

University of New Mexico

## UNM Digital Repository

---

2024 Award Winners

Jim & Mary Lois Hulsman Undergraduate  
Library Research Award

---

Fall 2023

### Parable of the Sower by Octavia E. Butler

Jasmine L. Partain

*University of New Mexico*, [jpartain@unm.edu](mailto:jpartain@unm.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ugresearchaward\\_2024](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ugresearchaward_2024)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Partain, Jasmine L.. "Parable of the Sower by Octavia E. Butler." (2023). [https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ugresearchaward\\_2024/6](https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/ugresearchaward_2024/6)

This Emerging Researcher is brought to you for free and open access by the Jim & Mary Lois Hulsman Undergraduate Library Research Award at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in 2024 Award Winners by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [disc@unm.edu](mailto:disc@unm.edu).

# Parable of the Sower

Octavia E. Butler

# Octavia Estelle Butler

**June 22, 1947 - February 24, 2006**

Nickname: Jonie

Born in Pasadena, CA

- MacArthur 'Genius' Grant

Growing up was crippling shy, was bullied heavily for being over 6' tall

- reflected in her work; reveals the crueler sides of human nature

Moved with 300 boxes of books - Lake Forest Park, Washington

Would wake up at 2 am every morning to write



Had many unique jobs:

- telemarketer, potato chip inspector, dishwasher

*Parable of the Sower*

- *Butler Mons* - Mountain on Charon, a moon on Pluto
- *Octavia E. Butler Landing* - landing site of Mars' rover
- *Octaviabutler* - Asteroid 7052 in the Solar System's asteroid belt



# Octavia's Journals

Emotional Drive  
Strive Always  
— In All Ways  
At All Times —  
Always  
For Intensity  
Cold or Hot  
Hard or Soft  
Gut-Wrenching or  
Deeply Stilling  
Utter Intensity

AUGUST		Last Week	1980
SUNDAY	10	223	Ten Pages A Day!
MONDAY	11	224	
TUESDAY	12	225	The Time!!!
WEDNESDAY	13	226	Keep Your Word

Tell stories  
Filled with  
Facts.  
Make People  
Touch and  
Taste and  
KNOW.  
Make People  
FEEL!  
FEEL!  
FEEL!

I shall be a bestselling writer.  
After Imago, each of my books  
will be on the bestseller lists of  
LAT, NYT, PW, WP, ~~etc.~~ etc..  
My novels will go onto the above lists  
whether publishers push them hard or not,  
whether I'm paid a high advance or not,  
whether I ever win another award or not.  
This is my life. I write bestselling  
novels. My novels go onto the bestseller lists  
on or shortly after publication. My novels  
each travel up to the top of the bestseller  
lists and they reach the top and they stay  
on top for months (at least two). Each of my  
novels does this. So be it! I will find the way  
to do this.  
See to it! So be it! See to it!

My books will be read by millions of people.  
I will buy a beautiful home in an excellent neighborhood  
I will send poor black youngsters to Clarion or other writer's workshops  
I will help poor black youngsters broaden their horizons  
I will help poor black youngsters go to college  
I will get the best of health care for my mother and myself  
I will hire a car whenever I want or need to.  
I will travel whenever and wherever in the world that I choose.  
My books will be read by millions of people!  
So be it! See to it!



# Parable of the Sower (1993)



## Premise

Through the diary entries of Lauren Oya Olameda, 15, which begin in 2024 set in post-apocalyptic Los Angeles County she begins documenting her discovery of the religion *Earthseed*. The world has been ravaged by global warming, economic collapse, and a drug pandemic, pyro, that has caused mass destruction from the users need to start fires & watch them burn. After she is driven out of her secluded gated community by 'Crazies' she is joined by two other surviving community members and forced to set off North toward Canada in hopes of finding somewhere to begin the first Earthseed community.

