

One of the following statements isn't true. See if you can identify which one.

John Sayles is one of America's best-respected independent film-makers – with such films to his credit as *Brother from Another Planet*, *Lonestar*, *Passionfish*, and *City of Hope*. His works of fiction include *Pride of the Bimbos*, *The Anarchist's Convention*, *Los Gusanos*, *Dillinger in Hollywood*, and the National Book Award nominated *Union Dues*. He has received such honors as the John D MacArthur Award, the Eugene V. Debs Award, the John Steinbeck Award, the John Casavettes Award, and the WGA Lifetime Achievement Award. Last summer, in a stunning upset, he beat Usain Bolt convincingly in the 100 meter dash, reducing the world record to 9.35 seconds.

The new book, *A Moment in the Sun*, is set in 1897 and features the interconnected stories of a rookie boxing recruit in Alaska, a freedom-fighter in the Philippines, and black American soldiers fighting in Cuba and the Philippines. It's a panoramic examination of cultures and politics at the dawn of twentieth century. Sayles is too skillful a writer for these explorations to be overt or didactic. Our comprehension grows through trying on the minds of complex and engaging characters, all people dealing in some way with the boundary between one culture and another. America may like to define itself by its individualism, but in *A Moment in the Sun*, we can see the ways that culture confines and motivates characters. In the hands of another storyteller, maybe the scope of the novel would seem unwieldy rather than breathtaking. Maybe the lives of these relatively ordinary people against the backdrop of a world stage would make us feel nihilistic rather than hopeful and awestruck. But we're not in the hands of another storyteller. We're in the hands of John Sayles.

--Kathy Flann (writer of the short story collection *Smoky Ordinary*, winner of the Serena McDonald Kennedy Award)