My name is Faith Ringgold and I wrote Tar Beach, the book, in 1990.

[Faith begins reading]

I will always remember when the stars fell down around me and lifted me up above the George Washington Bridge.

I could see our tiny rooftop with mommy and daddy and Mr. and Mrs. honey.

Our next-door neighbor's still playing cards as if nothing was going on.

And Beebe my baby brother lying real still on the mattress just like I told him to.

His eyes like huge floodlights tracking me through the sky.

Sleeping on Tar Beach was magical. Lying on the roof in the night with the stars and skyscraper buildings all around me made me feel rich like I owned all that I could see.

The bridge was my most prized possession.

Daddy said that the George Washington bridge is the longest and most beautiful bridge in the world and that it opened in 1931 on the very day I was born.

Daddy worked on that bridge hoisting cables. Since then I've wanted that bridge to be mine.

Now I have claimed it.

All I had to do was fly over it for it to be mine forever.

I can wear it like a giant diamond necklace, or just fly above it and marvel at its sparkling beauty. I can fly.

Yes, fly. Me, Cassie Louise Lightfoot. Only eight years old and in the third grade. And I can fly. That means I am free to go wherever I want for the rest of my life.

Daddy took me to see the new union building he is working on. He can walk on steel girders high up in the sky and not fall.

They call him the cat, but still he can't join the union because grandpa wasn't a member. Well daddy is going to own that building because I'm gonna fly over it and give it to him.

Then it won't matter that he's not an arrow wound or whether he's colored or a half-breed Indian like they say. He'll be rich and won't have to stand on 24 story high girders and look down.

He can look at his building going up and mommy won't cry all winter when he goes to look for work and doesn't come home. And mommy can laugh and sleep late like Mrs. honey.

And we can have ice cream every night for dessert.

Next I'm going to fly over the ice cream factory just to make sure we do.

Tonight we're going up to Tar Beach. mommy is roasting peanuts and frying chicken and daddy will bring home a watermelon.

Mr. and Mrs. honey will bring the beer and their old green card table and then the stars will fall around me.

And I will fly to the union building. I'll take BB with me he has threatened to tell mommy and daddy if I leave him behind.

I have told him it's very easy - anyone can fly.

All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way. The next thing you know you are flying among the stars.

The end.

[Music]