A Message from Ellen Oh
We Need Diverse Books CEO and President

In early March 2020, WNDB was preparing to host our annual Walter Dean Myers Awards at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. We had the catering booked and the programs printed, just as COVID-19 started spreading around the country. Ultimately, we decided to cancel the event for the safety of our attendees, but we had our fingers crossed that our lives might return to normal within a few weeks. We didn’t know then how the pandemic would soon overtake all of our lives.

Our world has been forever changed but, despite these unprecedented times, I am proud at how WNDB has risen to these challenges. In response to the pandemic, we launched an emergency fund for diverse creatives who’ve been affected by COVID-19, whether through layoffs or canceled book events and school visits. We will also launch a Summer Reading Series soon, which will provide book recommendations and resources for families since many camps and activities remain closed.

And that isn’t all. Before the pandemic hit, we were able to reach several milestones this fiscal year, such as publishing our latest anthology *The Hero Next Door*, announcing ten new mentorship partnerships, and giving away more than 4000 diverse books to schools and libraries nationwide.

Even as the pandemic continues, WNDB remains steadfast in our mission to create a world in which all children can find themselves on the pages of a book. In this annual report, we invite you to learn more about what we’ve accomplished this past year and what our goals are for the next. Our successes are your successes—because we couldn’t have gotten here without supporters like you.

Ellen Oh, CEO & President
What We Do

*We Need Diverse Books* is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to create a world in which all children can find themselves in the pages of a book. We run a range of exciting initiatives that advocate for essential changes in the publishing industry to reflect and honor the lives of all young people.

**How we define diversity:** We recognize all diverse experiences, including but not limited to LGBTQIA+, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.

**How we’re organized:** We are governed by a three-member Executive Board. Our part-time staff includes an executive director, program director, and five contractors who help oversee our programming, social media, and communications. We also have a team of dedicated volunteers who help run certain programming.
Our Team

2019-2020 Board
Ellen Oh (CEO and President)
Dhonielle Clayton (COO)
Judy Schricker (CFO)

Our partners

Team members:
Nicole Johnson (Executive Director)
Caroline Richmond (Program Director)
Christine Vallas (Accounting Manager)
Linda Hom (Controller)
Alaina Lavoie (Communications Manager)
JoAnn Yao (Social Media Manager)
Elissa Petrucci (Program Manager)
Chelsea Villareal (Program Manager)

Key Volunteers:
Meg Cannistra and Miranda Paul
(Mentorship)
Terry Hong and Kathie Weinberg
(Walter Awards)
Jennifer Mann and Linda Sue Park
(Internships)
Marietta Zacker (Walter Grants)
Sandie Chen and Nic Stone (Panels)
Fiscal Year 2020 Financials

Total Income Fiscal Year June 2019 to June 2020: $795,619

- **Foundation Grants** $178,322
- **Major Donors* (above $2000)** $160,334
- **Individual Donors (below $2000)** $138,085
- **Fees for Services, Royalties, Other*** $110,456
- **In-Kind Contributions** $208,422

Total Operating Budget: $600,284

**Highlights**

WNDB received major donations from individual donors in light of the Black Lives Matter movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. We also received various in-kind professional services for fundraising, programming, legal, financial, and administrative activities. Throughout the fiscal year, we accepted donated books for the WNDB in the Classroom initiative, valued at $11,742. Lastly, 98 volunteers gave approximately 2925 hours to WNDB’s programming, namely the Walter Awards, Internship Grants, and Mentorship initiatives.

**Highlights**

Due to the pandemic, WNDB launched the Emergency Fund for Diverse Creatives, providing financial support to authors, illustrators, and publishing professionals. We established the Black Creatives Fund in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and we published our third anthology, titled *The Hero Next Door*. WNDB recognizes in-kind contributions hours from the executive board and staff volunteers that make up a majority of the personnel expenses. Our volunteer executive board’s time is valued at $200,000.
The Walter Awards

The Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children’s Literature, also known as “The Walter,” honors the legacy of celebrated children’s author and diversity advocate Walter Dean Myers (1937-2014).