Originally meant to be the first book in a series titled: *Earthseed*

- Book Two: Parable of the Talents (1998)  
- 2000 Nebula Award for Best Novel
- Book Three: Parable of the Trickster  
(N/A)

## Afrofuturism

a cultural movement that explores the intersection of African American culture with science fiction and fantasy

- Butler "mother of Afrofuturism"
- representation that was lacking in science fiction novels prior to Butler



# Lauren Oya Olameda

15 yo beginning, 18 yo end  
Birthday: January 20, 2024 (shares w/ her father, Reverend  
Olameda, 55 yo beginning)

*Parable of the Sower as an Autobiography*

Hyperempathy "sharing" - According to Butler condition is strictly a delusion, not some super power

Originally a calculated leader, manipulative - who orders assassinations on her enemies & puts shock collars on members who try to leave

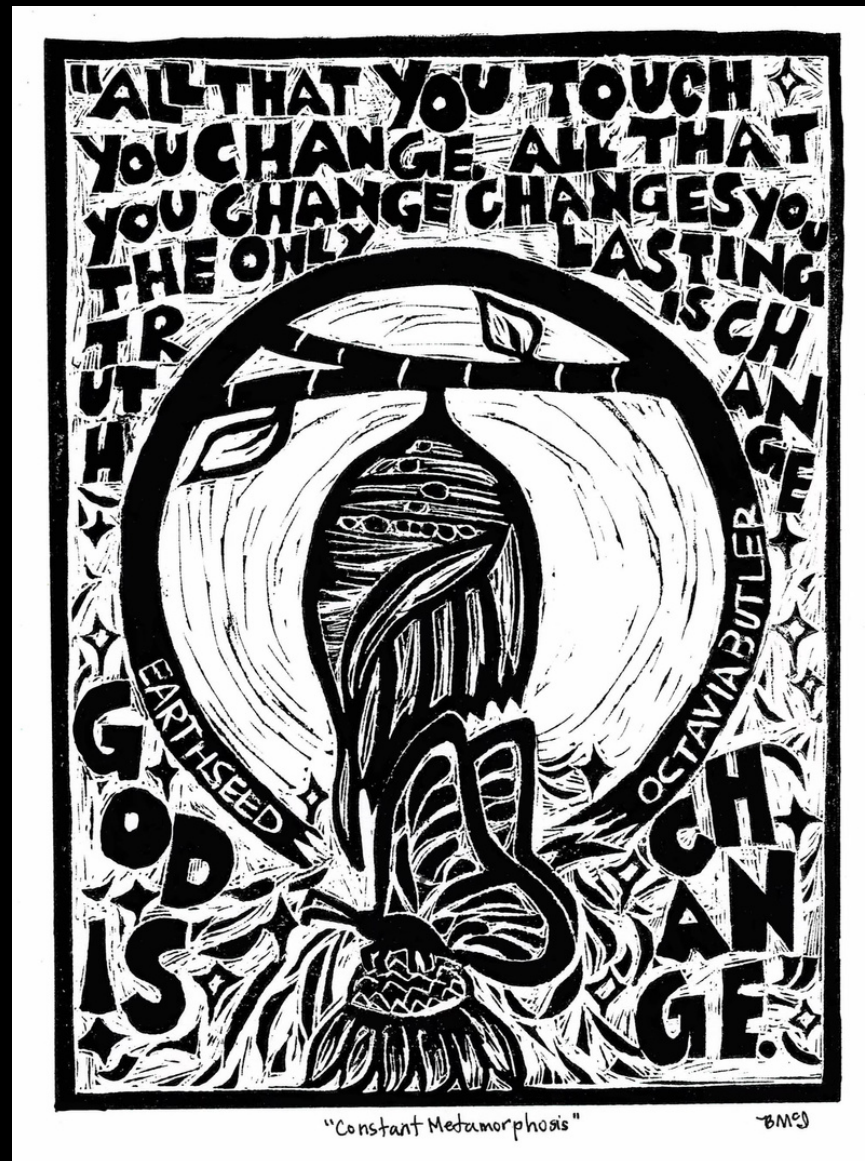
Instead is wise, practical, strong (everything that Butler is not, and aspires to be)

Hometown: Robledo, CA (20 miles outside of LA)

- Favorite book of the Bible - Job, "I think it says more about my father's God in particular and gods in general than anything else I've ever read." pg. 14
- "God sounds a lot like Zeus... Maybe God is a kind of big kid, playing with his toys."



