

GUILD QUARTERLY

FALL 2023

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC



A learning and sharing community for
DC-area children's literature professionals since 1945

Welcome to a new Guild year and a new mode of communication! The QUARTERLY is replacing our monthly newsletter, and it focuses on YOU, our members. In each issue we'll include a letter from our President, a "Heart of Guild" interview with a member, and (in future) any articles you would like to write on topics of interest to our community. If you want to be interviewed or to write an article (with a byline), *shoot us an email* and we'll see what we can fit. We won't be including the "Member News" column in this missive, but our social media channels will blast your news out to the world as often as you'd like. Just send it along to *Karen Leggett*. (Italics generally indicate hyperlinks, in case that isn't clear.) As to Guild programming and other announcements, continue to keep an eye on your email box to stay in the know. The *Guild website* is also a font of information. Please don't hesitate to give us feedback about the QUARTERLY. Any transmission glitches? We are still experimenting with this platform and would love to hear from you.

Jane Harrington & Kitson Jazyuka

From the Desk of Monica Valentine

I am honored to serve as your Guild President for the 2023-24 season. This is a wonderful organization full of warm and welcoming members, passionate about writing, illustrating, and connecting kids and teens to great literature. I share that passion. You will have the opportunity to learn more about me this month when my colleague from the Library of Congress, Sasha Dowdy, and I address the Guild. Sasha and I will discuss literary programming and informal learning initiatives that serve children, teens,



and families at the Library of Congress. Please be sure to register at the *Guild website*.

As part of navigating the worldwide pandemic, we have met in person less frequently for the last couple of years. I have heard members' concerns about challenges to stay connected. We are planning a mix of virtual evening meetings and in-person afternoon gatherings for this upcoming season. I am eager for us to reconnect as we envision the future of the Guild together. I welcome your thoughts about what you love about the Guild and potential improvements. We will discuss these topics at our March Business Meeting. Thank you to Past President Jason Wells for beginning this conversation and shepherding a new dues structure that improves the Guild's financial future.

I am thrilled that Caroline Brewer will serve as our Vice-President this year. You can learn more about her in this edition of the *QUARTERLY*. Other opportunities are available to serve on the Guild's Executive Board. I will be reaching out to those who expressed interest. Edie Ching is coordinating our Speaker Series this year. She is working on some exciting programming ideas, which include award-winning authors, professional development, and shining a light on the talent within the Guild. If you are interested in working with her, please let me know.

Finally, thank you for all of your well wishes and support. I'm looking forward to a great year, working towards a flourishing future for the Guild and continuing its legacy!

A Heart of Guild: CAROLINE BREWER

Caroline Brewer is an author, environmentalist, literary consult, and now our Guild Vice-President! She was kind enough to be the first victim of our interview series :)



Q: Which of your projects/involvements have been most important to you and why?

A: Holding space for oneness is my lifelong project. So, right now, helping children and adults connect with my latest picture book, *Say Their Names*, is really important to me. This book elevates children's voices and invites them to tap into their imaginations around the reality of police and racial violence, and around seeing people of color as worthy of protection, just as worthy as any other person of any other color, and as worthy as whales, elephants, pandas, and other wildlife on the endangered species list. In my work as a children's author and environmentalist, I talk about our oneness and how essential it is to protect living things. Over the past year, children made it clear to me that *Say Their Names* is giving them the gift of a positive identity. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had another word for this. He called it "somebodiness"--the belief that your life has dignity and worth. With the multitude of

challenges and threats this new generation faces, the gift of “somebodiness” and the understanding of our oneness with all forms of life is the most salient gift I can imagine giving a child.

Q: What aspects of being a Guild member have been most supportive to you and your work?

A: Guild members have offered advice, tips, resources, connections, invitations, and conversations about themselves and our craft that I’ve found enlightening and rewarding. I’ve gotten the chance to attend conferences and book festivals with Guild members, to volunteer and collaborate on book donation projects, and to speak to children’s literacy students in college. Being a member of the Guild has been one of the most meaningful professional associations of my life. I am so grateful that Karen Leggett Abouraya extended such a warm invitation to me to attend a gathering. Her generosity of spirit has been reflected over and over again by many other members of this Guild.

Q: Do you have any suggestions for ways the Guild can better serve members and the chil-lit community?

A: I’m thinking that events outside monthly meetings might help, perhaps, as collaborations or partnerships. The events might include “no-agenda” happy hour-type gatherings, forums that feature expert insight on getting an agent, marketing, promotions, and media, how to thrive in or revolutionize the current economic structure of being a children’s author, and, of course, the new big one: what does/could AI mean to the future of children’s literature?

Q: What are you up to right now?

A: [Laughs] Sometimes it feels like a bit much, but it’s all exciting! In terms of children’s literature, I’m finalizing the manuscript for a new book about Harriet Tubman that explores an aspect of her life that has not yet been the exclusive subject of any book as far as I and some historian friends know. I’m also seeking the right agent for a half dozen other picture book manuscripts and a middle grade novel. I’ll be blissfully devoting a big chunk of time over this new school year to helping children sharpen their literacy skills by writing about the environment expansively. These projects build upon years of working with students from preK-12 to express themselves in ways that hold meaning for them and that open doors to facets of their brilliance that the culture of standardized testing blocks from our view.

Q: Lastly, what would you say your goals are in the world of children's literature?

A: My goal is to help children who are not yet “avid” readers understand the power and the promise of literacy. And as a result get themselves “wrapped, tied, and tangled up” in pursuit of it. I am not alone in believing the future of the children’s literature industry and our hopes for more humane, democratic societies rest on the success of reaching this goal. And yet, I’m still looking for a widespread sense of urgency.

For more about Caroline, visit her *website*.



The Children's Book Guild of Washington DC

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