

**PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AND WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS ANNOUNCE
THE 2024 CREATIVE WRITING AWARDS ARE OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS**

**Penguin Random House to provide \$60,000 in scholarship awards
including a new Freedom of Expression Award**

New York, NY, October 16, 2023—Penguin Random House, the renowned trade book publisher, and We Need Diverse Books (WNDB), a national grassroots organization that advocates for diversity in literature, have opened submissions for the 2024 Creative Writing Awards. This is the first year the awards include the Freedom of Expression Award. In the face of book bans and attacks on free expression on the rise in America, Penguin Random House and We Need Diverse Books celebrate the power of books and stories. Applicants to the new award will be asked to answer the prompt, “*Tell us about one banned book that changed your life and why.*”

The 2024 competition launches on October 16, 2023, and closes on January 16, 2024—or when 1,000 applications have been submitted. Current high school seniors who attend public schools in the United States, including the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories, and are planning to attend college in fall 2024, are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Six first-place \$10,000 prizes, along with professional development opportunities, will be awarded in the categories of: the Michelle Obama Award for Memoir; the Amanda Gorman Award for Poetry; the Maya Angelou Award for Spoken Word; fiction/drama; and the new Freedom of Expression Award. In recognition of the Creative Writing Awards previously being centered in New York City, the competition will award an additional first-place prize to the top entrant from the NYC area. Runners up will also be honored.

Claire von Schilling, EVP, Director, Corporate Communications and Social Responsibility, said, “In the midst of rising book bans and censorship efforts, it’s crucial that we protect and celebrate freedom of expression, especially for young people whose voices we need and want to lift up now more than ever. As always, we are thrilled to partner with We Need Diverse Books on our Creative Writing Awards and can’t wait to hear from these inspiring and talented young writers.”

"This year it is of particular importance that we honor diverse young voices. As book bans proliferate across the country, we celebrate the power and importance of the written word," said Caroline Richmond, Executive Director of We Need Diverse Books. "Students today deserve to be heard. With this award we celebrate and amplify their perspectives."

Established in 1993, the Penguin Random House Creative Writing Awards have awarded more than \$2.9 million dollars to public high school students for their original compositions. In addition to scholarships, Penguin Random House offers Creative Writing Awards winners a variety of professional development opportunities, including virtual professional development each summer with one-on-one virtual meetings with Penguin Random House editors, networking workshops, a panel about career opportunities in publishing, and fireside chats with Penguin Random House authors. For the first time, this year's Creative Writing Awards winners will also have the opportunity to participate in ongoing mentorship opportunities sponsored by Penguin Random House throughout their college careers.

Winners will be announced and posted on the Penguin Random House Creative Writing Awards [website here](#) in early June.

To apply and to read more about eligibility and rules, please visit [this website](#).

About We Need Diverse Books. Founded by marginalized authors, We Need Diverse Books strives to diversify the publishing industry and make our bookshelves more equitable — all to promote literacy, build empathy, and reduce bias. Established in 2014, WNDB is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports diverse creators and publishing professionals via grants, mentorships, and workshops. We also serve educators and teachers nationwide, providing over 100,000 diverse books to schools and libraries. Learn more at www.diversebooks.org.

About Penguin Random House. Penguin Random House, the world's largest trade book publisher, is dedicated to its mission of nourishing a universal passion for reading by connecting authors and their writing with readers everywhere. The company, which employs more than 10,000 people globally, was formed on July 1, 2013, by Bertelsmann and Pearson, who own 75 percent

and 25 percent, respectively. With nearly 275 independent imprints and brands on six continents, Penguin Random House comprises adult and children's fiction and nonfiction print and digital English- and Spanish-language trade book publishing businesses in more than 20 countries worldwide. With over 15,000 new titles and more than 600 million print, audio and eBooks sold annually, Penguin Random House's publishing lists include more than 80 Nobel Prize laureates and hundreds of the world's most widely read authors. www.penguinrandomhouse.com

Press Contact:

Elissa Petruzz, elissapetruzz@diversebooks.org