

NEW CHILDRENS' BOOK AIMS TO INSPIRE CHILDREN OF COLOR TO BE DOCTORS

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, January 23, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Lazarex Cancer Foundation](#) is thrilled to announce the release of a new children's picture book aimed at inspiring children to become doctors. The goal behind the book is to help find innovative ways to address the shortage of African American medical students and doctors. The book is part of the non-profit's advocacy efforts to advance equity and access in cancer care.



Lazarex Cancer Foundation conceived the idea of the book and has spent years working to make it a reality as part of its advocacy efforts to advance equity in cancer care.

'Willis Watson is a Wannabe' tells the story of a young African American boy who wants to become a doctor after seeing the care his "Gramps" receives in the hospital by an African American doctor, supporting the idea that if a child can see it, he can be it. The book is being released during Black History Month on February 27, 2024, by [Denene Millner Books](#) at Simon & Schuster, the only children's book imprint at a Big Five publishing house led by an African American woman. Its goal is to celebrate the everyday humanity of African American children and families.

The idea for this book has long been a dream of Dana Dornsife, Lazarex's Founder & Chief Mission and Strategy Officer. Her patient advocacy group now works to create equal access to advanced cancer therapies. Part of their work includes developing culturally sensitive cancer resources to support patients of color, improve health outcomes and drive equity. Through its work, Lazarex has heard from historically underserved communities of color about the importance of having doctors and medical staff who look like them to provide an experience that is more comfortable and trusting. She also hears often about how rare it is for patients of color to find that.

Despite the fact that diversity in U.S. medical schools is on the rise, just 10% of students enrolled in U.S. medical schools are African American. Additionally, ONLY 3% of medical students in the U.S. and [3% of doctors](#) in the U.S. are African American men. Dornsife came up with the idea of

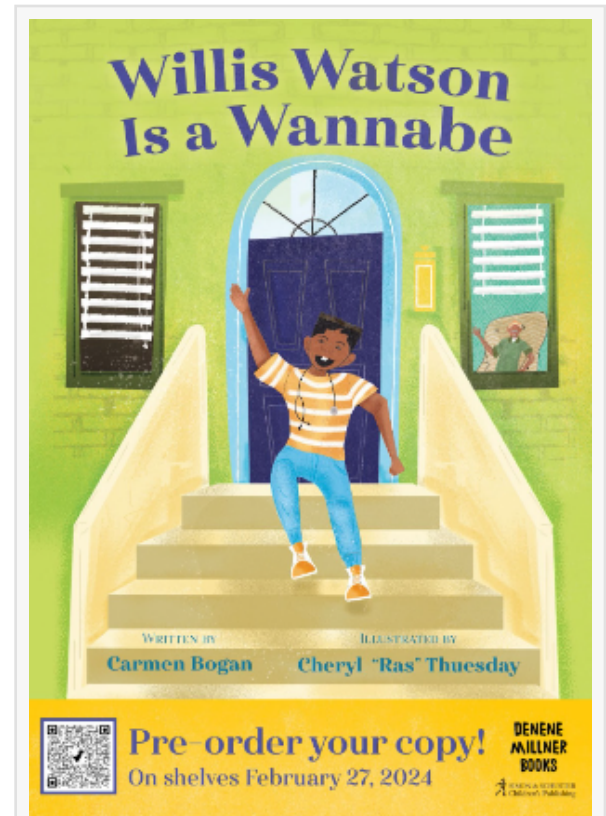
this book to find innovative ways to inspire children and drive real change. She reached out to author Carmen Bogan to create a story of a young boy who has an experience that inspires him to dream of becoming a doctor himself.

“At Lazarex Cancer Foundation, we strive to address cancer health disparities, improve cancer health outcomes and create equitable access to cancer care and resources for all. Through our community work aimed at improving equity and access in equity care, we have heard the voices of the people we serve in at-risk communities of color and they clearly and frequently express the importance of having doctors and medical staff who look and speak like them. This creates a healthcare experience that is ultimately more comfortable and trusting,” Dornsife says. “Research shows we need to engage children at a very early age if we want to drive change and it is our hope that this book will inspire young children of color to be the next generation of medical professionals.”

Author Carmen Bogan says she is honored to be part of this project. “This book is intended to engage children. There would be no book without Dana. It’s about making an impact at the beginning of the pipeline. That’s Dana’s vision and strategy - and it’s the result of nearly two decades of seeing the problem among the communities they serve.”

Lazarex will purchase copies of this book and distribute them free of charge within the diverse communities they serve.

