novel include gender, justice, the search for identity, adoption and how we, as society, define family. Every character faces moral dilemmas and is forced to make difficult choices. The protagonist, Greta Giffen, is unforgettable. She's not sure if Ian – the man she grew up with – is her parent, but she does know that she barely escaped her own childhood without being murdered by him. Now, as a young woman who is the prime suspect in Ian's death, Greta seeks more than ever to unlock the secrets of her own family.

Mark my words: *The Dime Box* is not the only work you will see from Karen Grose. You won't be surprised to hear that she left her employment as a TV executive to pursue writing full-time. Karen has already finished

several drafts of a second novel, and is onto a third. The girl who was on fire with the canoe on her shoulders is now burning with a mission to write and write and write. The thriller is her thing, and I believe *The Dime Box* will thrill readers.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE DIME BOX

1. "Inside every person you know, is a person you don't." Discuss the ways Emily, Ian, Colleen and Greta live with secrets. Have you ever been in a situation where someone's secret had a significant impact on your understanding of their life?
2. What connections might you imagine between a person's resilience and their search for identity?
3. Greta is a survivor of childhood trauma and abuse. What supports are available to survivors of gender-based violence in your community? What are the gaps? How might access to appropriate services differ depending on your identities, for example, if you are Indigenous, Black, a newcomer, LGBTI, and/or live with a disability?
4. Gender-based violence is rooted in patriarchal structures and systems that lead people to be targeted with violence because of their gender, and lead perpetrators too often not to be held to account. How did patriarchal structures fail to protect and support Greta?
5. What do you think motivated Colleen to do what she did? Do you think she has regrets?
6. Running, like all sports, is used in the novel as a way to release stress. How do you cope with stress?
7. Did you anticipate the ending? After you've read the ending, discuss the clues that were left for the reader along the way.
8. Greta's story is one of triumph and resilience. Will her next steps mitigate her grief? Why or why not?
9. Who would you recommend *The Dime Box* to? Why?



BACKGROUND



International Women's Day in Mexico.

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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS FUELED GENDER INEQUALITIES

As we came together to mark International Women's Day last March, we had no idea that the world was about to shut down and that hard-won women's rights were about to be put to the test during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past year, because of the pandemic, we have seen the number of women experiencing gender-based violence go up, the hours women dedicate to unpaid care work skyrocket, threats faced by women human rights defenders increase, marginalized groups including sex workers become further marginalized, access to sexual and reproductive health services decrease, and the number of women in the paid labour force plummet.

But we have also seen activists come together to demand that governments address the violence, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health services, protect activists, advocate for the rights of sex workers, and demand access to affordable and high-quality childcare.

International Women's Day, which every year falls on March 8th, is always a time to take stock of feminist

accomplishments over the past year and re-commit ourselves to the work ahead. This year we have much to take stock of, and much to re-commit ourselves to. The coming year will continue to be shaped by the pandemic response, and it will also be shaped by pandemic recovery. The pandemic has forced us to re-think society, and now is the time to re-think, re-envision, and re-build a more just and equitable world.

A PANDEMIC IS NOT AN EXCUSE TO VIOLATE WOMEN'S RIGHTS!

Take action in support of women's rights on International Women's Day and beyond!

Read our new guide for activists seeking to deepen their activism to help end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people surrounding International Women's Day this year:

<https://amnesty.ca/blog/if-ever-there-was-year-mark-international-women-s-day...>

COMING UP IN MAY/JUNE 2021

How to Pronounce Knife

By Souvankham Thammavongsa

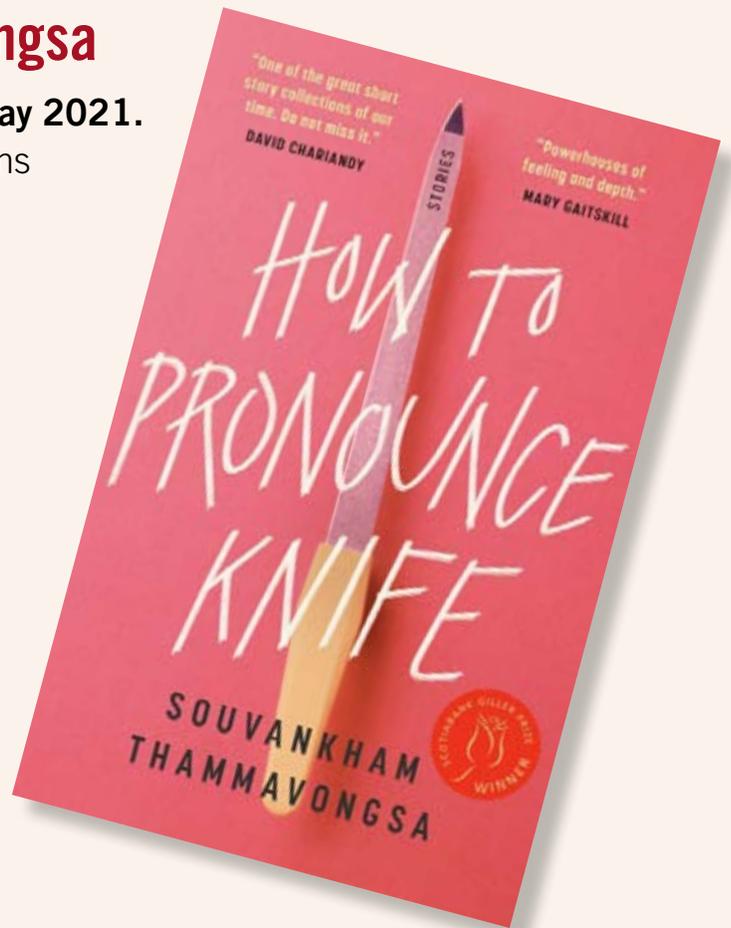
The discussion guide will be sent out May 2021.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please contact us at:

Bookclub@amnesty.ca



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