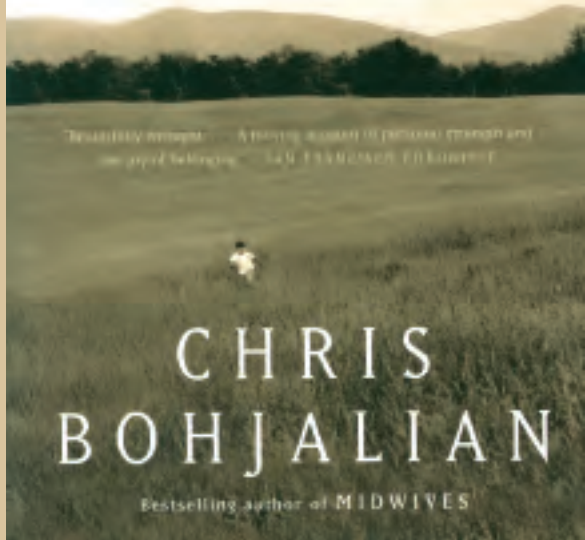




**ONE  
BOOK  
ONE**  
COMMUNITY

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

# THE BUFFALO SOLDIER



Find out what happens when all of  
Southwestern Indiana Reads

## THE BUFFALO SOLDIER

by Chris Bohjalian



Reading and Growing  
Together  
in Southwestern  
Indiana

## About the Program

One Book/One Community is a grassroots reading program to develop a community built around the shared experience of people reading and talking about the same book. Bringing people together to discuss ideas in books can play an important role in breaking down barriers between people, cultures, and economic and educational backgrounds.

The Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library is joining with the Evansville media, local schools and universities, book stores, and businesses to promote a culture of reading in the Evansville community.

## What can I do after I've read the book?

- Visit the One Book/One Community website at [www.evpl.org/onebook](http://www.evpl.org/onebook)
- Join a book discussion group.
- Use "Suggested Questions for Discussion" in the back of this booklet.
- Listen to special "One Book/One Community" programming on WNIN FM 88.3.
- Share the book with others.
- Attend the special author event on Tuesday, September 13.

## How can you participate?

Participation is free and open to the public – everyone is encouraged to join. You can call or stop by any Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library to borrow a copy of *The Buffalo Soldier*. Or you can purchase the book at 20% off list price at participating bookstores.

### Participating Libraries and Book Discussion Dates:

Central	200 SE MLK Jr. Blvd. Sept. 11 – 2:00 pm
East	840 E. Chandler Ave. Aug. 30 – 6:30 pm
McCollough	5115 Washington Ave. Sept. 28 – 3:00 pm
North Park	750 North Park Dr. Sept. 6 – 6:30 pm
Oaklyn	3001 Oaklyn Dr. Sept. 12 – 6:30 pm
Red Bank	120 S. Red Bank Rd. Sept. 7 – 3:00 pm
Stringtown	2100 Stringtown Rd. Aug. 23 – 6:30 pm
West	2000 W. Franklin St. Aug. 16 – 6:30 pm

Check other area libraries & book stores for dates.

# About The Buffalo Soldier

With his trademark emotional heft and storytelling skill, bestselling author Bohjalian presents this resonant novel about the formation of an unconventional family—the ties that bind it, and the strains that pull it apart. Two years after their twin daughters died in a flash flood, Terry and Laura Sheldon, a Vermont state trooper and his wife, take in a foster child. His name is Alfred; he is ten years old and African-American. And he has passed through so many indifferent families that he can't believe that his new one will last.

In the ensuing months Terry and Laura will struggle to emerge from their shell of grief only to face an unexpected threat to their marriage; Terry's involvement with another woman. Meanwhile, Alfred cautiously enters the family circle and befriends an elderly neighbor who inspires him with the story of the buffalo soldiers, the black cavalrymen of the old West. Out of the entwining and unfolding of their lives, **The Buffalo Soldier** creates a suspenseful, moving portrayal of a family, infused by Bohjalian's moral complexity and narrative assurance.

