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

As of June 2021, the COVID-19 virus has affected our lives for nearly a year and a half. But even during these challenging times, WNDB remains committed to serving diverse creators, publishing professionals, and educators across the country — and I’m proud of what our organization has accomplished amidst the turmoil and heartache of the pandemic.

WNDB has long strived to be a dynamic nonprofit, one that pivots to the changing needs of the communities that we serve. With that in mind, we’ve created two new initiatives that will provide key support to diverse writers: the Black Creatives Fund and the LitUp fellowship, in partnership with Hello Sunshine. We invite you to learn more about these programs further along in this report.

We’re also excited to share updates from our other initiatives, from the publication of our first Young Adult speculative anthology to our new slate of Walter Award winners to our biggest book giveaway yet.

Thank you for supporting WNDB this past year — together, we’re creating a world where everyone can find themselves in the pages of a book.

Gratefully,

Ellen Oh, CEO & President
What We Do

**We Need Diverse Books** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that seeks to create a world where everyone 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 readers.

**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 seven-member Executive Board. Our staff includes an executive director, senior program manager, and numerous contractors who help oversee our programming, social media, and communications. We also have a team of dedicated volunteers who help run select initiatives.
We Need Diverse Books

2020-2021 Board
Ellen Oh (CEO and President)
Dhonielle Clayton (COO)
Judy Schricker (CFO)
Zoraida Córdova
Minh Lê
Cornelius Minor
Kaitlyn Sage Patterson

Our Partners

Our Team

Team members:
Caroline Richmond
(Interim Executive Director)
Elissa Petruzzi (Senior Program Manager)
Christine Vallas (Accounts Manager)
Linda Hom (Controller/HR)
JoAnn Yao (Social Media Manager)
Alaina Lavoie (Program Manager)
Breanna McDaniel (Program Manager)
Chelsea Villareal (Program Manager)
Ann Marie Wong (Project Director of LitUp)
Kieron Scullington
(Submissions Assistant of LitUp)

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)
Revenue Streams

- **Foundation and Grants:** $286,284
- **Major Donors (above $2000):** $328,511
- **Individual Donors ($2000 and below):** $193,820
- **Fees for services, royalties* and interest income:** $112,938
- **In-kind donations** **: $585,940

Total Revenue: $1,507,493

* This number includes anthology advances and royalties.
** Our in-kind donations include thousands of books donated by publishers. We also receive various in-kind professional services for fundraising, programming, legal, financial, and administrative activities.

Areas of Expenses

- **Internship/Mentorship Grants & Awards:** $127,490 (includes $89K awards)
- **WNDB in the Classroom:** $476,159
- **Walter Awards:** $78,930
- **Black Creatives Fund:** $38,554
- **Other Programming:** $251,855 (includes $22K of awards)
- **Fundraising:** $147,902
- **General and Administrative:** $163,271

Total Expenses: $1,284,161

* Other programming includes the Native Fund, Creative Writing Awards, Emergency Grants, and Outreach and Promotions.
** Fundraising includes development and in-kind donations from our board members.
As of 2018, only 10 percent of children’s books published in the United States depict Black characters, according to the Cooperative Children’s Book Center. With this statistic in mind, WNDB established the Black Creatives Fund to better serve the needs of Black writers, both published and aspiring.

In 2021, the BCF will feature two initiatives. The first will be a Revisions Workshop for 12 unpublished, Black writers, who will receive guidance and critique over six months to ready their manuscripts for submission to agents. The second will be a Marketing Symposium for up to 20 mid-career, Black authors. The symposium faculty will include marketing experts, independent booksellers, school visit coordinators, and other authors who will share tips on how an author can best promote their work.
LitUp with Reese’s Book Club

In partnership with Hello Sunshine and Madcap Retreats, WNDB is excited to help run LitUp, a women’s writer’s fellowship for unpublished, underrepresented voices. LitUp will elevate, mentor, and champion first-time authors so more diverse stories are seen, heard, and read by all. This program will also be one of the first of WNDB’s initiatives to serve writers of adult fiction.

During LitUp’s inaugural year, WNDB will oversee a comprehensive review process and select 10 finalists for Hello Sunshine’s review. The five winners will then attend an all-expenses-paid writer’s retreat to develop their manuscript and learn about the publishing industry, followed by a three-month mentorship with a published author to get their book ready for market.

Heartdrum

Heartdrum is a new Native-focused imprint of HarperCollins Children’s Books in partnership with WNDB. The imprint “evokes the heartbeat of the Native community” by publishing books representing today’s 600-plus tribal Nations located within the borders of the United States and Canada.

