

Sean Qualls , Laurie Ann Thompson

## Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah

United States (2015)

TAGS: [African Storytelling](#) [African Traditions](#)



We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	United States of America
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	United States, Ghana, Spain, Sri Lanka
<i>Original Language</i>	English
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2015
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Laurie Ann Thompson, <i>Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah</i> . Ill. by Sean Qualls, New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2015, 34 pp.
<i>ISBN</i>	9780449817445
<i>Awards</i>	2016 - Schneider Family Children's Book Award
<i>Genre</i>	Biographies, Picture books
<i>Target Audience</i>	Children (4-8 years)
<i>Author of the Entry</i>	Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I, wandasi5@yahoo.com

Eleanor A. Dasi, "Entry on: Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah by Sean Qualls, Laurie Ann Thompson", peer-reviewed by Divine Che Neba, Daniel A. Nkemleke and Elżbieta Olechowska. *Our Mythical Childhood Survey* (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2022). Link: <http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1458>. Entry version as of January 15, 2025.

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## Creators



### **Sean Qualls , b. 1969 (Illustrator)**

Sean Qualls grew up in central New Jersey in the mid-1970s with an interest in art but his family did not have money for supplies, so he made do with discarded paper. After high school, he moved to Brooklyn for a diploma in art at the Pratt Institute but soon dropped out of school to work full time at the Brooklyn Museum. He however continued training himself in the artwork. Most of his paintings and illustrations reveal real life situations. In addition to Emmanuel's Dream, he is also the illustrator of Spike Lee's *Giant Steps to Change the World*. He has also illustrated for magazines and newspapers and his work has been exhibited in galleries in and out of New York. He lives in Brooklyn.

#### Sources:

[Seanqualls.com](http://Seanqualls.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022);

[Aalbc.com](http://Aalbc.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022);

[Thebrownbookshelf.com](http://Thebrownbookshelf.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I,  
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#### **Questionnaire**

Questionnaire available [here](#).



### **Laurie Ann Thompson , 1945 - 2015 (Author)**

Laurie Ann Thompson was an American writer who grew up in a small town in rural northern Wisconsin. She graduated from college with a degree in Applied Mathematics and later became a software engineer. She later began writing for children and young adults. Most of her books help her readers have a new understanding of the world. According to Thompson, each person is capable of doing amazing things once you discover your talent, passion and purpose. This explains why she wrote the book titled *Emmanuel's Dream* that won the Schneider Family Book Awards. She has written many other books, notably *Be a Changemaker: How to Start Something that Matters* (2014), *My Dog is the Best* (2015), and *Elizabeth Warren's Big, Bold Plans* (2020).

Source:

[Lauriethompson.com](http://Lauriethompson.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022);

[Simonandschuster.com](http://Simonandschuster.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022);

[Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) (accessed: June 21, 2022).

Bio prepared by Eleanor A. Dasi, University of Yaoundé I,  
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### Additional information

#### Translation

Sinhala: ඊමානුවෙල්ගේ සිහිනා: ඊමානුවෙල් ඔෆොසු යෙබ්වැගේ සාතා කාන්දාරාය), trans. Cūlānanda Samaranāyaka, Kaḷubōvila: Prōgrēs Prakāśana, 2018.

Spanish: *El sueño de Emmanuel: la verdadera historia de Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah*, trans. Jesús García-Abril Pérez, Bilbao: Editorial Mensajero, 2018.

