Friends,

For the past year, PEN/Faulkner has continued to innovate and persist in response to the pandemic. We maintained our steadfast support of the literary community of all ages, both nationally and locally. Thanks to the diligence of our staff and the devotion of our Board of Directors, all of our programs continued to thrive.

This year’s programs were more accessible than ever. Our education programs continued to be delivered at no cost to Title I schools. Tickets to all of our public literary programs and award celebrations were made available on a Pay-What-You-Will basis in recognition of the past year’s economic fragility. For the first time, those same events also included open captioning and transcriptions, and we have committed to continuing those practices into the future.

All told we served more than 7,500 people: a new high for PEN/Faulkner. Our education programs met the virtual needs of educators and students across DC, exceeding our goals for the school year. We also presented our literary programs and our award celebrations on virtual platforms, engaging three times as many audience members as we served the year before. We are very proud to have increased our impact during such difficult times.

Thank you for your support. We’re looking forward to another innovative and inclusive year!

GWYDION SUILEBHAN
Executive Director
OUR MISSION

The PEN/Faulkner Foundation celebrates literature and fosters connections between readers and writers to enrich and inspire both individuals and communities.

OUR VALUES

We are dedicated to the notion that our culture thrives when stories from a diverse variety of perspectives enrich our daily lives and when no voices are excluded from our conversations.

We believe the written word plays an essential role in contributing to civil discourse and in creating empathy within and among communities.
OUR PROGRAMS

EDUCATION
Inspiring the next generation of readers and writers.

LITERARY
Engaging with the world through literature.

AWARDS
Celebrating literary achievements.
OUR COMMUNITY

In 2020-2021, we served 7538 people.

4007 students

59 educators at 41 schools
in all eight wards of DC

3384 literary event attendees
(as measured by registered households,
which may have included multiple attendees)

88 writers
ACCESS TO OUR PROGRAMS

In 2020-2021:

We donated 3,709 free books to students in DC.

95.1% of our education partners were Title I schools.

We continued to offer our in-school education programs at no cost to Title I schools.

We provided our out-of-school-time Summer Writing Programs in exchange for Pay-What-You-Will donations.

Tickets to our Literary Conversations, our PEN/Faulkner Award Celebration, and our PEN/Malamud Award Ceremony were made available on a Pay-What-You-Will basis.

We applied for (and received) grant support to help us make our public literary events, as well as our marketing of those events, more accessible.

We provided transcripts for all of our virtual public events.

Beginning midway through the year, we added open captioning to all of our virtual public events as well.
In 2020-2021:

Two-thirds of the writers who participated in our education programs were BIPOC.

22.1% of the students we served participated in our Nuestras Voces initiative, which amplifies Latinx and Hispanic narratives.

A majority of the students we served were BIPOC.

43% of the writers who participated in our Literary Conversations, Salon Series, and Founding Friends were BIPOC.

SPECIFIC AREAS TO IMPROVE

Only 17% of our literary event attendees were BIPOC, per self-reported opt-in surveys. Another 6% did not identify their race or ethnicity.

Our board composition is 72% White; 67% of our newest board members are BIPOC, and we remain committed to diversifying our board.
OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

We connect DC students in grades 3-12 attending Title I schools with free books, author visits, and writing instruction—in both English and Spanish, thanks to our Nuestras Voces initiative—to inspire the next generation of readers and writers.

Writers in Schools
Free books and author visits for Title I schools in DC.

Writers in Residence
Residencies developed in partnership with educators.

Writing Workshops
Hands-on writing instruction led by trained writers.

Summer Writing Programs
Writing instruction, book discussions, and guest authors.

Together We Read
OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

BY THE NUMBERS

320
program sessions

235
school days of programming

4007
students served

3709
books donated

41
schools served

59
educator partners

52
writers
Our Education Programs

Sessions by Program

Key

WinS = Writers in Schools
WiR = Writers in Residence
WWS = Writing Workshops
SWP = Summer Writing Programs
TWR = Together We Read

Note: 22.1% of our students participated in our Nuestras Voces Initiative.
2020-2021 saw a significant increase in elementary school programming over the previous academic year.