“I am the mom of a med school student, a Black girl who decided when she was just a sixth grader that she wanted to be a doctor because her then-science teacher, a Black man, told her she had the intelligence and curiosity to be one. That’s all it took to get her to spread her wings - to hear from someone who looked like her that she could do it. Sometimes, that’s really all a child needs. This is why “Willis Watson is a Wannabe” resonated with me,” explains Denene Millner, whose Denene Millner Books is publishing the book. “Carmen tapped directly into the importance of exposing children to the unseen - the importance of teaching them how to block out the noise and understand what is available to them, particularly if there is someone who can lead them by an example, and those children are willing to open their eyes to what’s real. What’s possible. I’m so proud as a publisher to contribute to the canon in this way, to help Black children see what’s possible.”



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"It's wonderful to have a supportive partner in Dana and the whole Lazarex team," Millner continues. "She and they recognize the disparities in health care and how it impacts every aspect of life, and dug in to help make a difference. What a way to help Black children everywhere win!"

ABOUT LAZAREX CANCER FOUNDATION

Lazarex is the only non-profit in the United States that assists patients with finding clinical trials and reimburses them for the travel costs associated with those clinical trials. It also works at the community, state and federal levels to improve equity and access around cancer clinical trials. The Foundation has helped more than 12,000 patients in 17 years and continues to work to meet skyrocketing demand. It has also created Lazarex Cancer Wellness HUBS in Philadelphia, Los Angeles and the San Francisco East Bay. These are pop up and/or brick and mortar resource centers in underserved communities providing a safe place for residents to talk about health concerns and explore prevention, treatment, clinical trials and more. Learn more and help with this important work at Lazarex.org.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carmen Bogan is a children's author, publisher, and consultant to non-profit organizations. Her picture book *Where's Rodney?*, illustrated by award-winning artist Floyd Cooper, was a Kirkus Best Picture Book of the Year and a Junior Library Guild selection, and received starred reviews from Booklist and Kirkus Reviews. Visit Carmen online at CarmenBogan.com.

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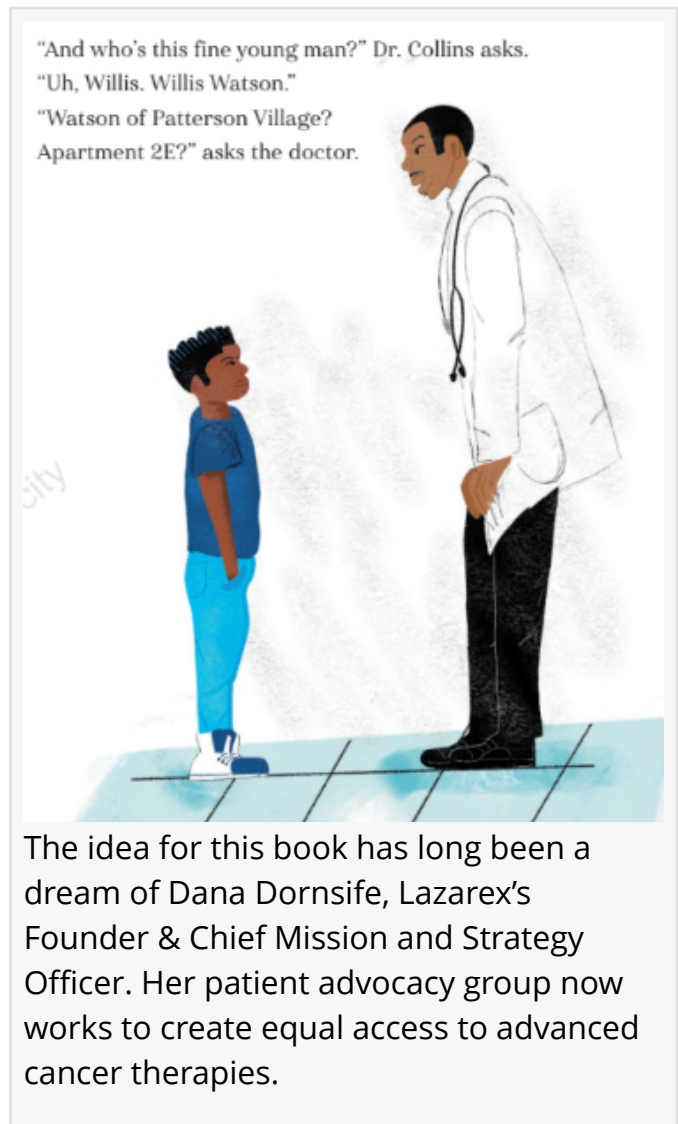
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