

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25TH
2021

ON DIVERSITY AND AUTHENTICITY IN WRITING

Presented by Niesha Davis

Diversity: What is it?

A range of differences in mankind including:

Race and Ethnicity

Sexual orientation

Age

Nationality/Place of Origin

Gender

Physical and mental abilities

Political beliefs

Religious or spiritual values

Why is diversity in fiction and non-fiction important?

Representation Matters!

Books with diverse characters validate and humanize people and groups that are often stereotyped or overlooked in society and different art forms/popular culture (2.)



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Did You Know...

IN 2019, BOOKS ABOUT WHITE CHILDREN, MONSTERS, AND ANIMATED CHARACTERS (FOOD/CARS AND TRUCKS/ANIMALS,) REPRESENTED 71 PERCENT OF CHILDREN AND YA BOOKS PUBLISHED THAT YEAR.

**-COOPERATIVE CHILDREN'S BOOK
CENTER**

■ Research

- Case studies, statistics, biographies, autobiographies, museums, articles.
- Speaking to members of a group/demographic

■ Clear and thought-out descriptions

- Naming characters correctly (how did your character get this name?)
- Give your character a real background.
- Try not to fashion after fictional characters.

■ Diversity isn't just one thing

- Include different types of diversity, not all, but work should mirror real-life.
- Think about religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, level of physical ability, age.

■ Hire a diversity consultant from that background

- Consult with someone with the lived experience you don't have.

FIRST YOU MUST...



morethanmiked • Following



morethanmiked [@jordanpeele](#) - Back with another animation! Have you ever noticed black characters never live throughout their animations as their original selves? It's really crazy. So why does this keep happening? The animation companies feel like black people need to be changed into something "adorable" or "relatable" in order to make sales. It's the same reason you don't see Asian actors get



16,335 views

APRIL 25, 2020



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What do Sensitivity Readers Do?

They read or edit for....

Unconscious Bias
(assumptions about each
other, based on stereotypes)
Stereotypes
Problematic/unrealistic
language
Misrepresentation of
cultures/history/ideas.



Common issues writers have when writing outside of their worldview?

- Savior Complex/White Guilt
- Exoticizing or de-humanizing
- Offensive descriptions (especially features and skin tones)
- Flat, one-dimensional characters

Is This Story

MINE TO

TELL?

- Why are you writing this?/want to write?
- Do people need to hear your experience or thoughts on a topic or area, if it's not something you have direct experience with?
- Are you taking from someone else's plate?

What an authenticity reader is not?

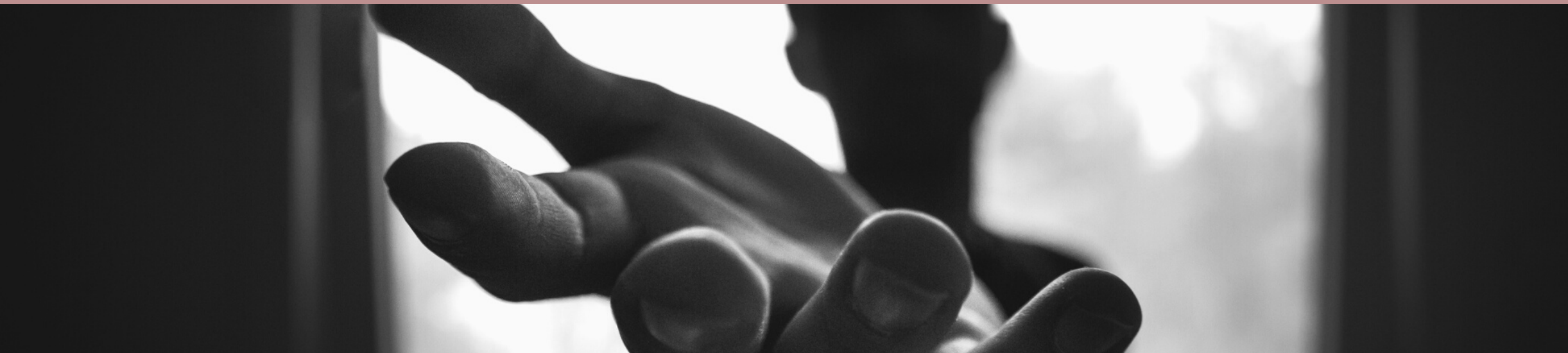
- Here to argue with you
- A ghostwriter or copyeditor
- A volunteer
- An all-around representation for whoever
- A censor. This is not censorship.

Getting the most from your read?

- Be open minded. You don't have all the answers.
- Understand the emotional strain this might have on your reader
- Read and do your own research

What to look for when hiring a diversity editor?

- LIVED EXPERIENCE
- EDUCATION/TRAINING IN A TOPIC OR BACKGROUND
- TESTIMONIALS?





When to hire?

At what point in the process?

COACHING THROUGHOUT?

A coach before and during the writing process can be beneficial if you are revising or reworking a project.

BEFORE SENDING TO AGENTS

People who come to me before sending their manuscript out are usually looking to create the best possible product to get signed/a deal.

DURING PUBLISHING PROCESS

When working with publishing houses I'm often brought on right before the copyediting process. This also happens in stances when publisher does not want to pay for service, and writer pays out of pocket.

How to Find a Diversity Editor?

TWITTER, INSTAGRAM

Type in hashtags like #sensitivityreader #diversityreader #authenticityreader

BINDERS FULL OF SENSITIVITY READERS

[Sign-up form for requesting a reader](#)

SALT & SAGE

[A list of indie-diversity readers](#)

WEBSITE

Brownandabroad.com/sensitivityreadings

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Queer/Bisexuality issues
- Sex work
- African/Black- American issues (ADOS viewpoint)
- Working Class
- Feminism
- Depression and self-harm

EMAIL ADDRESS

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Contact Me

Let's Connect!