Leaders: Terry Hong and Kathie Weinberg, Co-Directors

What we did this year: The Walter Award judging committee announced the winners and honorees of the 2020 cycle:

Winners
• Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me by Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O’Connell (Teen Category)
• The Bridge Home by Padma Venkatraman (Younger Readers Category)

Honorees
• Pet by Akwaeke Emezi (Teen Category)
• With the Fire on High by Elizabeth Acevedo (Teen Category)
• Other Words for Home by Jasmine Warga (Younger Readers category)
• A Good Kind of Trouble by Lisa Moore Ramee (Younger Readers Category)

The Walter Awards Ceremony and Diversity in Children’s Literature Symposium was scheduled to be held on Friday, March 13, 2020, with award-winning author Grace Lin as the ceremony emcee and WNDB COO Dhonielle Clayton as the symposium moderator. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to the pandemic, but WNDB warmly congratulates the winners and honorees and we hope to celebrate them in person at a future Walter Awards.
The Walter Awards

WNDB will donate a minimum of 2000 copies each of the winning books to schools, libraries, and other educational organizations.

What’s coming next year: In early 2021, the Walter Award judging committee announced the winners of the 2021 Walter Awards. The winners include *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam (Teen category) and *When Stars Are Scattered* by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (Younger Readers category). The 2021 event will be held virtually.

For more details about the Walter Award, contact Terry Hong and Kathie Weinberg at walteraward@diversebooks.org.
WNDB in the Classroom

WNDB in the Classroom provides free diverse books to low-income schools across the United States. By helping children find stories and authors that they can relate to, we encourage in them a lifelong love of reading.

Lead: Elissa Petruzzi

What we did this year: In the spring of 2020, we gave away 4000 copies of our 2019 Walter Award winners, *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo and *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes. Many of these books were distributed to students learning from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What’s coming next year: We have numerous book giveaways planned in the new year, including the biggest campaign in WNDB history—30000 diverse books, provided by Penguin Random House! We'll also donate 4000 copies of our 2020 Walter Award winners, *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me* by Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O’Connell and *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman.

For information about WNDB in the Classroom, contact Elissa Petruzzi elissapetruzzi@diversebooks.org.
Anthologies

Our anthologies provide a school-friendly sampler of short stories that can easily be incorporated into educational curricula. Long term, we hope that these anthologies will be made available to as many schools as possible.

Leader: Ellen Oh

What we did this year: Our newest middle grade anthology, The Hero Next Door, was published on July 30, 2019. Edited by WNDB team member Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich, this compilation received a starred review from Publishers Weekly and features stories by RJ Palacio, Linda Sue Park, and Rita Williams-Garcia. A Washington Post review of the book remarked that the collection, “admiringly succeeds in making available to all readers a wider and more representative range of American voices and protagonists.”

With each anthology, WNDB hosts a short-story contest for a spot in the book by an unpublished diverse author. Writer Suma Subramaniam won the contest for The Hero Next Door with her story “Rescue” and received a payment of $1,000.

What we can look forward to in 2018 and beyond: We’re excited to launch our next young adult anthology, A Universe of Wishes, which will be our first collection that focuses on science fiction and fantasy stories. Contributors will include bestselling authors like Victoria Schwab and Rebecca Roanhorse and will be edited by WNDB’s COO Dhonielle Clayton.

For more information about our anthologies, please contact Caroline Richmond carolinerichmond@diversebooks.org.
Internship Grants

Our Internships program, initiated in 2014, provides supplemental grants of up to $2,500 to interns from diverse backgrounds working at publishing houses and literary agencies. During the program’s first four years, WNDB Internship Grants were awarded to 33 interns. Twenty-two interns supported by WNDB have gone on to full-time work in the publishing industry.

Lead: Chelsea Villareal

What we did this year: In the summer of 2019, WNDB provided grants of $2,500 each to 11 interns across the publishing industry. This newest cohort secured internships at publishing houses and literary agencies, like Simon & Schuster, Lee & Low Books, and Writers House. WNDB also organized networking events for the interns, giving them the opportunity to meet other publishing professionals and learn more about the industry.

We also hired program manager Chelsea Villareal to oversee the Internship Grant initiative for the 2019 cycle and onward.

What to look forward to next year: WNDB will provide 10 Internship Grants in 2020, which will all take place virtually due to the pandemic. 2020 will also mark the first year in which we will organize an online ‘bootcamp’ for the grantees where they will attend panels and Q&As that cover professional development and networking.

For more details about the internship initiative, please contact Chelsea Villareal chelseavillareal@diversebooks.org.
Mentorships

Our Mentorships program connects emerging writers and illustrators with seasoned authors and artists who offer professional guidance on craft and publishing over the course of a calendar year. These mentorships cover multiple categories within children’s literature: picture book, middle grade, young adult, and illustration.

Leaders: Miranda Paul and Meg Cannistra

What we did this year: We oversaw the mentorships of 11 authors and/or illustrators, bringing our tally to 43 mentorships since 2015. This mentee class consisted of four picture book writers, three middle grade writers, and four young adult writers.

