



THE WORD A STORYTELLING SANCTUARY

A LETTER REGARDING VOICES HEARD:

At The Word, we have been excited to endeavor to open a new level of access to a literary agency, who would focus exclusively on submissions from writers of underrepresented groups, through the Voices Heard program. Our fight here is for cultural equity—where creators from marginalized backgrounds have equal access to both the resources and freedom to share their stories with their own vision.

For that to occur, literary agents—those who act as gatekeepers to a variety of resources—must understand the repugnance of identity policing and carry the burden of alerting themselves to their own biases. This burden should not be transferred to the writer, although in reality we know that it has been carried that way with each written word and so many unwritten.

We are disappointed that these goals were missed in regard to one agent's response to certain submissions. This agent acknowledges a mistake and has taken the initial step of apologizing. We are grateful to the writing and publishing community who first provided support to the writer in this case. This organization exists to provide that support as well. Our work is to reject actions born out of limited perspectives. Our work is also to shoulder the burden of expanding those perspectives as much as we are able. We do so with recognition that we cannot come closer together without treading where misunderstanding lurks. We do so with hope that from the tangled roots of disconnected knowledge possibilities for growth will bloom shared paths.

To ensure that writers who have been poised to query the separate agents whose submissions periods have not yet occurred are provided that opportunity, we continue to operate the program this month with additional internal instructions and guidance. We thank you writers, for the courageous role you play. Your work means that so many can feel seen; there is no question that you deserve that same dignity.

We are in your service,

The Word Team