

THE WORD

A Storytelling Sanctuary



**Annual Report
2022**

QUICK FACTS

3,150

Artists served,
artist paying
opportunities
created,

70%

of [margins.]
conference budget
goes to supporting
working artists.

29

publications from
Editor-Writer
Mentees

Creatives
highlighted
to a reading
audience of

3.2 million

*"The Word's programs
leave my heart full"*



WELCOME

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER



Dearest Word community,

The possibilities of what we can build when we trust in our collective movement continues to astound me. In FY2021-2022, The Word took a huge step in this collective work: bringing together a staff who holds space to heal one another each day, who feeds this work with love, and who respects that we are stewards and partners in a larger community's offerings. A supported staff is a vision for our being so long as our community asks us to be; it is because of your convergence around our programs that made this step right, that made it real.

It was an incredible gift to see [margins.] come to life in person in 2022. To witness folks who met over screens, over miles, finally get to hug and dance and to connect with so many new friends--writers, booksellers, and publishers--come together was such a strong reminder of the magic that unfolds in these spaces. The coming-to-life of our Margins Bookstores Month--with the beautiful spectacle of our costumed friends taking over downtown Denver at our BookBall, and a year of eleven Editor-Writer Mentees takes my breath away.



Viniyanka Prasad, Executive Director & Founder

Thank you for joining us, thank you for your commitment to this shared space, thank you for another year and expanding vision.

- Viniyanka

Who We Are

The Word | A Storytelling Sanctuary
is a Denver, CO-based, Nationally serving nonprofit.

We:

Promote authentic storytelling from BIPOC,
LGBTQIA2S+, disabled, and neurodiverse
communities

Support & connect writers, publishers, booksellers,
and readers

Explore new models for the literary ecosystem and
collective work toward equitable futures

Hold safe space in community



our programming

To create collective abundance through storytelling by promoting cultural equity and the inclusion in published literature of perspectives from across race, cultural, ethnic, or religious identity; gender identity; sexual orientation; disability; socioeconomic adversity; and personal experiences of adversity or injustice, The Word's programming includes:

EDITOR-WRITER MENTORSHIP

A one-of-a-kind opportunity for upcoming writers to work with an experienced acquiring editor for a year-long mentorship.

[MARGINS.] CONFERENCE & FESTIVAL

A biannual space where the dream of an inclusive literary future is made into a reality.

MARGINS BOOKSTORES MONTH

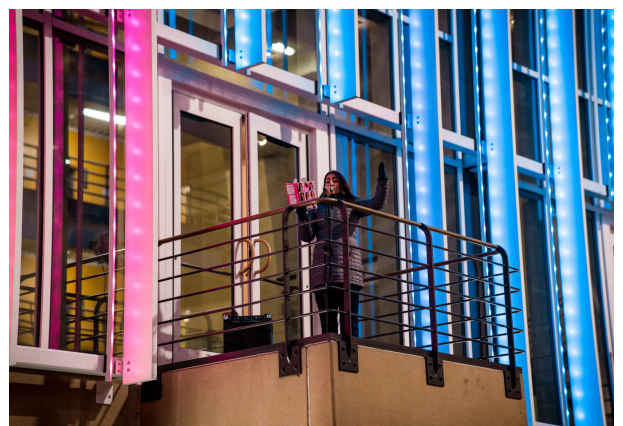
Margins Bookstores Month celebrates bookstores owned and managed by and for BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, Disabled, and Neurodiverse communities.

BIPOC BOOKSELLER AWARD

An annual award and ceremony, the only of its kind currently in the U.S., celebrating three booksellers whose dedication to indie bookstores, and their BIPOC colleagues and communities, has positively influenced the industry.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We hold safe space, and make room for joy, connection and celebrating the beautiful art from our communities in a variety of meet-ups and community events throughout the year.





our 2022 editor- writer mentees

Opening new
publishing
paths.



