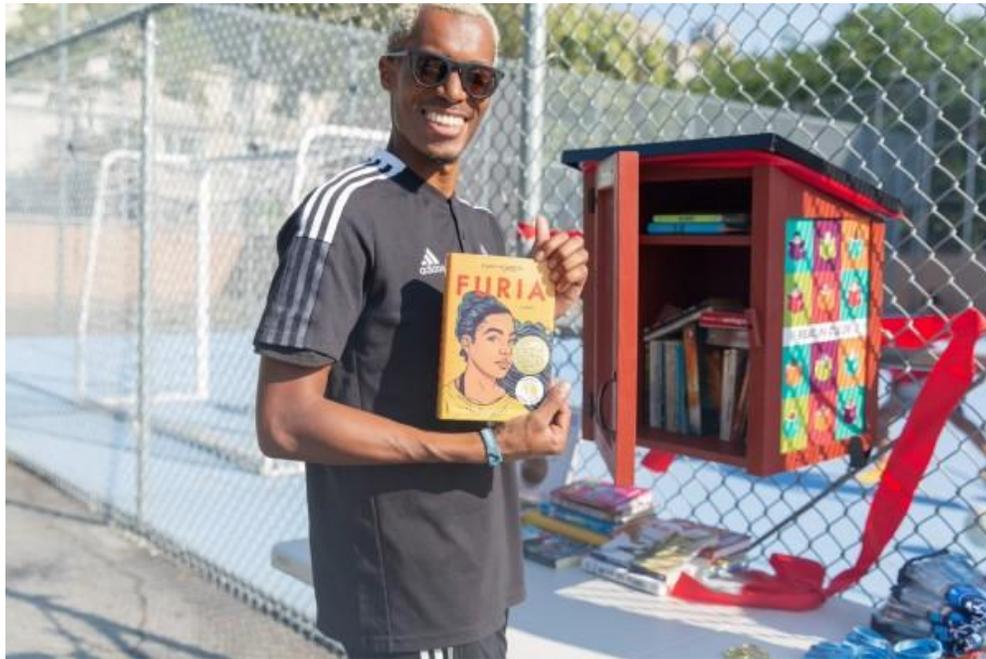




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In New York City, Little Free Libraries Share Diverse Books Through ‘Read in Color’ Initiative

The Little Free Library nonprofit teamed up with local partners in all five boroughs to share books that amplify marginalized voices.

New York (November 18, 2021) – New York City is now home to five special Little Free Library book-sharing boxes—one for each borough—highlighting books that feature diverse content, characters, and creators. The libraries are part of the Little Free Library® (LFL) nonprofit organization’s national **Read in Color** initiative. Installed in high-impact areas this summer and fall, the libraries share hundreds of diverse books to promote understanding, equity and inclusion.

The endeavor was championed by Heather Butts, a native New Yorker raised in Queens and co-founder of H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths, a nonprofit guiding young people to reach their goals. Butts, who has herself spearheaded roughly 70 Little Free Libraries over the last seven years, pulled in several additional local organizations to bring the 5-Borough Read in Color project to life.

“It is an honor to partner with the Little Free Library organization on the Read in Color initiative, which brings diverse books to Little Free Libraries globally,” said Butts. “Being part of giving individuals the ability to see the world from different perspectives is immensely gratifying. We are proud that the 5 Boroughs initiative in New York City is bringing this program to readers in Staten Island, Queens, the Bronx, Manhattan, and

Brooklyn, and we look forward to the true change these Little Free Libraries will bring to the communities where they are installed.”

The rich culture of New York City makes it a natural place to launch Read in Color, noted Greig Metzger, Executive Director of Little Free Library.

“There is no greater example of diverse communities than the 5 boroughs of New York City,” Metzger said. “While its residents are joined together by a map, each neighborhood presents different lived experiences, voices and perspectives. For Little Free Library, there is no better place to bring our Read in Color initiative, to share the works of diverse authors to inspire readers, than New York. Our success to date was enabled by great local partners. We are honored to have worked with a variety of New York’s best.”

Locations and local partners of New York’s Read in Color libraries include:

- **Manhattan** - Columbia University Irving Medical Center’s Haven Plaza, in collaboration with Columbia University and H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths.
- **Brooklyn** - Williamsburg High School for Architecture and Design, in collaboration with WHSAD and H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths.
- **Queens** - Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson Community Garden, in collaboration with the New York Restoration Project and H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths.
- **Bronx** - Hostos-Lincoln Academy’s soccer pitch, in collaboration with the New York City Football Club and H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths.
- **Staten Island** - Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, in collaboration with Snug Harbor and H.E.A.L.T.H. for Youths.

Free diverse books and Read in Color resources are also available for existing Little Free Library stewards in New York City. (See application information below.) Watch author interviews conducted by lifestyle TV host Ashley Bellman, another key partner of the project, and learn more about Read in Color at LittleFreeLibrary.org/read-in-color.

LFL’s national Read in Color initiative, created to honor George Floyd, was introduced in 2020 in Minneapolis—not far from LFL’s offices in Hudson, Wisconsin. More than 100 Little Free Libraries and 20,000 diverse books have been distributed nationwide this year. In addition to Minneapolis and New York, Read in Color has launched in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Boston; Washington, D.C.; Detroit; Kalamazoo, Michigan; Ferguson, Missouri; Atlanta; and Phoenix. More cities will be added in 2022, and there are plans for expansion in New York.

“I’ve always felt that the beauty of the Little Free Library concept is that it has something for everyone,” Butts said. “Over 800 different languages and dialects are spoken in New York City, and 1/3rd of people living in New York City were born in a country other than the United States.... My ultimate hope is that anyone who picks up a book from one of the Read in Color libraries sees something in the story that may be different from their own personal life, and yet at the same time, speaks very clearly to their own life. That is my hope.”

How the Program Works, How to Get Involved

The Read in Color initiative has four key components:

1. **Little Free Library installations** full of culturally relevant books, placed in high-need communities.
2. **Free diverse books** for applying LFL stewards, purchased from independent and BIPOC-owned bookstores when possible.
3. **Recommended reading lists** representing Black, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Latinx, Muslim, LGBTQ+ and other communities.
4. **Read in Color pledge**, allowing everyone to show their support for diverse books and access downloadable resources.

Get involved:

- **To learn more and sign the Read in Color pledge visit LittleFreeLibrary.org/Read-In-Color.**

- Registered Little Free Library stewards in New York may apply to receive a bundle of free diverse books: tfaforms.com/4944268 or LittleFreeLibrary.org/Books

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INTERVIEWS AND PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.



Clockwise, from top left: Events at Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Bronx Read in Color Little Free Libraries. Photo at top of release: Launch day at the Bronx Read in Color Little Free Library with NYCFC.

About Little Free Library: Little Free Library® (LFL) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that builds community, inspires readers, and expands book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries. LFL received the 2020 World Literacy Award as well as honors from the Library of Congress and National Book Foundation. There are more than 100,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes worldwide in all 50 states, 110 countries and 7 continents; through them, more than 200 million books have been shared.

LittleFreeLibrary.org