26.8% of our education program sessions were held East of the River in areas of highest need.
The Impact of One Visit with Author Kondwani Fidel

“Three of my students have mentioned on separate occasions how this talk was one of their favorite moments of the semester and made them think about poetry in a new way. One of my students has been more engaged in class ever since.”
Meeting New Needs During COVID

“The writing workshop aligned perfectly to our current unit. Unfortunately, students missed the narrative-heavy units in 3rd grade due to COVID and spent so much time writing evidence-based responses. This was refreshing and much needed. The students enjoyed these sessions and walked away with great strategies to incorporate into their future pieces!”
2020-2021 AUTHORS

"The writers are great, but it's the growth that happens when those writers leave. It completely changes students' relationship to the learning space they’re in. Curriculum-wise, it has been a huge win.” He adds that the project has given students a huge push because it has added so much writing in the curriculum. It “really stretches their writing. Not just their creative writing, but it helps all their writing improve.”

—Topher Kandik, 2016 DC Teacher of the Year and English Teacher at The SEED School
OUR WRITERS IN RESIDENCE

OFELIA MONTELONGO

L.Y. MARLOW

RACHEL WHALEN
LITERARY CONVERSATIONS

Our Literary Conversations bring together highly acclaimed writers from all over the country so that their work can inspire rich and provocative conversation about timely and often urgent subjects.
LITERARY CONVERSATIONS

OUR FALL SEASON

Literature on Screen: You
September
Adapting a best-selling book to the small screen

Virus
October
Viruses and pandemics in literature

Escape
November
Literature as an escape from a difficult reality
LITERARY CONVERSATIONS

OUR SPRING SEASON

Intersections
February
Books that explore intersectional identities

Refuge
March
Writing about immigration, identity, and home

Crisis
April
Novelists engaging with the climate crisis
Our 2020-2021 authors included Margaret Atwood, Lauren Beukes, T.C. Boyle, Emma Donoghue, Tope Folarin, Aleksandar Hemon, Stephen King, Abdi Nor Iftin, Caroline Kepnes, Min Jin Lee, Jenny Offill, Nnedi Okorafor, Rion Amilcar Scott, Nisi Shawl, Douglas Stuart, and Souvankham Thammavongsa.
CAROLINE KEPNES

"Everything about the event was wonderful... Your kindness and experience and the flow and the world's best, most prepared and engaging moderator... I wouldn't change a thing."

RION AMILCAR SCOTT

"It was a great event. Thank you for having me. I had a great time and I'm still in shock I was up on that stage with those writers. I [hope] the audience enjoyed it as much as I did."

ABDI NOR IFTIN

"I've thoroughly enjoyed the session tonight. Great discussion and wonderful fellow authors. I could have done this a hundred more times."
"It was very well moderated. The writers were thoughtful, well-informed generally, and perceptive about their roles and burdens as writers."

"It was a fabulous event that I could have watched forever. Seriously, you know that a webinar is good when an hour and a half feels like no time at all. No small feat in an age of screen time fatigue."

"[T]he online format worked incredibly well! We might all be a little tired of Zoom after the pandemic, but even so, holding events online hugely increases accessibility to those who might not be able to attend a traditional in-person event. I hope that online offerings like this continue even past the pandemic."
OTHER LITERARY EVENTS

SALON SERIES

Intimate, small-group conversations with notable authors. This year’s guests included Brit Bennett (*The Vanishing Half*) and Imbolo Mbue (*How Beautiful We Were*).
OTHER LITERARY EVENTS

FOUNDING FRIENDS

Virtual lunchtime presentations from local authors. This year’s guests included **Jackson Bryer** and **Cathy Barks**, Marie Arana, Keith Clark, Deborah Tannen, Lauren Francis-Sharma, Jack Bray, Tope Folarin, Joan Biskupic, Thomas Lloyd, Bryan Huffman, and **Susan Eisenhower**.
OUR AWARDS

