Media collaboration offers opportunities to writers from under-represented backgrounds

Thursday 25 February, 2021

A new initiative co-funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and supported by the New Statesman and Daily Mirror aims to increase opportunities for aspiring writers and journalists from under-represented backgrounds.

A WRITING CHANCE is a UK-wide programme, delivered by New Writing North and literature organisations nationally, with research from Northumbria University. It is looking for fresh perspectives and great stories from people whose voices have historically not been heard in publishing and the media.

Through mentoring with established writers and journalists, bursaries, insight days, broadcast and publication with by-lines, A Writing Chance seeks to prise open a persistently elitist industry to encourage access for all.

A Writing Chance is a positive intervention, designed to discover new talent, support new writers from under-represented backgrounds to break into the creative industries, and empower publishers and editors to make space for a broader range of perspectives.

Who gets to write for the British media we all read?

The media may be one of the most competitive industries to break into, but it isn't a meritocracy. For many new writers, progress does not always correspond to their talent and those with huge potential are often held back by a range of barriers.

A London-centric industry; unpaid and low-paid internships; the casualisation of jobs; and a reliance on personal contacts make finding work in the media far more difficult for people from working-class and lower income backgrounds. What's more, people from these backgrounds often face intersecting challenges due to historic under-representation in the media, including but not limited to ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender identity, age and religious beliefs.

- 47% of authors and writers are from the most privileged social starting points, contrasting with only 10% from working-class backgrounds. *Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey, 2014*
- 12.6% of those working in publishing come from working-class social origins, compared with a third of the population as a whole. *Cultural Capital: Arts Graduates, Spatial Inequality, and London's Impact on Cultural Labor Markets, 2017*
- Newspaper columnists, who significantly shape the national conversation, draw from a particularly small pool, with 44% attending independent school (compared with 7% of the population) and 33% coming through the independent school to Oxbridge 'pipeline' alone (compared with less than 1% of the population who attend Oxbridge). *Sutton Trust, Elitist Britain 2019*
- Just 0.2% of British journalists are Black (compared to 3% of the population) and 0.4% of British journalists are Muslim (compared to nearly 5% of the population). *City University, 2016*

Husna Mortuza, Deputy Director of Advocacy and Public Engagement, Joseph Rowntree Foundation said: "We are delighted to support 'A Writing Chance'. This powerful project will bring new voices to the public, and address inclusivity in our media and publishing industries head on.

Far too often, talented storytellers from working-class backgrounds have found it difficult to break into the industry whether through lack of support, networks or space to develop their craft. This project aims to better understand the many barriers that budding writers from under-represented groups face, and to create opportunities for more non-fiction and creative writers to be part of the industry.

Hearing a diverse range of voices from across society matters, and both writers and readers will benefit from a widening of the lens. I look forward to reading some new work and fresh perspectives on the year we've just lived: Life in 2020-2021."

Alison Phillips, Editor-in-Chief of the Mirror, said: "At the Mirror we understand the power of having a

Media:

A WRITING CHANCE

Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Entertainment & Arts :: Media & Marketing :: Opinion Article ::

Related Keywords:

Writing :: Journalism :: Working Class :: Media :: Publishing :: Opportunities ::

Scan Me:

voice and holding people accountable. Ensuring that everyone has access to that power will only make the national conversation that much more interesting and effective. I can't wait to see the new talent this project uncovers."

Jason Cowley, Editor of the New Statesman, said:
"For too long the world of journalism has favoured a privileged minority. The New Statesman, which thrives on discovering new voices, is delighted to lend its support to this vital scheme to redress the balance."

A Writing Chance is now open for application until 26 March 2021. A group of ten new and aspiring writers of journalism, fiction and creative non-fiction will be selected for the programme, which includes the opportunity to have work published in the New Statesman or Daily Mirror (in print or online), or broadcast as part of a new podcast series.

Full details of A Writing Chance are available at AWritingChance.co.uk

Company Contact:

New Writing North

T. 07411164837
E. laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com
W. https://newwritingnorth.com

View Online

Additional Assets:
http://awritingchance.co.uk

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.newwritingnorth.pressat.co.uk