

# A WRITING CHANCE

Press release: for release 00.00 Thursday 25 February 2021

## Media collaboration offers opportunities to writers from under-represented backgrounds

A new initiative co-funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and supported by the New Statesman and Daily Mirror aims to increase opportunities for aspiring writers and journalists from under-represented backgrounds.

A WRITING CHANCE is a UK-wide programme, delivered by New Writing North and literature organisations nationally, with research from Northumbria University. It is looking for fresh perspectives and great stories from people whose voices have historically not been heard in publishing and the media.

Through mentoring with established writers and journalists, bursaries, insight days, broadcast and publication with by-lines, A Writing Chance seeks to prise open a persistently elitist industry to encourage access for all.

A Writing Chance is a positive intervention, designed to discover new talent, support new writers from under-represented backgrounds to break into the creative industries, and empower publishers and editors to make space for a broader range of perspectives.

### Who gets to write for the British media we all read?

The media may be one of the most competitive industries to break into, but it isn't a meritocracy. For many new writers, progress does not always correspond to their talent and those with huge potential are often held back by a range of barriers.

A London-centric industry; unpaid and low-paid internships; the casualisation of jobs; and a reliance on personal contacts make finding work in the media far more difficult for people from working-class and lower income backgrounds. What's more, people from these backgrounds often face intersecting challenges due to historic under-representation in the media, including but not limited to ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender identity, age and religious beliefs.

- 47% of authors and writers are from the most privileged social starting points, contrasting with only 10% from working-class backgrounds. *Office for National Statistics' Labour Force Survey, 2014*

Supported by

**JRF** JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

**DAILY**  
**Mirror** **NewStatesman**

**NEW WRITING**  
**NORTH**

 **Northumbria**  
University  
NEWCASTLE

# A WRITING CHANCE

- 12.6% of those working in publishing come from working-class social origins, compared with a third of the population as a whole. *Cultural Capital: Arts Graduates, Spatial Inequality, and London's Impact on Cultural Labor Markets, 2017*
- Newspaper columnists, who significantly shape the national conversation, draw from a particularly small pool, with 44% attending independent school (compared with 7% of the population) and 33% coming through the independent school to Oxbridge 'pipeline' alone (compared with less than 1% of the population who attend Oxbridge). *Sutton Trust, Elitist Britain 2019*
- Just 0.2% of British journalists are Black (compared to 3% of the population) and 0.4% of British journalists are Muslim (compared to nearly 5% of the population). *City University, 2016*

**Husna Mortuza, Deputy Director of Advocacy and Public Engagement,**

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation said:** "We are delighted to support 'A Writing Chance'. This powerful project will bring new voices to the public, and address inclusivity in our media and publishing industries head on.

Far too often, talented storytellers from working-class backgrounds have found it difficult to break into the industry whether through lack of support, networks or space to develop their craft. This project aims to better understand the many barriers that budding writers from under-represented groups face, and to create opportunities for more non-fiction and creative writers to be part of the industry.

Hearing a diverse range of voices from across society matters, and both writers and readers will benefit from a widening of the lens. I look forward to reading some new work and fresh perspectives on the year we've just lived: Life in 2020-2021."

**Alison Phillips, Editor-in-Chief of the Mirror, said:** "At the Mirror we understand the power of having a voice and holding people accountable. Ensuring that everyone has access to that power will only make the national conversation that much more interesting and effective. I can't wait to see the new talent this project uncovers."

**Jason Cowley, Editor of the New Statesman, said:** "For too long the world of journalism has favoured a privileged minority. The New Statesman, which thrives on discovering new voices, is delighted to lend its support to this vital scheme to redress the balance."

A Writing Chance is now open for application until 26 March 2021. A group of ten new and aspiring writers of journalism, fiction and creative non-fiction will be selected for the

Supported by

**JRF** JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

**DAILY**  
**Mirror** **NewStatesman**

**NEW WRITING**  
**NORTH**

 **Northumbria**  
University  
NEWCASTLE



programme, which includes the opportunity to have work published in the New Statesman or Daily Mirror (in print or online), or broadcast as part of a new podcast series.

