



CHARLOTTE
COUNTRY DAY
SCHOOL

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 8,000 Charlotte-Mecklenburg lower, middle, and high school students at the following schools:

Berean Junior Academy	Olympic High School
Bradley Middle School	Piedmont Middle School
Charlotte Preparatory School	Ranson IB Middle School
Cochrane College Academy	Renaissance West
Collinswood Language Academy	Ridge Road Middle School
E. E. Waddell Language Academy	Sedgefield Montessori Elementary
Francis Bradley Middle School	Smith Middle School
Independence High School	South Academy of Language
James Martin Middle School	South Charlotte Middle School
McClintock Middle School	South Mecklenburg High School
Military & Global Leadership Academy	SouthWest Middle School
Myers Park High School	Walter G Byers K-8
Northridge Middle School	Wilson Middle School
Oaklawn Language Academy	Windsor Park Elementary

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

Walter Dean Myers (2006)	Nic Stone (2020)
Sonia Levitin (2007)	Alicia Williams (2021)
Jacqueline Woodson (2008)	Joseph Bruchac (2022)
Justina Chen (2012)	IW Gregorio (2022)
Joseph Bruchac (2013)	Carole Boston Weatherford & Jeffrey Weatherford (2023)
Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2014)	Jerry Craft (2023)
Neela Vaswani (2015)	Guadalupe McCall (2023)
Kekla Magoon (2016)	Rajani LaRocca (2024)
Matt de la Peña (2017)	Christina Soontornvat (2024)
Charles R. Smith, Jr. (2018)	Jessica Whipple (2025)
Nina LaCour (2019)	
Lesla Cline-Ransome and James E. Ransome (2025)	

Distinguished Diversity Guest Author Series
Office of Diversity Planning



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 Finalist.



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



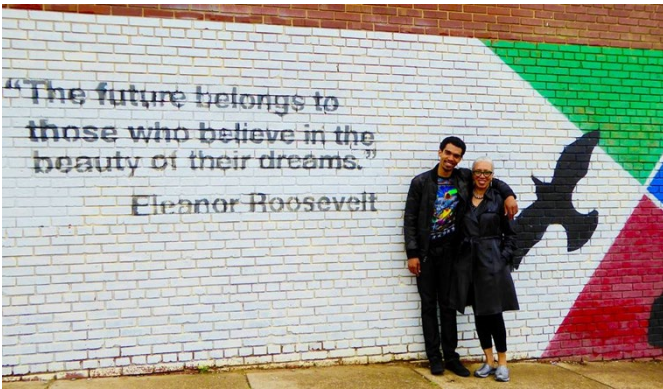
Alicia D. Williams, author of *Genesis Begins Again* (which received the Newbery and Kirkus Prize honors), was a William C. Morris prize finalist, and won the Coretta Scott King--John Steptoe Award for New Talent. Alicia D also debuted a picture book biography, *Jump at the Sun: The True Life Tale of 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.



New York Times best-selling author **Carole Boston Weatherford** has written 50-plus books including the Caldecott Honor winners *Freedom in Congo Square*, *Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*, and *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*. She won a Coretta Scott King Author Honor for *Becoming Billie Holiday*, NAACP Image Awards for *Moses* and for *Gordon Parks: How the Photographer Captured Black and White America*, the Arnold

Adoff Poetry Award for *The Legendary Miss Lena Horne*, and an SCBWI Golden Kite and WNDB Walter Award for *Schomburg: The Man Who Built a Library*. Among her most popular titles are *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins* and *The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip Hop*. Baltimore-born, Weatherford teaches at Fayetteville State University In North Carolina.

Illustrator and poet **Jeffery Weatherford** founded the online hip hop collective Triiibe Worldwide. His debut release, *You Can Fly: The Tuskegee Airmen*, was selected among the year's best books by *Kirkus Review*. A teaching artist for the National Book Foundation, he has lectured, performed and conducted workshops in the U.S., Africa and the Middle East. His fine art has shown in North Carolina, Maryland, Georgia and Washington, D.C. He lives in his hometown of High Point, North Carolina.



