

# Laura Pegram's Kweli Literary Journal Helps First Time Writers Hone Skills, Find Publishing Success

*A Slew of BIPOC Writers First Published with the Kweli Journal Go On to Award-winning Careers*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, USA, August 28, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Author and editor Laura Pegram founded Kweli Journal in 2009 when she was newly disabled and learning to walk again. Her mission was simple: to give back to the community she loved.

Fifteen years later, Kweli is a literary juggernaut where aspiring authors and creatives of color learn and explore the craft, dozens of award-winning writers found their voices, and celebrated writers come to share their expertise.



Author Jacqueline Woodson at the Kweli Literary Festival

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Laura Pegram through Kweli has emboldened some of today's most important BIPOC voices, remarkable, timely, and necessary voices.”

*Victoria Sanders, founder,  
Victoria Sanders & Associates  
Literary Agency*

Kweli alums include some of the hottest names across writing genres, including:

- 2020 National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 honoree Naima Coster, author of the New York Times bestseller ‘What’s Mine and Ours.’ Her short story, “Cold,” a chapter in her second novel, was first published in Kweli Journal in June 2016.
- LaToya Watkins, whose short story collection “Holler, Child” was longlisted for the 2023 National Book Award for Fiction, had one of her first short stories published in the January 2012 Kweli Journal. “When I received that acceptance email from Kweli, I had received so many

rejections that I was just about to give up,” Watkins said. “That acceptance and the journal’s belief in my work was just what I needed to believe in myself as a writer.”

- Daphne Palais Andreades, a 2023 Inaugural Carol Shields Prize for Fiction finalist, the first major English-language literary prize to celebrate creativity and the excellence in fiction by women and non-binary writers in Canada and the United States, had her short story, "Panagbenga," published in the April 2019 Kweli Journal.

- "Woman of Light" author Kali Fajardo-Anstine workshopped a short story with Kweli in 2012 that was later included in her debut collection, "Sabrina & Corina" an American Book Award winner, National Book Award finalist, PEN/Bingham Prize and the Saroyan International Prize winner. "Early in my writing life, editors at Kweli recognized the strength of my stories at a time when very few journals would even offer me a form rejection," said Fajardo-Anstine, the 2018 Kweli International Literary Festival keynote speaker.

- In 2012 Nicole Dennis-Benn attended Kweli's first literary conference. Kweli published one of her short stories in May 2014 that became a chapter in Dennis-Benn's Lambda Literary Award winning 2016 debut novel "Here Comes the Sun." Her 2019 novel "Patsy," became a New York Times Editors Choice, a Financial Times Critics Choice, and a Today Show Read with Jena Book Club selection.

- Young adult literature wunderkind Jason Reynolds ("Long Way Down," "Patina," "Miles Morales: Spiderman") was the keynote speaker during Kweli's Color of Children's Literature Conference at Teacher's College, April 19 - 21.

Kweli's 15th Anniversary Anthology will be published in Spring, 2025 and include short stories by each of the aforementioned authors and an introduction by National Book Award and MacArthur Genius Grant winner Edwidge Danticat. Danticat will close the 2024 Kweli International Literary Festival on September 30.

Kweli hosts an annual Kweli Color of Children's Literature Conference in the spring, a Kweli International Literary Festival in the summer, a year-long Kweli Fellowship Program for new and emerging BIPOC writers, publishes a quarterly journal, hosts a free in-person reading series that



Author Autumn Allen speaks about Afrofuturism on a Kweli Literary Festival panel.



Author Brian Young at the Kweli Literary Festival

is open to the public, and a free virtual craft series: The Third Eye on IG LIVE.

Poets & Writers and Publishers Weekly magazines have regularly covered Kweli conferences, a testament to the quality of the programming and the brilliance and generosity of the participating authors.

"Laura Pegram through Kweli has emboldened some of today's most important BIPOC voices, remarkable, timely, and necessary voices," said Victoria Sanders of the Victoria Sanders & Associates Literary Agency. "VSA represents Kweli alumnae Cozbi A. Cabrera, DéLana R.A. Dameron, and Princess Joy L. Perry and is a proud longtime supporter of Kweli's mission."

Still living in the fifth-floor walk-up where she founded Kweli and battling an autoimmune disease that has hospitalized her many times and requires her to use a walker and leg braces, Laura remains faithful to the life mission that grew out of a love of literature that helped her through a difficult childhood. After her mother got Laura and her six siblings library cards, books became her refuge - the Harlem native essentially lived at the George Bruce Library on West 125th Street.

Laura went to Stony Brook University, where she took a children's literature class with poet/activist June Jordan. Jordan became a lifelong friend and mentor who taught Laura she was only limited by her dreams. Laura was accepted to medical school, but repeated hospitalizations would not allow her to complete her studies. The arts became Laura's oxygen. As a teaching artist she created curriculums at after school programs in the community. The determined author of several books, including the picture books "A Windy Day," "Rainbow Is Our Face," and "Daughter's Day Blues," which took ten years to publish, Laura's greatest thrill is giving would-be authors the opportunity to see their work receive the audience it deserves.

"There have been so many special moments over the past 15 years, but nothing compares to having an author hand me a signed copy of their debut published work as they tell me that I helped them find their voice and find the confidence to put their story on the page," she said. "That gets me every time."

Laura has made Kweli the go-to source for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color hoping to be published - and for the publishers looking for said work. Her energy, drive, brilliance, and determination are unparalleled. Despite her disabilities she goes the extra mile to keep Kweli financially afloat, often teaching online workshops. She intentionally keeps Kweli conference attendee fees affordable, offering generous scholarships to many.

Please support Kweli with a tax-deductible financial contribution at <https://kwelijournal.kindful.com/>.

With your support, we hope to raise \$25K in September.

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