Full details of A Writing Chance are available at [AWritingChance.co.uk](http://AWritingChance.co.uk)

### **Ends**

**For all media enquiries, please contact Laura Fraine at New Writing North**  
[laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com](mailto:laurafraine@newwritingnorth.com) 07411 164 837

A Writing Chance is co-funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with support from the Daily Mirror and New Statesman.

The programme is produced by New Writing North with research from Northumbria University and support from the following organisations: Literature Wales, Literature Works, National Centre for Writing, New Writing South, Spread the Word, Writing West Midlands, Writing East Midlands.

### **Project partners:**

#### **Daily Mirror**

Since 1903 the Mirror has informed millions of readers, combining entertainment with must-read political news. Politically the Mirror sits left of centre, and has backed the Labour Party in every election since 1945.

The Mirror has a long history as a campaigning newspaper - following the sinking of the Titanic it led the charge calling for more lifeboats on ships. More recently, the Mirror has focused on child poverty, climate change, homelessness, and successfully campaigned to change the law on organ donation (Max and Keira's Law).

The Mirror also launched the Pride of Britain awards 20 years ago, celebrating ordinary people who have achieved extraordinary things. For more info visit [Mirror.co.uk](http://Mirror.co.uk).

#### **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty. We work with private, public and voluntary sectors, and people with lived experience of poverty, to find solutions to end the injustice of poverty. For more information visit [jrf.org.uk](http://jrf.org.uk).

Supported by



# A WRITING CHANCE

## **New Statesman**

The New Statesman is an award-winning weekly politics and culture magazine. Founded in 1913, the print magazine has subsequently been joined by a thriving website and other digital platforms.

Past contributors to the New Statesman include H G Wells, John Maynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf, Christopher Hitchens and Arundhati Roy – and today writers such as Stephen Bush, John Gray, Megan Nolan, Gary Younge, Rowan Williams and Deborah Levy fulfil its promise of “enlightened thinking in dark times”. The magazine has been guest-edited by Ai Wei Wei, Grayson Perry, Jemima Khan and Neil Gaiman and Amanda Palmer, among others.

In 2021, the *NS* won two prestigious British Society of Magazine Editors awards: the editor-in-chief Jason Cowley was named, for the fourth time, current affairs and politics editor of the year, and the 5 June 2020 issue, “We Can’t Breathe”, was named consumer cover of the year.

## **New Writing North**

New Writing North is the development agency for creative writing and reading in the North of England, and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. The organisation works in partnership with regional and national partners to produce a range of literary and performance activities including flagship projects such as the Northern Writers’ Awards, the Gordon Burn Prize, Read Regional, Young Writers and Durham Book Festival. New Writing North specialises in developing and investing in writers of all ages and acts as a dynamic broker between writers, producers, publishers and broadcasters across the creative industries. Partners include BBC Radio 3, Channel 4 Drama, Faber & Faber, Sky Studios and higher education partners including Durham University, Northumbria University and University of York. As a producer of new work, New Writing North commissions a wide range of writing from topical essays and publications to award-winning dance theatre productions, short films, live literature and broadcast projects.

[newwritingnorth.com](http://newwritingnorth.com)

## **Northumbria University**

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. It is based in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, which is regularly voted the best city in the UK for students.

Supported by

**JRF** JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

**DAILY**  
**Mirror** **NewStatesman**

**NEW WRITING**  
**NORTH**

 **Northumbria**  
University  
NEWCASTLE

# A WRITING CHANCE

The University has its origins in the Rutherford College, founded in 1880. Today, by putting students at the heart of an outstanding experience, and with world leading research and award-winning partnerships, Northumbria is a new kind of excellent university.

Northumbria is top ten in the UK for the number of graduates entering professional employment and nine out of ten of our graduates are working or studying six months after graduation.

Northumbria is ranked 27<sup>th</sup> in the UK (The Guardian University Guide 2021).

Find out more at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

Supported by

**JRF** JOSEPH  
ROWNTREE  
FOUNDATION

**DAILY**  
**Mirror** **NewStatesman**

**NEW WRITING**  
**NORTH**

 **Northumbria**  
University  
NEWCASTLE