



[Lisa you are an null level member.](#)

SUPPORT US

FREE NEWSLETTER

**ARTS**

# Bestselling author Celeste Ng to speak at the library on Wednesday

By [LISA HORNUNG](#) | May 18, 2019 5:45 am



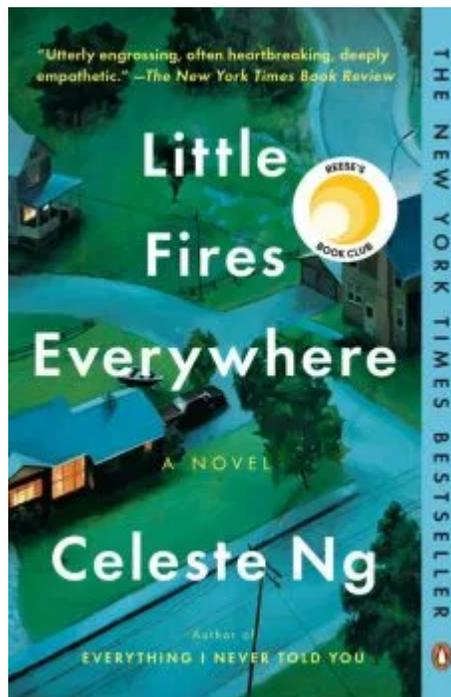
Celeste Ng, author of “Little Fires Everywhere,” will speak at the Main Branch of the Louisville Free Public Library on Wednesday, May 22. | Photo by Kevin Day Photography

[Celeste Ng](#), author of the bestseller “Little Fires Everywhere,” grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio, thinking it was just like any other suburban city. It wasn’t until she went away to college at Harvard that she started to notice not everyone grew up like she did.

Shaker Heights is a planned, progressive city where its residents make an effort to be open-minded about political and sociological issues, but it also has very specific rules about what color you can paint your house and where you leave your garbage cans (not on the street).

“I thought, what is the quintessential Shaker (Heights) family, and I came up with the Richardsons,” Ng (pronounced *ing*) tells Insider about the characters in “Little Fires.” “Then I thought, what type of family would disrupt their life? And I came up with Mia and Izzy Warren. Then it kind of came together organically.”

Ng will discuss “Little Fires



Ng’s book is being adapted into a TV series by Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington.

“Little Fires Everywhere” on Wednesday, May 22, at the [Louisville Free Public Library](#).

Ng's first book, "Everything I Never Told You," was the Amazon Book of the Year in 2014, and her short story, "Girls at Play," won a Pushcart Prize in 2012.

And to add to the accolades, "Little Fires Everywhere" is now being adapted into an eight-show series on Hulu by Reese Witherspoon and Kerry Washington. Witherspoon and Washington will play the two mothers, Elena Richardson and Mia Warren in the show.

The story centers on these two families whose lives intertwine in an interesting way. The children become friends, the mothers have a kind of suspicious respect for each other, and there are several mysteries along the way. Who is Izzy's father? Who burned down the Richardson house? Who will get custody of an adopted Chinese baby?

Ng says the book took about two years to write, a much shorter time than the six-years incubation of "Everything I Never Told You."

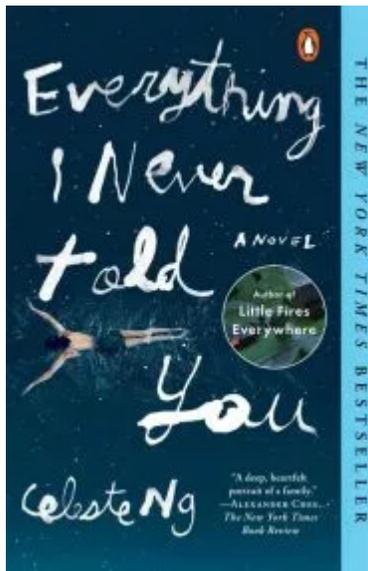
"(Two years) sounds really fast, and then I realized when I went back and looked at my notes, I'd actually been thinking about this story and these characters starting in 2009," she says with a laugh. "So it actually took about six years that I was thinking about it. It was a long sort of percolating process. I was so proud of myself the second time because I got it done so much faster, but I realized, no, it took just as long."

In the book, Bebe, a Chinese immigrant in the throes of postpartum depression, abandons her newborn at a fire station after a couple of months struggling to take care of her in a country where she is not a native speaker and can't find sufficient work and childcare. A family in Shaker Heights that struggled with infertility adopts her.

Several months later, Bebe has her life together and wants her daughter back, which forces the families of Shaker Heights to choose sides, often differing in opinion with their own family members.

Ng wanted to bring transracial adoption to the story because of the complicated issues surrounding it.

“I was interested in that, because as I started to write about these two families, I realized I was really talking about issues of motherhood and issues of class, but more than that, issues of power and privilege,” she explains. “The idea of a baby being adopted would pull all these issues together — all these issues of race and class and privilege and motherhood all come together in that one story.”



“Everything I Never Told You” was published in 2014.

Though one side wins the court battle, the reader is left with the nagging complication of the situation.

“Really, what I wanted to do with the book is not to provide any kind of answer or say, ‘This is how it should be done,’ but to make people realize just how complicated this situation is on all sides,” says Ng. “Then ask questions so they can kind of decide what to think or what they need to be asking in a situation like this.”

This visit is Ng’s first to Louisville, and while she’s not staying long, she’s thrilled to come here.

“I’m just really excited,” she says. “I love libraries, and I’m really excited to get to come to Louisville and speak at the library.”

Ng’s reading of “Little Fires Everywhere” on Wednesday, May 22, will begin at 7 p.m. The event is sold out, but limited standby seating may be available the day of the event, which is being presented by [Carmichael’s Bookstore](#). The Louisville Free Public Library is located at 301 York St.

**LISA HORNUNG**

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



**Institute for  
Nonprofit News**

Copyright © 2019 Insider Media Group, Inc., All Rights Reserved.