# Earthseed



"There's always a lot to do before  
you get to go to heaven" pg. 79

## The Destiny of Earthseed 11

a fusion of concepts from Heraclitus, Darwin, & Buddha

- idea of: science fiction as religion
- space colonization
- Biblical reference - Parable of the Sower / St. Luke 8: 5-8

"A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And others fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bore fruit an hundredfold." (*last page, 325*)

2021 - A24 films production company bought the rights to Parable of the Sower, will be directed by Garrett Bradley

## Core Principles

- "God is Change."
- "And the Destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars."

# Entries as Documentation

## ***Parable of the Sower, pg. 136*** **Current Pandemic (2024)**

“... fire drug with it's dozen or so names: Blaze, diego, flash, sun fire... The most popular name is pyro-short for pyromania.”

## ***Parable of the Sower, pg. 128*** **Community Members**

“Kayla, on the other hand, has a big voice, beautiful, clear, and able to do everything she asks of it. Also, Kayla has a reputation for moving unless she wants to.”

## ***Parable of the Sower, pg. 117 & 74*** **Earthseed**

- “I’ve finally got a title for my book of Earthseed verses- Earthseed: The Book of the Living.”
- “I’m going to go through my old journals and gather the verses I’ve written into one volume... Then, someday when people are able to pay more attention to what I say...”



# References to slavery

## **Parable of the Sower, pg. 211**

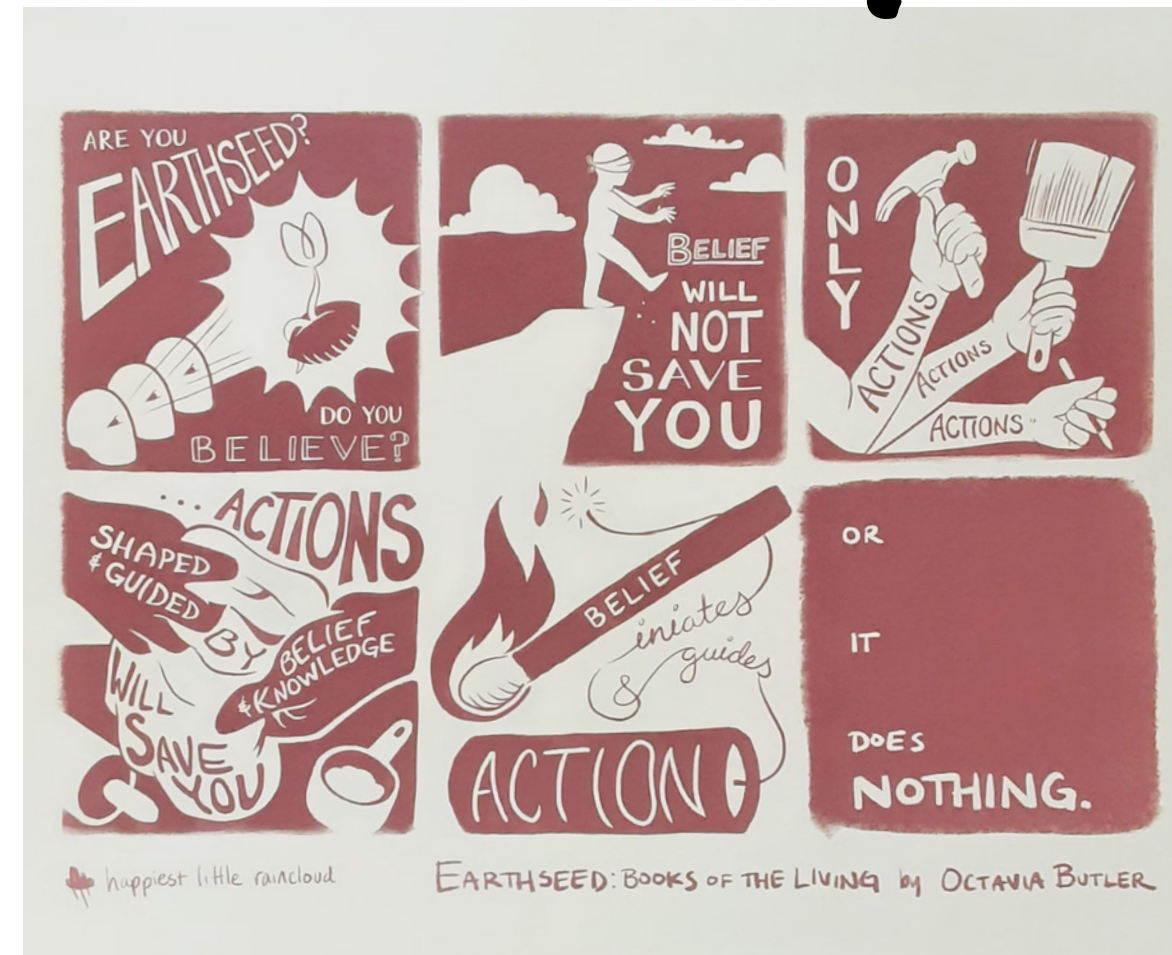
- “Slaves did that two hundred years ago. They sneaked around and educated themselves as best they could, sometimes suffering, whipping, sale, or mutilation for their efforts.”