Celebrating literary achievements to call the world’s attention to noteworthy artistry and advocacy with the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story, and the PEN/Faulkner Literary Champion.
THE PEN/FAULKNER AWARD FOR FICTION

THE SECRET LIVES OF CHURCH LADIES
BY DEESHA PHILYAW

In the words of our judges: “Deesha Philyaw speaks in the funny, tender, undeceived voices of her title characters, who have more in common perhaps even than they know, from love to loss to God. In the group portrait that emerges, Philyaw gives us that rarest and most joyful fusion—a book that combines the curious agility of the best short fiction with the deep emotional coherence of a great novel.”
“I’m deeply honored and thankful to receive the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction. I wrote *The Secret Lives of Church Ladies* in hopes that Black women would see and hear themselves in my characters who are all, in some way, striving to get free. Winning this award during a time of unconscionable loss, grief, and injustice, I’m reminded just how tenuous our freedom is. I’m reminded of and encouraged by Toni Morrison’s words: ‘The function of freedom is to free someone else.’ On the other side of this time of reckoning and the fight ahead, may we all be free.”

—Deesha Philyaw
THE PEN/FAULKNER AWARD FOR FICTION

FINALISTS AND LONGLIST

This year's additional PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction finalists included *Disappear Doppelgänger Disappear* by Matthew Salesses, *The Knockout Queen* by Rufi Thorpe, *Mother Daughter Widow Wife* by Robin Wasserman, and *Scattered Lights* by Steve Wiegenstein.

Our longlist also included *Bestiary* by K-Ming Chang, *Dear Ann* by Bobbie Ann Mason, *Nine Shiny Objects* by Brian Castleberry, *The Office of Historical Corrections* by Danielle Evans, and *Transcendent Kingdom* by Yaa Gyasi.
THE PEN/FAULKNER AWARD FOR FICTION

OUR 2020 JUDGES

CHARLES FINCH

BERNICE L. MCFADDEN

ALEXI ZENTNER
THE PEN/FAULKNER LITERARY CHAMPION

LEVAR BURTON

This year, in recognition of our 40th anniversary, we established a new commendation for devoted literary advocacy and a commitment to inspiring new generations of readers and writers: the PEN/Faulkner Literary Champion. Our inaugural recipient was LeVar Burton.

In the words of our Executive Director, Gwydion Suilebhan: “For decades, LeVar Burton has inspired readers all over the world. He has brought stories to life in a magical and meaningful way for generations of book-lovers, and his work has made a lasting, positive impact in literature.”
Our virtual PEN/Faulkner Award Celebration included appearances by our winner, finalists, judges, and Literary Champion, as well as special guests First Lady Laura Bush, Stephen King, Angie Thomas, Jason Reynolds, Luis Alberto Urrea, Francine Prose, and our MC, Ron Charles.
THE PEN/MALAMUD AWARD
FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE
SHORT STORY

LYDIA DAVIS

This year’s PEN/Malamud Award went to Lydia Davis. In the words of our board President Susan Coll, on behalf of the Malamud Award Committee:

“Wildly inventive, fiercely observant, a master of concision, Lydia Davis is arguably one of the most creative, funny, playful, cranky, and joyful short story writers at work today. She can craft a satisfying arc from a one-sentence missive about geography, or from a letter of complaint to a candy manufacturer, while also mastering more traditional narrative forms. She has a lot to say about eating fish, too. It's tempting to say that Davis subverts form, but what she really does is teach us that the meaning of the word ‘story,’ itself, is endlessly elastic.”
The continuing COVID pandemic demanded major adjustments to our organizational plans for the year. The safety needs of our staff and the students and writers we work with, as well as our audiences, necessitated changes (like the elimination of travel) that significantly reduced expenses.
At the same time, the ongoing generosity of our supporters and the availability of federal and local COVID relief support gave us the opportunity to shore up our financial future against continuing pandemic effects.
THANK YOU!

We are grateful for the support of the following organizations, without which our work would not have been possible.

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Contributors to PEN/Faulkner are the lifeblood of our organization, and we are delighted to recognize the invaluable part they play in our success.

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