



CHARLOTTE  
COUNTRY DAY  
SCHOOL

## Distinguished Diversity Guest Author Series Office of Diversity Planning

The Charlotte Country Day School Diversity Guest Author Series seeks to expose students from Charlotte area schools, both public and independent, to award-winning writers and literary voices. We believe giving students access to this caliber of writers promotes a love of reading and increases literacy. We also believe reading great literature that is relevant to the lives and daily experiences of students helps to build empathy and compassion within them. Ultimately, we know the Diversity Guest Author Series serves our mission and brings to life our Affirmation of Community.

Through the original vision of Middle School Librarian Megan Fink Brevard, our Diversity Guest Author Series has benefitted over 6,000 Charlotte-Mecklenburg middle and high school students at the following schools:

Berean Junior Academy	Oaklawn Language Academy
Bradley Middle School	Olympic High School
Cochrane College Academy	Piedmont Middle School
Collinswood Language Academy	Ranson IB Middle School
E. E. Waddell Language Academy	Ridge Road Middle School
Francis Bradley Middle School	Smith Middle School
Independence High School	South Academy of Language
James Martin Middle School	South Mecklenburg High School
McClintock Middle School	SouthWest Middle School
Military & Global Leadership Academy	Wilson Middle School
Myers Park High School	
Northridge Middle School	

Since 2006, our Diversity Guest Author Series has welcomed literary giants:

Walter Dean Myers (2006) Sonia Levitin (2007)  
Jacqueline Woodson (2008)  
Justina Chen (2012)  
Joseph Bruchac (2013)  
Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2014)  
Neela Vaswani (2015)  
Kekla Magoon (2016)  
Matt de la Peña (2017)  
Charles R. Smith, Jr. (2018)  
Nina LaCour (2019)  
Nic Stone (2020)  
Alicia Williams (2021)  
Joseph Bruchac (2022)  
IW Gregorio (2022)  
Guadalupe McCall (2023)



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**Walter Dean Myers**, an American writer of children's books, best known for young adult



literature. He wrote more than one hundred books, including picture books and nonfiction. He won the Coretta Scott King Award for African-American authors five times. His 1988 novel *Fallen Angels* is one of the books most frequently challenged in the U.S. because of its adult language and its realistic depiction of the Vietnam War. He was the recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement. *Monster* was the first winner of the Michael L. Printz Award and a National Book Award 777Finalist.



**Sonia Levitin**, born in Berlin, a novelist and author of over forty novels and picture books for young adults and children, as well as published essays on various topics for adults. Her books include: *The Journey to America*, *Room in the Heart* and *Silver Days*, a series about a family of German Jewish refugees who flee the horrors of the Holocaust, and *The Cure*, a story about a boy in the future sent back in time. Her book *Strange Relations* (2007) won a Sydney Taylor Book Award.



**Jacqueline Woodson**, an American writer of books for children and adolescents. She is best known for *Brown Girl Dreaming* and *Miracle's Boys*, which won the Coretta Scott King Award in 2001 and her Newbery Honor titles *After Tupac & D Foster*, *Feathers* and *Show Way*. Her work is filled with strong African-American themes, generally aimed at a young adult audience. For her lifetime contribution as a children's writer, Woodson won the Margaret Edwards Award in 2005 and she won the National Book Award in 2014 for *Brown Girl Dreaming*.



**Justina Chen**, a Taiwanese-American fiction writer. From 2007 to 2008, Justina toured across the US with Olympic Gold medalist Hannah Teter to promote her upcoming book, *Girl Overboard*, and the "Go Overboard" challenge grants. Her novel *Nothing But the Truth (and a few white lies)* won one of the 2007 Asian/Pacific American Awards for Literature. *North of Beautiful*, her next book, got a Kirkus Book of the Year and a Barnes & Noble Book of the Year award and is widely considered her most famous work.



**Joseph Bruchac**, a writer of over 120 books relating to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, with a particular focus on northeastern Native American and Anglo-American lives and folklore. He has published poetry, novels, and short stories. Bruchac is from Saratoga Springs, New York, and is of Abenaki, English, and Slovak ethnicity. Among his works are the novel *Dawn Land* (1993) and its sequel, *Long River* (1995), which feature a young Abenaki man before European contact. Bruchac is best known for his work as a Native writer and storyteller, with more than 120 books and numerous awards to his credit. He began publishing in 1971 and has collaborated on eight books with his son, Jim. In 1999, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas.