## **Parable of the Sower, pg. 212**

- “The sun of the cook marrying one of the maids. That was like something out of another era, too.”

## **Parable of the Sower, pg. 288**

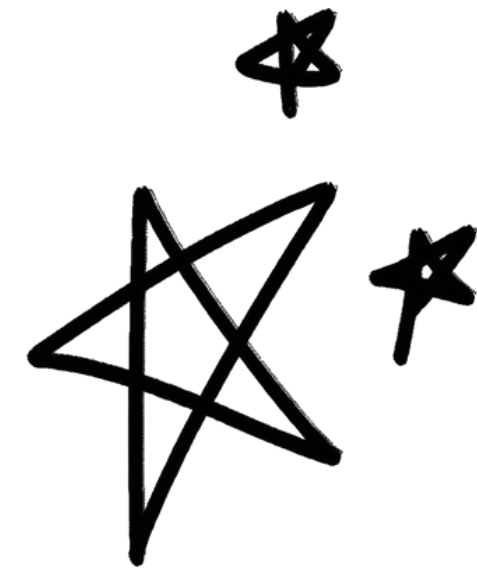
- ““So we become the crew of a modern day underground railroad,” I said. Slavery again-even worse than my father thought, or at least sooner.”



- Released less than a year after the LA riots (1992)
- Mirror classic slave narratives - emphasis on literacy & quest for education = freedom (*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*)
- Debt slavery, marital slavery, and other types of slavery exist and are real forms of slavery today

# Among the stars

## Favorite quotes



### ***Parable of the Sower, pg 5***

- City lights would block stars - pollution
- Stepmother -

“My mother told me that the stars-the few stars we could see- were windows into heaven. Windows for God to look through to keep an eye on us...”

### ***Parable of the Sower, pg 21***

- Astronaut being returned to Earth from Mars & neighbor - Mrs. Sims who committed suicide

“Somehow, she and her suicide have gotten tangled up with the astronaut and her death and her expulsion from heaven.”