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Diversity in Romance: Why It Matters #RWA15

A panel with Rebekah Weatherspoon, Sugar Jamison, Farrah Rochon, Alisha Rai and Corrina Lawson

by  Alisha Rai 3 years ago 4 Likes 1,128 Views ▾



Question 1: There seems to be a general impression that books with diverse characters "don't sell." Is this true?



 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🦖
@courtneymilan

.@AlishaRai: "Imagine a world where there were no duke romances, and the dukes all get upset." Killing it.

6:51 AM - Jul 23, 2015


♡ 11 👤 See Courtney!!! Milan 🦖's other Tweets

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🦖
@courtneymilan

"Imagine a world where they didn't know how to package duke books so they put wicker furniture on the front cover."

6:52 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 14 👤 See Courtney!!! Milan 🦖's other Tweets

 **Priscilla Shay**
@PShay339

"Imagine dukes being upset because they're not represented and they form a duke panel" #rwa15
[#whyweneeddiverseromance](#)

6:53 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 👤 See Priscilla Shay's other Tweets



Alyssa!!! Cole
@AlyssaColeLit



Alisha talking about [#weneeddukeromance](#) and duke author panels in a great example during the diversity panel. [#rwa15](#)

6:55 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♥ 14 👤 See Alyssa!!! Cole's other Tweets



Maggie Coughlin
@MaggieSheWrote



Imagine NY said "dukes don't sell" and then they pubbed *1* duke book by *1* duke author and put white wicker furniture on the cover [#RWA15](#)

6:55 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♥ 2 👤 See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets



Saritza Hernandez
@epubagent



If we start from the premise that diverse books don't sell, they won't. [@AlishaRai](#) [#wndb](#) [#RWA15](#)

6:53 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♥ 1 👤 See Saritza Hernandez's other Tweets





 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Not knowing how to sell and not selling are not the same thing.
[#RWA15](#)


6:53 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 

 **Maggie Coughlin** 
@MaggieSheWrote

It's not that diverse books won't sell, it's that pubs aren't sure how to sell them -- and maybe they don't want to take a risk.
[#RWA15](#)

6:54 AM - Jul 23, 2015



♡  See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets 

 **Susanna Fraser** 
@susannafraser

Self-publishing has shown that diverse romance CAN sell-- publishers haven't always known how to market them. [#RWA15](#)



6:54 AM - Jul 23, 2015 · Manhattan, NY



♡ 1  See Susanna Fraser's other Tweets 

 **Priscilla Shay** 
@PShay339

Self publishing has shown that books that look like her and me and you WILL sell [#rwa15](#) [#DiversityInRomance](#)



6:54 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Priscilla Shay's other Tweets 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@AlishaRai says that if you hear someone say diverse books don't sell, give them the V8 tap to the forehead #RWA15

6:55 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 9  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Courtney!!! Milan**  
@courtneymilan

.@FarrahRochon says that diverse books will sell.

6:55 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Courtney!!! Milan 's other Tweets 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@rebekahwsm argues that it's not diverse characters that pub companies don't know how to sell, but diverse authors #RWA15

6:56 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 



Adrienne Mishel

@DrenzPen



"We don't need more diverse characters we need more DIVERSE AUTHORS." @rebekahwsm
[#WeNeedDiverseRomance](#) [#rwa15](#)

7:01 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 31 💬 24 people are talking about this



Tara Kennedy

@TaraTLK



Weatherspoon suggests that trad publishers try to market books by authors of color differently, which causes issues. [#RWA15](#)

6:56 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 👤 See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets



Jessica Scott

@JessicaScott09





Publishers think they have to package books by diverse authors differently from "mainstream" romance [#RWA15](#)

6:55 AM - Jul 23, 2015



♡ 👤 See Jessica Scott's other Tweets



 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@rebekahwsm's answer (& I think she's absolutely correct) is to sell diverse authors the exact same way you would sell white authors #RWA15

6:57 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 6  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

Put the books by diverse authors on the shelf with everyone else. #rwa15

6:58 AM - Jul 23, 2015




♡ 5  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Courtney!!! Milan**  
@courtneymilan

.@SugarJamison in fact had curtains/wicker furniture on her first book. Got shelved in African American section.




6:57 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 5  See Courtney!!! Milan 's other Tweets 

 **Courtney!!! Milan**  
@courtneymilan

. @CorrinaLawson says she's white & writes diverse characters, and hasn't had the same problems w/other panelists with production.