**Guadalupe Garcia McCall**, the author of *Under the Mesquite*, a novel in verse. *Under the Mesquite* received the prestigious Pura Belpre Author Award, was a William C. Morris Finalist, received the Ellen Hopkins Promising Poet Award, the Tomas Rivera Children's Book Award, and was included in Kirkus Review's Best Teen Books of 2011, among many other accolades. Her second novel, *Summer of the Mariposas*, won a Westchester Young Adult Fiction award, was a finalist for the Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy, was included in the 2013 Amelia Bloomer Project List, the Texas Lone Star Reading List, and the 2012 School Library Journal's Best Books of the Year.



**Neela Vaswani**, the author of the book, *Same Sun Here*, along with co-author Mr. Silas House. She is the recipient of the American Book Award, a PEN/O. Henry Prize, the Fore Word Book of the Year Gold Medal, the Italo Calvino Prize for Emerging Writers, the Nautilus Book Award, and many other literary honors. She received a Grammy in 2015 for her narration of *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* and an Audie Award for her narration of *Same Sun Here*.



**Kekla Magoon**, the author of eight young adult novels, including *The Rock and the River*, *How It Went Down*, *X: A Novel*, *Camo Girl* and the *Robyn Hoodlum Adventures* series. She has received an NAACP Image Award, the John Steptoe New Talent Award, two Coretta Scott King Honors, The Walter Award Honor, and been long listed for the National Book Award. She also writes non-fiction on historical topics. Kekla conducts school and library visits nationwide and serves on the Writers' Council for the National Writing Project. Kekla holds a B.A. from Northwestern University and an M.F.A. in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts, where she now serves on faculty.



**Matt de la Peña**, the New York Times Bestselling, Newbery Medalwinning author of seven young adult novels (including *Mexican WhiteBoy*, *We Were Here*, and *Superman: Dawnbreaker*) and five picture books (including *Love and Last Stop on Market Street*). In 2016, he was awarded the NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award. Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego State University and his BA from the University of the Pacific where he attended school on a full basketball scholarship. In 2019, Matt was given an honorary doctorate from UOP.



**Charles R. Smith Jr.**, an award-winning author, photographer, and poet with more than thirty books to his credit. His awards include a Coretta Scott King Award for his photographs accompanying the Langston Hughes poem "My People" and a Coretta Scott King Honor for his biography on Muhammad Ali, *12 Rounds to Glory*. He is the author of *Rimshots*, *Hoop Kings*, *Hoop Queens*, *Tall Tales*, *Short Takes*, *Diamond Life*, and *I Am America*. Charles brings his love of basketball and baseball right down to the toddler set in *Let's Play Basketball!* and *Let's Play Baseball!*



**Nina LaCour**, the bestselling and Michael L. Printz Award-winning author of four critically acclaimed young adult novels published by Dutton Books: *We Are Okay*, *Hold Still*, *The Disenchantments*, and *Everything Leads to You*. She is also the co-author of *You Know Me Well*, a novel written in collaboration with David Levithan and published by St. Martin's Griffin, and a contributor to numerous anthologies, including *Summer Days and Summer Nights*, edited by Stephanie Perkins.



**Nic Stone**, author of the "New York Times bestseller and William C. Morris finalist *Dear Martin* and its companion novel, *Dear Justyce*, looks at the power of circumstance in decision-making, and seeks to stir compassion for a population of black children who have been deemed unworthy of it: the incarcerated. Growing up with a wide range of cultures, religions, and backgrounds, Stone strives to bring these diverse voices and stories to her work



**Alicia D. Williams**, author of *Genesis Begins Again* (which received the Newbery and Kirkus Prize honors), was a William C. Morris prize finalist, and won the Coretta Scott King--John Steptoe Award for New Talent. Alicia D also debuted a picture book biography, *Jump at the Sun: The True Life Tale of Unstoppable Storycatcher Zora Neale Hurston*. She shares a passion for storytelling which stems from conducting school residencies as a Master Teaching Artist of arts-integration. Alicia D. infuses her love for drama, movement, and storytelling to inspire students to write.



**Joseph Bruchac**, author of a slew of Indigenous literature, For over forty years **Joseph Bruchac** has been creating literature and music that reflect his indigenous heritage and traditions. He is a proud Nulhegan Abenaki citizen and respected elder among his people. He is the author of more than 120 books for children and adults. His best-selling *Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories and Environmental Activities for Children* series, with its remarkable integration of science and folklore, continue to receive critical acclaim and to be used in classrooms throughout the country. Mr. Bruchac returned to Country Day for his second Distinguished Diversity Guest Author appearance.



**I.W. Gregorio** is a practicing surgeon by day, award-winning YA writer by night. She is the author of *This Is My Brain in Love*, which was an Amazon Best Book, and also won the 2021 Schneider Family Book Award. She is proud to be a founding member of We Need Diverse Books and its former VP of Development. Her writing has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *New York Daily News*, *Scientific American*, and *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, among others. A recovering ice hockey player, she lives in Pennsylvania with her husband and two children.