

Your Heart is a Muscle the Size of Your Fist



About the Author:

Sunil Yapa holds a BA in economic geography from Penn State University, and received his MFA in Fiction from Hunter College where he worked with two-time Booker Prize winning author Peter Carey, and the 2009 National Book Award winner Colum McCann.

He is the recipient of the 2010 Asian American Short Story Award, sponsored by Hyphen Magazine and the Asian American Writers' Workshop in New York, and has received scholarships to The New York State Summer Writers' Institute, The Norman Mailer Writers' Center in Provincetown and The Bread Loaf Writers' Conference. His writing has appeared in *Guernica*, *American Short Fiction*, *The Margins*, *Hyphen Magazine*, *The Tottenville Review*, *Pindeldyboz: Stories that Defy Classification*, and others.

Inside the kit:

- (8) copies of the book
- (1) book club guide

About the Book:

(from the author's website)

On a rainy, cold day in November, young Victor—a boyish, scrappy, world traveler who's run away from home—sets out to sell marijuana to the 50,000 anti-globalization protesters gathered in the streets. It quickly becomes clear that the throng determined to shut the city down—from environmentalists to teamsters to anarchists—are testing the patience of the police, and what started as a peaceful protest is threatening to erupt into violence.

Over the course of one life-altering afternoon, the lives of seven people will change forever: foremost among them police chief Bishop, the estranged father Victor hasn't seen in three years, two protesters struggling to stay true to their non-violent principles as the day descends into chaos, two police officers in the street, and the coolly elegant financial minister from Sri Lanka whose life, as well as his country's fate, hinges on getting through the angry crowd, out of jail, and to his meeting with the president of the United States.

In this raw and breathtaking novel, Yapa marries a deep rage with a deep humanity, and in doing so casts an unflinching eye on the nature and limits of compassion.

Suggested Reads:

Missionaries by Phil Klay

Your House Will Pay by Steph Cha

The Last Exiles by Ann Shin



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1. Before reading this book, what, if anything, did you know about the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle? Did Yapa's novel change your understanding of the protest?
2. Which of Yapa's characters did you relate to the most? Which did you relate to the least?
3. What do you think Yapa was saying about the role of the police during political protests? What should we expect of police during these types of protests? What did you make of Bishop's behavior? What about the behavior of Ju and Park? Did you view any of these characters—or any characters at all—as villains?
4. Discuss the role that violence plays throughout the novel. Can violence be a force for good? Can real political change occur without violence?
5. On the day of the protest, the lives of disparate characters collide, and these characters from all walks of life find themselves connected to one another—either physically or emotionally. But, at the same time, the protesters are fighting against globalization, against global connectivity. Discuss the role that human connectivity plays throughout the novel.
6. In an interview, Sunil Yapa said of the novel: “It’s about people listening, and not listening.” Discuss the ways various characters listened—or didn’t listen—throughout the novel.
7. Discuss the role that empathy plays in the novel. What does it mean to be empathetic, especially in this global age?