2022 PICTURE BOOK

ADRIANA LEBRÓN WHITE



2022 NON-FICTION PICTURE BOOK

MERIAM BEN HAMZA



2022 CHILDREN'S FICTION CHAPTER BOOK

SHIFA SALTAGI SAFADI



2022 YOUNG ADULT FICTION/NON-FICTION

J.H. AHN



2022 MIDDLE GRADE FICTION

SOPHIE LI



2022 MG/YA GENRE FICTION

KIM FEARS



2022 ADULT MEMOIR

RAKSHA VASUDEVAN



2022 ADULT GENERAL FICTION

PATRICIA MARTIN



2022 ROMANCE

NURIN CHATUR



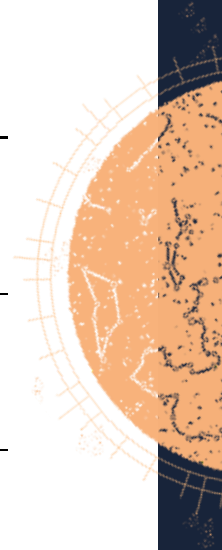
2022 ADULT SCI-FI/FANTASY

KARI M. JOHNSON



2022 ADULT POETRY MENTEE

CHARLOTTE YEUNG





our 2022 mentors



ESTEE ZANDEE

Editor
WaterBrook & Multnomah (PRH)

2022 Non-Fiction Picture Book Mentor



MATT PHIPPS

Assistant Editor
G.P. Putnam's Sons (PRH)

2022 Non-Fiction Picture Book Mentor



MARIA CAMILA CORREA

Associate Editor
Random House Books for Young Readers (PRH)

2022 Fiction Picture Book Mentor



RŪTA RIMAS

Executive Editor
Razorbill (PRH)

2022 Children's Chapter Book Mentor



GIANNA LAKENAITH

Assistant Editor
Knopf Books for Young Readers (PRH)

2022 Middle Grade Mentor



STACEY BARNEY

Associate Publisher
Nancy Paulsen Books (PRH)

2022 Young Adult Fiction Mentor



LYDIA GREGOVIC

Assistant Editor
Delacorte Press (PRH)

2022 MG/YA Genre Fiction Mentor (SFF, Mystery/Thriller, Speculative)



AMY LI

Associate Editor
Crown (PRH)

2022 Adult Memoir Mentor



KHARI DAWKINS

Assistant Editor
Doubleday (PRH)

2022 Adult General Fiction Mentor



SAREER KHADER

Assistant Editor
Berkley (PRH)

2022 Adult Sci-Fi/Fantasy Mentor

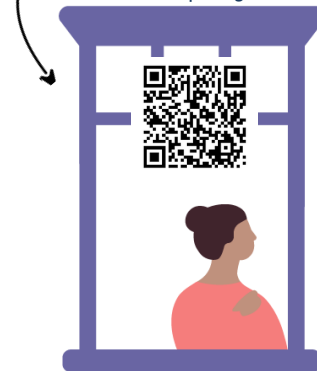


MIA COUNCIL

Associate Editor
Penguin Press (PRH)

2022 Adult Poetry Mentor

[Click Here](#)
or scan below to learn more
about the Editor-Writer
Mentorship Program.



THE WORD'S

mentees

ARE MAKING WAVES

Since 2018, The Word has been pairing upcoming writers from underrepresented backgrounds with experienced book publishing editors for a year-long mentor experience.

In 2022 The Word partnered with Penguin Random House editors to support **11 writer mentees**, and provided **148 writers with feedback!**

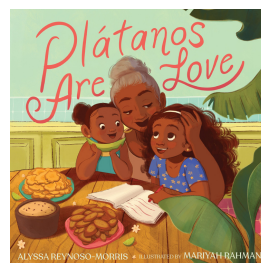
Since 2017, NINE MENTEE trade book PUBLICATIONS from PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED WRITERS

"My mentor completely changed how I view poetry and how I write. Our regular exchanges and discussions have opened my eyes to the fantastic and unusual facets of poetry that I never learned at school."

- *Charlotte Yeung*
2022 Mentee

"Thanks to my mentor, and the program's community of writers, I feel more confident and better equipped to make my voice and ideas heard. As a BIPOC writer, this mentorship is my first open door, and I firmly believe it will lead me to many others."

