

10 Responsibilities for White Writers Writing Our Cultural Mosaic

1. The call for #Ownvoices in children's and YA lit is what one writer describes as a call to Let Others Speak in a culture in which white writers have historically been the ones to tell the stories of everybody. Explore why *you* need to write about a culture that isn't your own.
2. Research deeply. Take a job, build relationships, live in the neighborhoods, become familiar with the language, read oral histories, explore the markets, cook the foods, listen to the music, read, read, read. Keep journals about your education as you find entries into a culture not your own. What do you understand about the interpretation of your culture from inside a culture not your own?
3. Don't include a diverse character with the hope of making a book diverse for the market. Make characters whole individuals essential to the story.
4. Writers can't write an ethnicity or a culture. We can only write individuals.
5. Stereotyping only means the writer didn't research enough. Write fully conceived, whole flesh and blood people.
6. Avoid writing accents. It's superficial. Show speech through sentence structure. Use slang.
7. Imagination is not enough. Listen to and read people's experiences to understand how what is most valued can shift from the writer's own values or world view.
8. Cultivate and cherish beta readers. Don't argue with them. Listen.
9. Like the staff of Lee and Low Publishing, take a course in White Privilege to get grounded in the realities of race as it impacts gatekeeping in children's books publishing and who, historically, is allowed to tell the stories.
10. A writer could get something wrong. Everybody is learning. Our work is ongoing.

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Writing Our Cultural Mosaic, NESCBWI '17 with Terry Farish and Susan Lynn Meyer