Our 2019 YA mentee Angeline Boulley went on to sell her contemporary manuscript *Fire Keeper’s Daughter* in a seven-figure deal to Henry Holt Books for Young Readers.

What’s coming next year: We will oversee 15 new mentorships in 2020. Looking ahead, we also aim to increase the number of mentorships and provide our mentors with a greater stipend.

For more details about the mentorship initiative, contact Miranda Paul mirandapaul@diversebooks.org.
We Need Diverse Books continued our partnership with Penguin Random House, further developing the Creative Writing Awards scholarship program through educational workshops for applicants, professional development opportunities for alumnx, and much more.

**Lead:** Elissa Petruzzi

**What we did this year:** During the second year of our Creative Writing Awards collaboration, WNDB expanded our application cap to 900 entries, reaching the most geographically varied applicant pool to date. Public high school seniors representing nearly 700 high schools and 48 states and territories of the U.S. applied for the awards.

The 2020 first-place winners and recipients of $10,000 scholarships are:

- Erika Whisnant for *Loophole Abuse* (Fiction & Drama), Burke Middle College, Morganton, NC
- Ivana Cortez for *Planet: Elkhart, Indiana* (Personal Essay), Galena Park High School, Galena Park, TX
- Jeffrey Liao for *Museum of My Own History, Age Sixteen* (Poetry), Livingston High School, Livingston, NJ
- Orlane Devesin for *Evolution of the Black Woman* (Maya Angelou Award for Spoken Word), Hiram High School, Hiram, GA
- Maya Williams for *To My Catcaller* (NYC Entrant Award), Edward R. Murrow High School, Brooklyn, NY
Creative Writing Awards with Penguin Random House

What we can expect in 2020: The winners will attend a virtual week of professional development, concluding with an online awards ceremony and reading of their work. The winning submissions are available on Wattpad here.

For more information on the Creative Writing Awards, contact Elissa Petruzzi elissapetruzzi@diversebooks.org.
Emergency Fund for Diverse Creatives

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, WNDB established the Emergency Fund for Diverse Creatives to provide financial assistance to marginalized authors, illustrators, and publishing professionals who have lost income due to the pandemic.

Lead: Elissa Petruzzi

What we did this year: As the pandemic spread across the country, we launched the fund in April 2020 to bolster diverse creatives who lost their livelihoods due to canceled contracts, school visits, or layoffs at publishing houses and literary agencies. We provided 18 grants from April to June of this fiscal year.

What’s coming next year: We will transition this grant into a general emergency fund for diverse creatives, serving those who are experiencing financial insecurity due to job loss, medical expenses, a death in the family, and more. We will also increase the grant amount to up to $1000 per grantee.

For more details about the Emergency Grants, please contact Elissa Petruzzi elissapetruzzi@diversebooks.org.
We Need Diverse Books needs your help to continue and further our mission! With your donation, WNDB will be able to:

- **Support diverse authors and illustrators** through our Walter Awards, Walter Grants, and Emergency Fund.
- **Diversify our classrooms** via WNDB in the Classroom.
- **Promote diversity in publishing** through the WNDB Internship Grants.
- **Provide mentorships to promising writers and artists** with our WNDB Mentorship Program.

**How can I send my donation to WNDB?** If you wish to give a gift by check, please make it out to We Need Diverse Books and send it to:

We Need Diverse Books  
10319 Westlake Drive #104  
Bethesda, MD 20817

If you wish to make a donation online, you can contribute via [WNDB’s donation website](#).

If you wish to make a sustaining donation or include WNDB in your Planned Giving, please contact Caroline Richmond at carolinerichmond@diversebooks.org.

**Are there other ways to support WNDB?** When you are shopping on Amazon and other e-vendor sites, you can direct some of your purchase to WNDB!

- **Amazon Smile** donates 0.5% of your purchase price to the nonprofit of your choice, at no extra cost to you. The first time you visit Amazon’s homepage via smile.amazon.com, you
can log into your regular Amazon account and search for “We Need Diverse Books” when prompted to choose your charity. Then, as long as you shop through smile.amazon.com, whatever you buy helps WNDB move closer to our goals.

• **iGive** is a website that functions as a portal to many e-commerce sites you’re likely already shopping on. Once you have an account, you can install a browser button and then choose WNDB as your charity of choice. iGive will direct some of your purchase price to our organization at no extra cost for you.

**Corporate Matching**

Did you know most companies will match employees’ charitable contributions? A great way to increase the amount of your gift is to find out if the company you work for will match your donation. Most companies will match dollar-for-dollar, while some even double or triple your gift. Ask your human resources department to find out if your company matches gifts for 501(c)(3) organizations!