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”
quick facts 2
table of contents 3
message from the founder 4
who we are 5
programming 6
Editor-Writer Mentorship 7
[margins.] conference + festival - 2022 10
[margins.] awards - 2022 12
Margins Bookstores Month 13
BIPOC Bookseller Award - 2021 15
Community Engagement 16
Financials 17
Staff & Board 18
Partners & Donors 19
How to Support The Word 20
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.

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

- Viniyanka

Viniyanka Prasad, Executive Director & Founder
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 BOOKSTORES MONTH**

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

**[MARGINS.] CONFERENCE & FESTIVAL**

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

**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

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

Opening new publishing paths.
our 2022 mentors

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

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 LAKENAUTH  
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

Click Here or scan below to learn more about the Editor-Writer Mentorship Program.
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 Benhamja
  2022 Mentee

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 (l.), 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.
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.
**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.
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 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

**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

Scan the QR code to learn more about the [margins.] conference.
Our annual month of festivities celebrating bookstores owned and managed by and for BIPOC, LGBTQIA2S+, Disabled, and Neurodiverse communities.

Throughout the month of October 2021 we hosted a variety of events including author talks with many artists including NYT-bestseller and Grammy Award nominee Michelle Zauner, NYT-bestseller Mariame Kaba, and national bestseller R.O. Kwon. We celebrated incredible booksellers with the annual BIPOC Bookseller Award, and hosted Book Ball, which created first-time reading opportunities for writers from marginalized backgrounds at the iconic Buell Theater in Denver, CO.

With only 3-4% of 10,000 independent bookstores in the U.S. being owned/managed by marginalized communities we have been at work to account for, support, and celebrate all of them. We more than doubled our map, cataloging over 120 bookstores, highlighting these stores in our communities all over the U.S. to reach 3.2 million book lovers.
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.

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.**

2021 Leadership Award Winner
MICHELLE MALONZO

**LEADERSHIP**

**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
**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**

Margins Bookselling & BIPOC Bookseller Award 10%  
Editor-Writer Mentorship 4.5%  
General Operations 6.5%  
Coalition Building 3%  
Community Engagement Programs 15%

**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

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 us 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 many 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

The Word, A Storytelling Sanctuary, Inc.
757 East 20th Avenue
Suite 370-335
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
The Word, A Storytelling Sanctuary, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) public charity organization. Donations to The Word are tax deductible.