- *Meriam Benhamza*,
2022 Mentee



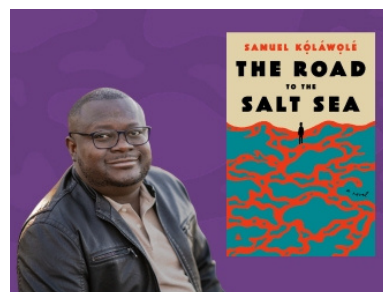
2020 Picture Book Mentee, Alyssa Reynoso-Morris released two books in 2023!

Plátanos Are Love

(Atheneum Books for Young Readers - Simon & Schuster)

The Bronx Is My Home

(Christy Ottaviano Books - Hachette)



2019 Adult Fiction Mentee Samuel Kọláwọlé

Debut novel *The Road to the Salt Sea*
out July 2024 with HarperCollins

Emily Feinberg at Roaring Brook Press has acquired world rights to debut picture book *Cesaria Wears No Shoes* by **2019 Picture Book Mentee**, Denise Adusei (I.), co-founder of #BlackCreatorsInKidlit and #LatinxPitch, illustrated by Priscila Soares. *Cesaria Wears No Shoes* is about a deaf girl who experiences the wonders of African diaspora-inspired Carnival celebrations by feeling the music through her bare feet. Publication 2024; Regina Brooks at Serendipity Literary Agency did the deal.

[margins.]

Our first in-person conference and festival and visions for the future:

In 2022, the *[margins.] Conference* came to life both virtually and in-person, for 3 days in Denver, CO after the COVID-19 pandemic. The opportunity for writers from the margins to finally come together in this time offered deep connections, community healing, the sharing of knowledge and resources in the expansive setting that is cultivated in this space.

[margins.] is a biannual space where the dream of an inclusive literary future is made into a reality. The conference also includes break-out group **Q&As with our speakers**, one-on-one **feedback sessions**, **free community programming**, the presentation of **three literary awards**, and a public **book festival**.

In the non-conference year of 2023, The Word is organizing a virtual mini-conference ahead of the next biannual conference and festival coming in 2024.

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In 2022, we were together in person and virtually, gave 20 scholarships to attend the conference, and cultivated a space that was accessible to an expanded audience, with attendees from all over the globe.

We explored through writing craft, publishing, and community/activism tracks. We were grounded in each other's presence. We explored expanding paths. We screened films. We danced. We came together to heal, learn, and spark continuing movement.



FEATURING +100
LITERARY CREATIVES FROM
BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+,
DISABLED AND
NUERODIVERSE COMMUNITY



the story of the [margins.] awards
is as the story of the conference:
reclaiming the beauty of what we create without
denying the battles we fight to be here

centering our souls in imagination, celebrating
the reality of our industriousness

and so were born three funded awards that are
ours—that hold our words, our journeys, as our
own:

the rishi award | the rasquache award |
the alchemy award

The
m
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awards



the rishi award

VALERIE BOLLING
2022 RISHI AWARD WINNER

An acknowledgment of a literary artist, a seer or sage and culture bearer whose work reminds us that diverse voices are essential to a thriving cultural landscape



the rasquache award

BILLY-RAY BELCOURT
2022 RASQUACHE AWARD WINNER

An acknowledgement of a literary artist whose way of working honors and celebrates inherent cultural wealth and the ability to sustain our communities with our existing resources

Scan the QR code to
learn more about the
[margins.] conference.



the alchemy award

HAKEEM FURIOUS
2022 ALCHEMY AWARD WINNER

An acknowledgement of an organizer or organization whose work in the literary arts is to craft and conjure a more inclusive and equitable world

#MARGINSBOOKSTORES



THE WORD | FY22

DUENDE-WORD BIPOC BOOKSELLER AWARD

Duende District & The Word founded the annual BIPOC Bookseller Awards to celebrate and uplift the Black and Brown independent booksellers whose dedication to indie bookstores, and their Black, Indigenous and POC colleagues and communities, have touched and influenced countless lives. The BIPOC Bookseller Award is celebrated during Margins Bookstores Month.