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#### Summary

The story revolves around a young Ghanaian boy whose mother, Mama Comfort, names him Emmanuel at birth. Though Emmanuel was born relatively healthy, his right foot is impaired. He is rejected by all including his father who leaves and never returns. His mother however does not give up on him. At a very tender age, the mother instills in him a sense of hard work and independence as she tells him that he can get whatever he wants but he will have to achieve it on his own. Emmanuel performs many petty jobs, like shining shoes, in order to earn money. His colleagues ostracize him at school but this rather serves as a challenge because from his savings he is able to get something no one has (a soccer ball) and plays with one foot supported by crutches. This of course earns him respect among his peers and they began involving him in their exploits, particularly in biking. When he is 13, his mum becomes sick and no longer can carry on her usual activities. But then, Emmanuel, against his mother's wish, decides to go to Accra (a place unknown to him) to fend for himself. He arrives in Accra with a lot of hope and determination but faces the same rejection - no one is willing to hire him because of his physical handicap. It is even suggested that he should beg, as other people affected by the same condition do, but this does not discourage him. Finally, a food stand owner hires him and offers him shelter. With the little he makes, he helps his mother and siblings back home. Meanwhile, his mother's health deteriorates and news of it compels Emmanuel to rush home. Before she dies, the mother tells him to always respect others, never to beg and never to give up. These words serve as a catalyst to reinforce Emmanuel's determination to work even harder. With the help of friends, a bicycle donated by the Challenged Athletes Foundation San Diego, California, alongside the



royal blessings from the King, Emmanuel produces t-shirts (with the words "The Pozo" – meaning a disabled person – inscribed on it) and postcards carrying messages of hope to disabled people. While pedaling round the country, he talks to many disabled people and government officials; everyone needs to see and hear his message. His actions leave many people astonished. The child, once forsaken and cursed, becomes a national hero, the subject of attention and admiration (he is able to ride four hundred miles a day even though he has only one strong leg). Emmanuel proves beyond reasonable doubt that disability is not synonymous with inability. One leg is enough to achieve great things, just as one person is enough to change the world.

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## Analysis

Some African societies, past and present, associate disabilities with witchcraft, punishment from the gods and/or evil in general, and they consider disabilities a curse to be suffered by those who are affected by them and their families. The desire to avoid being associated with misfortune pushes members of society to shun people with any form of physical disability. It is probably this belief that makes Emmanuel's father leave him and his mother at his birth. The disabled are considered useless by society and are expected to depend on charity and alms for survival. This is why when Emmanuel arrives in Accra, no one wants to hire him and he is told outright to beg in the streets.

However, mothers are also known in African traditions to shoulder the burden of raising children and instilling in them positive values. Emmanuel's mother is a living example of such an attitude, as she makes Emmanuel understand, at a very tender age, that he would have to rely on himself. By being able to play soccer and ride a bike having only one leg, Emmanuel is preparing for greater achievements ahead, the frame of mind reinforced by his mother's last words to him. We have here the concept of motherhood as an institution in African and other world cultures. It is believed that mothers would always love their children unconditionally and would therefore always lead them to the right path in life. Emmanuel's mother fulfils this mission and Emmanuel grows up determined, courageous, hardworking, self-reliant and above all, a living proof that disability does not necessarily mean inability.

*Emmanuel's Dream* is a story of encouragement to people who have physical disabilities and who face rejection on that basis. As Emmanuel



is endowed with values that enlighten both his family and community, the story helps in eradicating the age-long belief among some African communities that children born with disabilities are a curse or evidence of some form of evil. They should thus be considered instead as valuable members of such communities.

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Classical, Mythological,  
Traditional Motifs,  
Characters, and  
Concepts

[African Storytelling African Traditions](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,  
and Concepts Relevant  
for Children and Youth  
Culture

[Adversity Boys Child, children Childhood Desires Disability Family Hope\\* Parents \(and children\) Sport Values](#)

Further Reading

Ndlovu, Helen, "African Beliefs Concerning People with Disabilities: Implications for Theological Education", *Journal of Disability and Religion* 20.1-2 (2016): 29-39.

Wa Munyi, Chomba, "[Past and Present Perceptions towards Disability: A Historical Perspective](#)", *Disability Studies Quarterly* 32. 2 (2012). (accessed: June 21, 2022).

Addenda

The story was an inspiration for a documentary film *Emmanuel's Gift* from 2005, directed by Lisa Lax and Nancy Stern Winters, narrated by Oprah Winfrey.

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