Jerry Craft is an American cartoonist and children's book illustrator best known for his syndicated newspaper comic strip *Mama's Boyz* and his graphic novels *New Kid*, *Class Act*, and *School Trip*. His book, *New Kid*, is the only book to win the Newberry Medal, Coretta Scott King Award, and the Kirkus Prize for Young Readers. It is also the first and only graphic novel to win a Newberry Medal. Craft has two sons who co-wrote the book *The Offenders: Saving the World While Serving Detention!* with their father. Craft lives in Norwalk, CT.



Born in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico and raised in Eagle Pass, Texas, **Guadalupe García McCall** is the award-winning author of several young adult novels. Guadalupe has received the Prestigious Pura Belpre Award, a Westchester Young Adult Fiction Award, the Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award, and was a finalist for the William C. Morris Award and the Andre Norton Award for Young Adult Science Fiction and Fantasy, among many other accolades. She lives in San Antonio, Texas, with her husband, Jim.



Born in Bangalore, India, raised in Kentucky, and now living near Boston, **Rajani LaRocca** is a Harvard Medical School Graduate whose published work encompasses picture books, poetry, and middle grade novels. Her books range in topic and include realistic fiction that reflects her culture, fantasy that explores real-world topics through magic, and nonfiction books that bring science to life. Her visit left students inspired to read, write, investigate, and explore while also encouraging them to reflect and make connections to our world. Her talent, imagination, and expertise connected students across divisions and inspired a sense of community and belonging.



Christina Soontornvat is the award-winning author of over twenty books for children of all ages. She has received three Newbery Honors awards for her books for middle-grade readers, and she is the only author to be awarded Newbery Honors for both fiction and nonfiction in the same year. Her account of the Thai Cave Rescue, *All Thirteen*, received numerous accolades, including the Kirkus Prize for Young People’s Literature. She travels all over the world to speak to children, writers, and educators about her love of reading and storytelling. She is very proud of both her Thai and her Texan roots and makes regular trips to both Weatherford and Bangkok to see her beloved family members (and eat lots and lots of Thai food!). Christina holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a master’s degree in Science Education.



Jessica Whipple, based in Eastern Pennsylvania, is a celebrated poet and children’s author whose work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including *Funicular*, *Door Is a Jar*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Whale Road Review*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and *Pine Hills Review*. Her poem “*Broken Strings*” was nominated for a 2023 Pushcart Prize. Her picture books deliver thoughtful lessons for young readers on self-awareness, empathy, and emotional well-being: *I Think I Think a Lot* – celebrates neurodiversity by capturing the inner world of a child who experiences life with heightened sensitivity and awareness. *Enough Is...* – explores joy in contentment and the importance of resisting the pressure to constantly seek “more.”



Lesa Cline-Ransome is an award-winning author of picture books, chapter books, middle-grade, and young adult works. Her accolades include the John Newbery Honor, Coretta Scott King Author Honor, Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction, Jane Addams Honor, and multiple NAACP Image Award nominations. She lives in the Hudson Valley with her husband and frequent collaborator, illustrator **James Ransome**. Her notable works include *Before She Was Harriet*, *The Finding Langston Trilogy*, and *For Lamb* – her debut young adult novel.

James E. Ransome, recipient of the 2023 Children’s Literature Legacy Award from the American Library Association, has illustrated more than 75 books over his 35-year career. A 2021 MFA graduate of Lesley University, Ransome’s art has earned him numerous honors, including the Coretta Scott King Awards, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor, ALA Notables, the Jane Addams Award, NAACP Image Awards, and a Gold Medal from the Society of Illustrators. His artwork was also featured on the cover of the Society of Illustrators’ *62nd Annual of Illustration*.