All BIPOC who work in U.S. independent bookstores in any capacity are eligible to be nominated for the three categories: Winners are awarded a plaque and monetary prize.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the BIPOC Bookseller Award.



2021 Innovation Award Winner
DARTRICIA ROLLINS



INNOVATION

THIS AWARD IS FOR THE BOOKSELLER WHOSE VISION, WHETHER ENTREPRENEURIAL OR PROGRAMMATIC, HAS SHOWN US WHAT THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY SHOULD BE.

2021 Activism Award Winner
DENISE CHÁVEZ



ACTIVISM

THIS AWARD IS FOR THE BOOKSELLER WHO GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND TO ADVOCATE FOR BLACK AND BROWN BOOKSELLERS AND LITERARY REPRESENTATION, IN THEIR STORES AND COMMUNITIES.

LEADERSHIP

2021 Leadership Award Winner
MICHELLE MALONZO



THIS AWARD IS FOR THE BOOKSELLER WHO HAS DEDICATED THEIR CAREER TO SUPPORTING, UPLIFTING, AND LEADING BLACK AND BROWN BOOKSELLERS IN THEIR STORES, COMMUNITIES, REGIONS, AND/OR NATIONALLY, FIGHTING FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR ALL BIPOC IN THE BOOKSTORE INDUSTRY.

Thank You to Our 2021 Judges
Ada Lily, Deidre Dumpson, Arvin Ramgoolam

Community Engagement at The Word



Hosting regular writing
and publishing groups
and community-meet-
ups.



*Serving the community
in-person and virtually*



17,000

BOOK PEOPLE ANNUALLY
ACCESS TOOLS +
RESOURCES BUILT BY THE
WORD

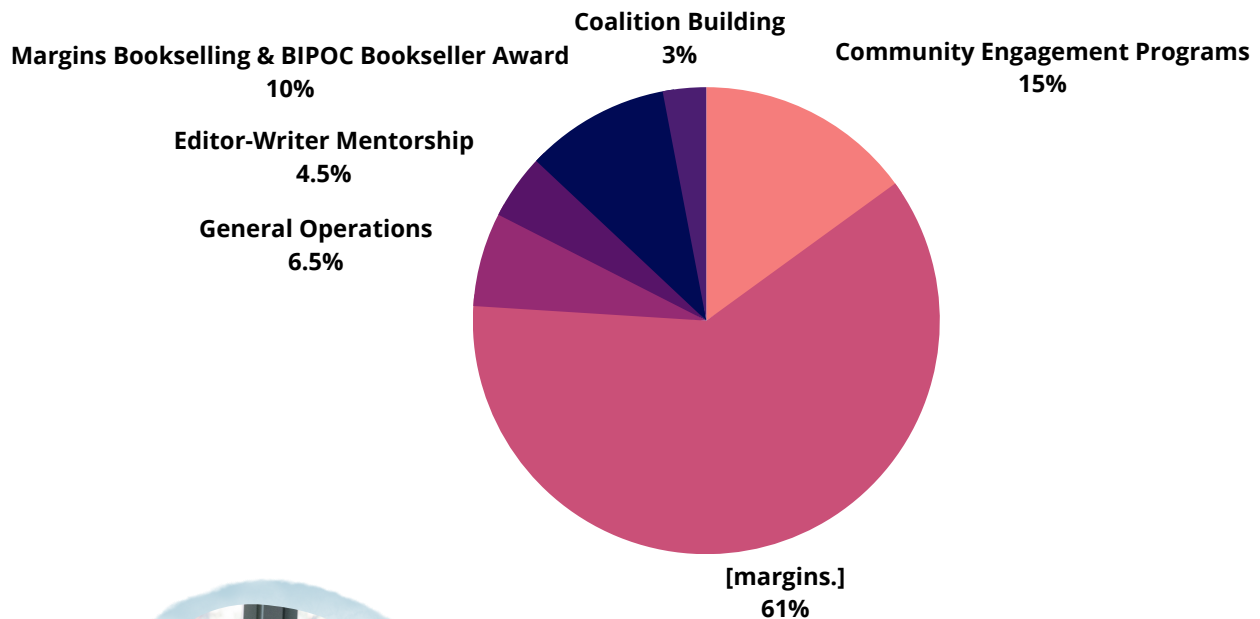
THE NUMBERS

2021 - 2022

OUR INCOME

Individual Donations \$53,209
Corporate Sponsorship \$18,938
Grant Funding \$215,236
Earned Income \$4,894
In-kind \$84,961
Other Donations \$12,500
Additional Cash - \$85,000
Total Income \$474,738

