

A WRITING CHANCE



FRESH STORIES FROM UNDER-REPRESENTED VOICES

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Michael Sheen leads the call for greater inclusivity in the media as support for 11 new writers is announced

Actor Michael Sheen has called on the media industry to create options and opportunities for aspiring writers and journalists from lower income and under-represented backgrounds.

Today he announces 11 new writers who will be supported by [A Writing Chance](#), a positive intervention to a persistent industry issue that sees 75% of journalists come from the highest social groups.

A Writing Chance is co-funded by Michael Sheen and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with support from the New Statesman and Daily Mirror. The UK-wide initiative is delivered by New Writing North with research from Northumbria University.

The project is designed to discover new talent, support new writers, and prise open an industry which remains difficult to access.

Through the project's research strand led by Northumbria University, it also seeks to better understand the barriers to success faced by aspiring writers from a broad range of backgrounds who are under-represented in the industry and to empower publishers and editors to make space for a greater range of experiences and perspectives on their pages.

Eleven writers were selected for *A Writing Chance* from 750 applicants. They will each receive one-to-one mentoring with an established writer or journalist, a £1,500 bursary, insight days with media partners, and publication or broadcast of their work.

The project was instigated by Sheen, inspired by the successful *Common People* anthology of working-class writers in 2019, which profiled and supported new writers alongside established names and which created debate within the publishing industry about representation.

The writers selected for *A Writing Chance* are:

- Mayo Agard-Olubo, based in London
- Tammie Ash, based in Bradford
- David Clancy, based in Ulverston
- Jacqueline Houston, based in Glasgow
- Maya Jordan, based in Newtown
- Anna Maxwell, based in Lancaster
- Tom Newlands, based in London
- Grace Quantock, based in Pontypool
- Elias Suhail, based in Folkestone
- Stephen Tuffin, based in Swindon
- Becka White, based in London

Michael Sheen said: "The talent among our 11 writers is phenomenal.

Combined with the diversity of their voices and at times revelatory points of view this is a real powerhouse of a group. They go way beyond the hopes I had for this project and make me so excited for not only what they themselves will go on to achieve but also the countless other yet to be discovered voices across all our communities.”

Husna Mortuza, Deputy Director of Advocacy and Public Engagement, Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) said: “The published conversation frames how we think and feel about the world around us. The best writing shows us who we are by reflecting our lives. Currently, those who get to write, edit and set the agenda, too often do so through a very narrow prism of experience. We know visibility matters, and when a diverse group of writers are able to be published and progress in their careers, we all benefit from a greater understanding of our collective experience. JRF are proud to co-fund this positive initiative, and are delighted to be supporting such a talented group from underrepresented and lower income backgrounds”.

Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writings and Faculty Director of Partnerships at Northumbria University, said: “I am delighted to be working as researcher in residence for *A Writing Chance*. By explicitly embedding research into the design of the programme we aim to generate new evidence about what works and what is needed to address disparities of access, representation and perspective in UK media writing today. Partnership working is a stylistic trait of how we do teaching and research at Northumbria University. This ambitious new collaboration between the university, JRF, NWN, Daily Mirror and New Statesman shows what can be achieved when we work across sectors, leveraging our resources and expertise, to generate new solutions to recognised challenges.”

Full details of A Writing Chance are available at AWritingChance.co.uk

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