

# PRESS RELEASE

## PARTNERSHIP AND PRIZE TO ENCOURAGE DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN'S FICTION

Commonword, Puffin Books and Rogers, Coleridge & White Literary Agency (RCW) are pleased to announce a partnership for the **Commonword Children's Diversity Writing Prize**, to be awarded annually from 2012. The prize will be the culmination of fortnightly Commonword writing workshops in Manchester and an annual Puffin and RCW-sponsored masterclass for budding writers who exhibit potential in children's fiction writing for 7+ to teenage. The winning writer must embrace ethnic diversity either through their own ethnicity and culture and/or within their writing. The winning writer will receive a £500 cash prize, professional mentoring and £100 of Puffin books.

Commonword, established in 1977, is a leading grassroots, not-for-profit organization for writers in the north west. Their sister brand, Cultureword, has particular success in bringing to the fore new Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) writing talent. They currently run the vibrant and well-attended BME writing workshop, Identity, which focuses on poetry and prose for adults. January 2011 will see the inaugural diversity in children's writing workshop take place in Manchester, and the first masterclass will be held in November.

Marnie Riches, Commonword's Fundraising and Strategic Development Manager, says: 'Commonword is delighted to be spearheading this excellent project with such prestigious partners. We will strive to do what we do best: to bring undiscovered, unique voices to the fore.'

Shannon Park, executive editor for fiction at Puffin, says: 'As an editor at the UK's number-one children's publisher I am always on the lookout for exciting new voices for Puffin's list. The lack of diverse authors and characters has always been an issue for me – our schools and communities are so much more wonderfully diverse than the current children's book market suggests. I look forward to working with Commonword and RCW to discover and develop some fantastic new talent.'

Catherine Pellegrino, children's book agent for RCW says: 'As a children's agent, living in one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, it struck me that there was a gaping hole in the children's writing community; in the authors I represent, the writers published and consequently in the books we are able to offer our children to read, books that should represent our rich cultural diversity but so often fail to do so. The opportunity to address this issue alongside Commonword and Puffin Books is enormously exciting and I am confident that working together we will bring to light original and talented new writers and writers in the making.'

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