

HONOREES

SAMANTHA TUCKER

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“**T**o be culturally responsive is to be human centered,” Samantha Tucker says. “To consider the perspectives and world experience of everyone, in all their difference—to not privilege one understanding of the world.” This is at the heart of the work Tucker does at Westchester Education Services, where she and her team ensure that their clients’ educational materials are inclusive and free of bias and that students see themselves represented in the work.

Before joining Westchester Education Services, Tucker held a number of teaching jobs after struggling to find work with an arts degree at the height of the Great Recession. She first moved to South Korea to teach English for two years, and after returning to the U.S., Tucker earned her MA in nonfiction writing at Colorado State and an MFA in creative nonfiction at Ohio State. While in school, and for five years after that, Tucker taught rhetoric and composition at a community college in Columbus and found herself becoming more involved with community organizing and activist work.

In October 2020, Tucker joined the team at Westchester to help tackle bias in educational materials. “Our culturally responsive team includes reviewers and content creators who are BIPOC, from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, of the LGBTQ community, with varying levels of education, religious backgrounds, and an understanding of issues of ableism, nationalism, climate change, social and emotional learning, marginalization, and more,” Tucker says. “Our team uses their intersectional lenses and the culturally responsive training we’ve developed so Westchester can offer the perspectives necessary to change and better educational content.”

In the future, Tucker hopes for “classrooms of students who are encouraged to be curious and critical, an educational system prioritizing inquiry over indoctrination, a publishing industry as diverse as the educational communities we serve, and a functioning democracy.”

Reid-Benta, which draws on Jamaican folklore but centers on a millennial Black woman who is navigating a quarter-life crisis on the streets of Toronto. The acquisition was featured in an article by CBC Books. Another book she is proud of is *Tell Me Pleasant Things About Immorality* by Canada Reads–shortlisted author Lindsay Wong, which Sun de la Cruz notes was “unlike anything I’ve ever seen.” Sun de la Cruz says she had wanted to work with Wong and is excited to publish this collection where “women haunt and they are haunted.”

Beyond her editing work, Sun de la Cruz is interested in giving back. Having been mentored in her own career, Sun de la Cruz does a lot of mentoring herself. She participated in Canada’s inaugural mentorship program for BIPOC of Publishing in Canada, and contributed to FOLD’s Pitch Perfect event from 2018–2021.

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