

GUILD QUARTERLY

WINTER 2023

The Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC



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

From the Desk of Monica Valentine

Greetings Guild Members,

We are off to an exciting start this year!

The Guild has explored Library of Congress programming for youth and families, heard from Newbery and Coretta Scott King winner Amina-Luqman Dawson, and examined book-banning efforts in the U.S. with Pat Scales. We are grateful for Edie Ching, who is coordinating our Children's Book Guild Speaker Series this season. Please join us on Zoom January 18th at 7pm, with Andrea Beatriz Arango, whose book *Iveliz Explains It All* was a 2023 Newbery Honor book. We have received terrific suggestions for guests from membership, and we will soon be able to share the full programming slate through June.



Members have also made suggestions for increasing engagement, including a field trip opportunity to view the Building Stories exhibit coming to the National Building Museum in January. We are also looking at adding the ability to join breakout rooms after hearing from our speakers on Zoom. Thank you to Amy Hansen and Deborah Cohen for these wonderful ideas! You will receive an email with more information about these in the coming weeks.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest members: Ruth Forman, Mayonn Paasewe-Valchev, Tracey Kyle, and Miriam Chernick. Be sure to introduce yourselves to them at future events. It's wonderful to see that our organization is growing. Let's continue to spread the news

about the Guild, and invite folks to consider joining. We still have some vacancies on our Executive Committee. If you are interested in serving as a Recording Secretary, an At-Large Member, or on the Nominating Committee, or are curious about the duties involved please [send me an email](#).

There will be a post-holiday potluck gathering during the first week of January. The date and location will be announced shortly by email. Please RSVP by the requested date when you receive the invitation. I am looking forward to celebrating with everyone! Thank you all for continuing the legacy of the Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC. I feel fortunate to be a part of this welcoming community of children's literature professionals.

Happy Holidays and warm wishes for 2024!

Hearts of Guild

INTERVIEWS WITH OUR MEMBERS



Tammar Stein is an award-winning author of six middle grade and young adult novels, and a long-time Guild member. She is currently in Singapore, where she lives with her family and adopted street dog, a Singapore Special.

Tell us about your goals in the world of children's literature.

The best compliment I can get as an author is that my book kept someone up past their bedtime. Especially in today's world, there's something so wholesome and peaceful about a child snuggled in their bed, getting lost in a good book. I want to make more of those moments.

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

A few years ago, I was approached by someone who told me there were no middle grade books about Israel. I lived in Israel as a child, I grew up on the stories my dad told me about life there in the 60s and 70s. Israel has always been many things at the same time, but for me, it's been a place of love and family, rich culture and brassy chutzpah, danger and complex relationships. I don't recognize the Israel that's discussed in the news, that's sneered at in social media. Especially today, with the lack of conversations, the lack of understanding, the lack of a desire to hear anything but what people already believe in, the novels I wrote which are set in 1967 and 1973 in Israel mean the most to me.

What are you up to right now?

I'm working as a librarian at an international school in Singapore. I've been writing picture books and working on a graphic novel.

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

I found my best writing friends, and the best critique group of my entire career, as a member of the Guild. It was only through my Guild membership that I finally had colleagues, fellow authors, who understood the challenges, pitfalls, and struggles of writing and publishing. I'm not sure I would still be writing without them.

Do you have any ideas/suggestions for ways the Guild can better serve members and the child-lit community?

I would love to see more support and guidance for the career-building aspect of writing, such as:

- A review of annual conferences that members feel are or are not worth attending.
- A discussion on the impact of AI on writing and perhaps legal advice for language in future contracts.
- A discussion with a PR expert about what to do if caught in a social media controversy (as some of our members have found themselves in).
- An update on the current state of Big Publishing (are we down to 3 or 4 now?)

And so on...the world of publishing has changed a lot in the last five years, and it's hard to keep up with it alone. We should share our knowledge and bring in expert advice to support our members in this very difficult time.



Mayonn Paasewe-Valchev (Mă-yonn) (Pass-sā-way Văl-chěv) is a lifelong storyteller who was born in Liberia. She has published two middle-grade novels and lives in Washington, DC. Mayonn is a new Guild member, a drinker of tea and a daydreamer.

What are your goals in the world of children’s literature?

A major goal of mine is to empower and encourage children through my stories. In my middle-grade novel *The Leopard Behind the Moon*, a grief-stricken boy sets out on a quest to capture a mysterious leopard and in doing so finds the confidence and courage he needs to move forward—a tale I hope will empower and encourage children dealing with a loss. I also want to foster empathy and curiosity for others through my stories. In my book *There Flies the Witch*, empathy is provoked as readers follow the lead character, Red, on her journey to uncover who she is and where she belongs. Ultimately, I hope my stories heal and unite.

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

Last year, I partnered with Chesterfield County Public Schools in Virginia for a countywide read aloud of *The Leopard Behind the Moon*. Teachers and students in grades 3–5 read a few chapters of the book each week, shared their reactions through Flip videos, participated in hands-on activities to deepen their understanding of the story, and met with me for virtual classroom visits—all with the aim to encourage reading. Throughout the project I saw firsthand the impact of my work. Students loved the story. They empathized with the lead character, Ezomo, and seemed to really care about him. The project was important to me because it helped promote a love for stories. Moreover, it connected teachers and students from 35 different schools, forging relationships and friendships across the county.

What do you love most about being a children’s author?

Writing is my safe space. When I'm having a challenging day, I can turn to the pages for answers and comfort. On the pages I can unleash my creativity, free my quirky thoughts, and PLAY! My writing allows me to be vulnerable and speak up about things I care about.

What are you up to right now?

I recently wrapped up a writing project with DK and have shifted my focus to drafting my third middle-grade novel. I'm also re-entering the Instructional Design field after taking a year off.

What aspects of being a Guild member do you most look forward to?

As a new member, I appreciate the chance to connect with local authors and organizations focused on promoting early childhood literacy. After joining the Guild, I almost immediately felt a sense of community. During my first in-person meeting, members were friendly and willing to share helpful information. I'm grateful to have found a supportive community with opportunities to network, learn, contribute, support and celebrate one another.

Do you have any ideas/suggestions for ways the Guild can serve members and the kid-lit community?

Opportunities to discuss hot topics in safe, open-minded spaces would be great. So much of the writing life is silent and I crave more dialogue. I would love to participate in facilitated conversations where members can openly discuss issues we care about, share nuanced perspectives, and brainstorm solutions.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

We love putting the spotlight on our fellow members in this new missive, learning about and from each other. If you are interested in being interviewed or have any thoughts/suggestions about the GUILD QUARTERLY, please let us know. (Just click on our names.)

WE WISH YOU PEACE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON,
Jane Harrington & Kitson Jazyuka

The Children's Book Guild of Washington DC

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