HOW WE USED FUNDING



USE OF FUNDS

Total: \$394,607
Carryover to support FY23: \$80,131

[View 990](#)



Staff

Program Coordinator:

- **Aida Lilly**

Program Deputy:

- **Alyssa Reynoso-Morris**

Operations Coordinator:

- **Blaire Bridges**

Chief Operating Officer

- **Michelle Malonzo**

[margins.] Conference Director

- **Suzi Q. Smith**

Executive Director, Founder:

- **Viniyanka Prasad**

Board

- Olivia Abtahi
- Manuel Aragon
- Chris Aguilar-Garcia
- Liza Bevams
- Deidre Dumpson
- Bunmi Ishola





Thank you

TO ALL OF THE PARTNERS WHOSE
SUPPORT HELPED UP EXPAND OUR
IMPACT AND MISSION IN 2022.

Asian American Writers Workshop
Biennial of the Americas
Bookshop.org
Book Industry Charitable Foundation (BINC)
Bonfils Stanton
Cave Canem
Chinook Fund
Chronicle Books
City & County of Denver
Colorado Trust Foundation
Community First Foundation
Denver Arts & Venues
Denver Film
Denver Foundation
Denver Public Library
Doubleday
Duende District
Hachette
Helianthus Books
Jaipur Literary Festival
Latino Community Foundation of Colorado
Libro.fm

Lighthouse Writers Workshop
Literary Arts Emergency Fund
National Endowment for the Arts
Nelson Literary
PEN America
Penguin Random House
Poetry Foundation
Queer Asterisk
Raven Bookstore
Reese's Book Club
Regis Mile High MFA
RESIST
Rose Community Foundation
Sacred Voices
Slam Nuba
Torch Literary
Townie Books
We Need Diverse Books
Wilkes University
Zoeglossia
27th Letter Books



HOW TO SUPPORT

There are a many of ways to help us build:

[Make a gift now](#) that will lead us into 2023.

[Join our Sustaining Circle](#) for monthly donors; it's all about the goodies and doing-good. It's a love-love situation.

[Shop our Reading Lists on Bookshop.org](#). You can buy books to support the storytellers who are published and the ones who are fighting to be.

[Become a Joy Ambassador](#). Joy Ambassadors are authors who have demonstrated a commitment to centering joy and multitudes of experience in their writing and who help spotlight and raise energy for the #MarginsBookselling Month celebrations.

[Read and learn more](#) about the values that guide our equity work. This is how we remake publishing and literature.

Get in touch with us.

MAILING ADDRESS

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Denver, Colorado 80205

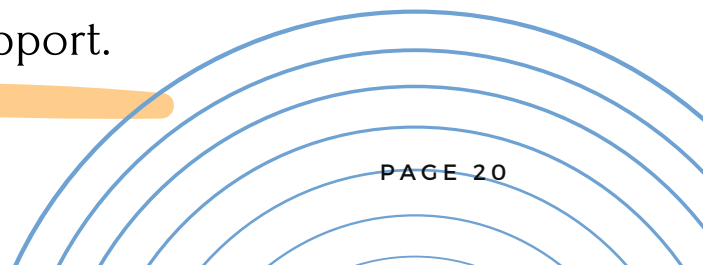


VISIT US:

www.thewordfordiversity.org

Make your gift today!

Thank you for all your care and support.





THANK YOU FOR BUILDING SPACES THAT FEEL LIKE HOME

-Community Engagement program participant

THEWORDFORDIVERSITY.ORG

The Word, A Storytelling Sanctuary, Inc. is a
501(c)(3) public charity organization.
Donations to The Word are tax deductible.