Led by editor Rosemary Brosnan and author Cynthia Leitich Smith, Heartdrum is dedicated to shining a spotlight on Native and First Nations characters, topics, and points of view while raising up Indigenous creatives as well as their literary and visual art. Reading these books will create opportunities for teachers and students — both Native and non-Native — to better understand one another and to communicate more effectively. WNDB is excited to support Heartdrum by purchasing its titles for distribution to schools and libraries.
WNDB in the Classroom

WNDB in the Classroom provides free diverse books to low-income schools across the United States. **This holiday season, we ran the biggest campaign in our history—giving away 30,000 diverse books, provided by Penguin Random House!** We sent books to classrooms and after-school organizations across the country.

Throughout the year, we also donated 4000 copies of our 2020 Water Award winners, *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* by Mariko Tamaki, illustrated by Rosemary Valero-O’Connell; and *The Bridge Home* by Padma Venkatraman. In addition we gave away several generous book donations, including 800 books by Angie Thomas and 900 titles from Beacon Press, like *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and *A Queer History of the United States* by Michael Bronski.

Anthologies

Our new young adult anthology *A Universe of Wishes* was published in December 2020. Edited by WNDB COO Dhonielle Clayton, this compilation of short stories received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly* and *Shelf Awareness*, and features stories by V.E. Schwab, Rebecca Roanhorse, and Samira Ahmed. A review from the *School Library Journal* remarked that “the diversity represented in these stories is exceptional” and that the work itself is a “strong choice for all collections serving teens.”

With each of our anthologies, WNDB hosts a short-story contest for unpublished writers and includes the winner in the published book. Writer Jenni Balch won the contest for *A Universe of Wishes* with her story, “Wish.”
Other Programming Highlights

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. During this fiscal year, we oversaw 16 mentorships with diverse authors and illustrators, bringing our tally to 59 creators served since 2015.

We're also proud to share that several of our 2020 mentees have gone on to secure publishing deals. Valerie Bolling, who was paired with mentor Kelly Starling Lyons, has sold picture books to Chronicle and Abrams. And Lily Quan, who was paired with mentor Aisha Saeed, signed a deal to write The Real R.P.G.: The Story of the Red Panda Girl, a book based on the upcoming Disney and Pixar film “Turning Red.”

The Walter Awards

The Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children’s Literature, also known as “The Walter,” recognizes excellence in diverse children’s literature by diverse creators. The winners and honorees of the 2021 cycle include:

Winners

Punching the Air by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam (Young Adult)
When Stars Are Scattered by Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed (Younger Readers)

Honorees

We Are Not Free by Traci Chee (Young Adult)
Almost American Girl by Robin Ha (Young Adult)
King and the Dragonflies by Kacen Callender (Younger Readers)
Everything Sad Is Untrue by Daniel Nayeri (Younger Readers)

Due to the ongoing pandemic, we hosted the Walter Awards virtually this year. WNDB will donate a minimum of 4,000 copies of the winning books to schools, libraries, and other educational organizations.
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.

In 2021, we transitioned 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 also increased the grant amount to up to $1000 per grantee, and gave out 22 grants, totaling $21,000.

Internship Grants

Our Internship Grant program, initiated in 2014, provides supplemental grants of $3000 to diverse publishing interns. We began this initiative to help diversify the publishing industry from within, since it has historically been led by a majority white, straight, and cis workforce.

In the summer of 2021, WNDB provided grants to 29 interns — the biggest cohort in the program’s history! Nineteen of the interns worked in the children’s side of the industry while 10 secured internships on the adult side of publishing, marking the first time that the grants were open to adult fiction and non-fiction interns. WNDB also organized virtual networking events for the interns, giving them the opportunity to learn more about the industry.
Creative Writing Awards with Penguin Random House

In partnership with Penguin Random House, the Creative Writing Awards offers $50,000 in scholarships to public high school students across the country. **Nine hundred public high school seniors representing more than 700 schools applied for the awards in 2021, and the winners are:**

- **Ally Guo** for “Superstition” (Fiction & Drama), William Mason High School, Mason, OH
- **Ajok Thon** for “(Un)erasable Shade” (Personal Essay/Memoir), High Tech High Media Arts, San Diego, CA
- **Evelyn Lee** for “My Mother Rejected God When She Was 19 But I Don’t Think God Ever Really Got Over It” (Poetry), Sam Houston High School, Moss Bluff, LA
- **Chloe Cramutola** for “Why” (Maya Angelou Award for Spoken Word), Absegami High School, Stamford, NJ
- **Tandika Somwaru** for “How to Write the Great Guyanese Novel” (NYC Entrant), of Midwood High School, Brooklyn, NY

The winners attended a virtual week of professional development with Penguin Random House, meeting online to receive one-on-one coaching from editors and attending a virtual chat with bestselling author Mahogany L. Browne. Watch the winners reading their work [here](#).
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
- Provide diverse books to classrooms and libraries
- Promote diversity in the publishing industry
- Aid diverse creators and educators in need

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.

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!