"In **The Buffalo Soldier**, Bohjalian proves once again that he's a master novelist."

- The Boston Globe

# About the Author

Chris Bohjalian is the author of eight novels, including **Midwives**, (a #1 New York Times bestseller and an Oprah's Book Club® selection), **Trans-Sister Radio**, and **The Buffalo Soldier** — as well as **Idyll Banter**, a collection of magazine essays and newspaper columns.

His work has been translated into seventeen languages, been published in twenty countries, and twice become acclaimed movies, ("Midwives" and "Past the Bleachers"). In 2002 he won the New England Book Award.

## Join Us

**Chris Bohjalian will come to the Victory Theatre to discuss his book, *The Buffalo Soldier*, answer questions, and autograph books on:**

**Tuesday, September 13**

**7:30 PM**

**The Victory Theatre**

**Admission is free and**

**open to the public.**

## One Book/One Community Committee

Patty Avery • Shellie Benson • Becky Conner • John Engelbrecht • Susan Enlow  
Bob Hammonds • Joyce Hamon • Cris Hochwender • Shelley Kirk • Julie Mills  
Mariana Mudd • Jean Noyes • Ryan Reynolds • Brenda Scheidler • Matt Wagner  
Rose Young • Marina Will • Lola Teubert • Evelyn Walker

# Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. How does the initial portrait of Alfred (p.17) establish his sense of alienation in Cornish? What else does this chapter reveal about Alfred, his self-image and the image he wants to project to the world?
2. What is your first impression of Laura? Does the description of her behavior with Alfred (pp. 26-28) make you question her decision to take in a child. Do you think her reaction is common among foster parents entrusted with older, more independent children or are they in some way unique to her situation?
3. "There were months when (Laura) believed she'd never get better and what was more important for everyone around her, it was clear that she didn't want to" (p.28). What evidence is there of her reluctance to move on with her life?
4. In the aftermath of the drowning, Terry Sheldon retreats into his work. Is this simply an indication of the importance of his profession in re-establishing a normal life after the tragedy or does it say something about his emotional make-up? Is the way he handles his grief related to his training and work as a state trooper or do you think his behavior is typical of most men?
5. How do Terry's doubts about taking Alfred in differ from Laura's? Do you think he is right to be concerned about his ability to relate to an African-American (p.43)? Should foster care agencies make an effort to place children in familiar environments (in Alfred's case, a more urban, more integrated setting) or is the most important thing finding a safe, caring home for a child?
6. Which partner do you think is more responsible for the estrangement, Laura or Terry? To what extent does Laura's lack of interest in sex, as well as her emotional withdrawal, explain Terry's attraction to Phoebe?
7. Paul Herbert's empathy and generosity make a tremendous difference in Alfred's life. Why is he able to break through Alfred's shell? What does his friendship with Alfred offer Paul?
8. The confrontation between Terry and Alfred (pp.250-252) is one of the most powerful and poignant incidents in the book. What threads of the story come together in this scene and its immediate aftermath?
9. The novel begins and ends with floodwater engulfing the town. Why is a flood a potent metaphor for framing the events of the novel?
10. What purpose do the passages from the book about the buffalo soldier which introduce each chapter have in the unfolding of the plot and the changes that Alfred is undergoing? Do they cast any light on the other characters? Which quotations did you find particularly significant?
11. What did you think of the scene where Alfred rescues Terry? Was it believable?
12. Have you ever considered fostering a child? What impact did the book have on your feeling of foster care?

## One Book/One Community Sponsors

NEWS 25 • Barber Shoulders and Seisky LLP • Barnes and Noble • Borders  
City of Evansville • Evansville Courier & Press • Evansville Vanderburgh Public Library  
The Evansville Literacy Coalition • Old National Bank • Public Library Friends  
o'connor/creative marketing • Semisans, Incorporated • S.I.N.E. • South Central  
Communications • Tucker Publishing Group • Veazey, Parrott, Durkin and Shoulders  
WIKY • WNIN 88.3