6:59 AM - Jul 23, 2015


♡  See Courtney!!! Milan 's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

Credit is given to white authors for writing diverse that is not given to women of color. [#RWA15](#) [#DiversityInRomance](#)

6:59 AM - Jul 23, 2015

 2  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Maggie Coughlin** 
@MaggieSheWrote

Why is there an "African American" shelf? Just mix them in. So agree with that!! [#rwa15](#) [#WeNeedDiverseRomance](#)

6:59 AM - Jul 23, 2015

 3  See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets 

 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Lawson talks about how this is similar to the people who kept talking about how to make girly comics instead of good comics w/girls. [#RWA15](#)

7:00 AM - Jul 23, 2015

 2  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

Ms Marvel - woman of color written by a woman of color. And DC is like omg, it's selling [#DiversityInRomance](#) [#RWA15](#)

7:00 AM - Jul 23, 2015


 9  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Maggie Coughlin** 
@MaggieSheWrote

The readers are ready! It's the marketers, the gate keepers. But there's a market [#RWA15](#)


7:00 AM - Jul 23, 2015

 5  See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets 



 **Stephanie Scott** 
@StephScottYA

.@SugarJamison's book got into Walmart. They shelved in the back in African American section, not with romance [#RWA15](#)

7:02 AM - Jul 23, 2015




 1  See Stephanie Scott's other Tweets 


Audience question: Do all genres have this problem?

 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Audience question about if sci-fi is having this problem. Panel, short version yes. There are breakouts. [#RWA15](#)

7:02 AM - Jul 23, 2015



  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

The perception is "We have our superstars so we don't need anymore authors of color" [#RWA15](#) [#DiversityInRomance](#)




7:04 AM - Jul 23, 2015



  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

Seeing people clamor for LA Banks's books switched off a light in @FarrahRochon's head that "it can be done" #RWA15




7:04 AM - Jul 23, 2015



  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Rochon teared up when she saw a huge signing line for L. A. Banks. Rai mentions breakouts become the excuse for not working on more. #RWA15




7:05 AM - Jul 23, 2015

  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 

 **Maggie Coughlin** 
@MaggieSheWrote

There are stars but they're few & far between. & it's like "you have people who are successful so that's enough, you're represented" #RWA15

7:06 AM - Jul 23, 2015



  See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

Change the gatekeeper's understanding of what marketing to a diverse market means #RWA15 #DiversityInRomance



7:05 AM - Jul 23, 2015



  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Weatherspoon talks about Empire being positioned as a family drama with music not a "black" show. And people came.
[#RWA15](#)



7:07 AM - Jul 23, 2015




♥ 2  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@rebekahwsm does not write under the (non-)genre of "black lady" [#RWA15](#)




7:08 AM - Jul 23, 2015



♥  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Courtney!!! Milan**  
@courtneymilan

.@rebekahwsm "I don't write under the genre of 'black lady.' I write contemporary new adult."



7:07 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♥ 2  See Courtney!!! Milan 's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** 
@JessicaScott09

New York has categorized the books as "you're a black author, we'll sell you to black women" [#RWA15](#) [#DiversityInRomance](#)

7:08 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♥ 2  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Tara Kennedy** 
@TaraTLK

Multicultural is not a genre. Most readers are looking for a plot theme not a character appearance theme. [#RWA15](#)

7:08 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets 



Who should be writing diverse books?

 **Courtney!!! Milan**  
@courtneymilan

"Who should be writing diverse books?"
"Everyone." [#RWA15](#) [#DiversityInRomance](#)



7:10 AM - Jul 23, 2015


♡ 112  104 people are talking about this 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@AlishaRai **"*how* you write diverse characters is a much more important question than *if* you should." [#RWA15](#)**


7:12 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 6  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Kelly Maher** 
@kmmaher

.@FarrahRochon authentic people are the only characters you should be writing. Avoid the stereotype!! [#RWA15](#)

7:13 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 2  See Kelly Maher's other Tweets 

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🐲
@courtneymilan

.@FarrahRochon says: It's not realistic to have only white people in a book.

7:12 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 13 👤 See Courtney!!! Milan 🐲's other Tweets

 **Tara Kennedy**
@TaraTLK

Rochon asks if anyone lives in a 100% white town. If you do, she suggests inviting some new people. Books should reflect reality. #RWA15

7:13 AM - Jul 23, 2015


♡ 👤 See Tara Kennedy's other Tweets

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🐲
@courtneymilan

.@rebekahwsm says: There's racism, homophobia, and ableism. And people die from these things. Entertainment is how we learn about the world.

7:14 AM - Jul 23, 2015

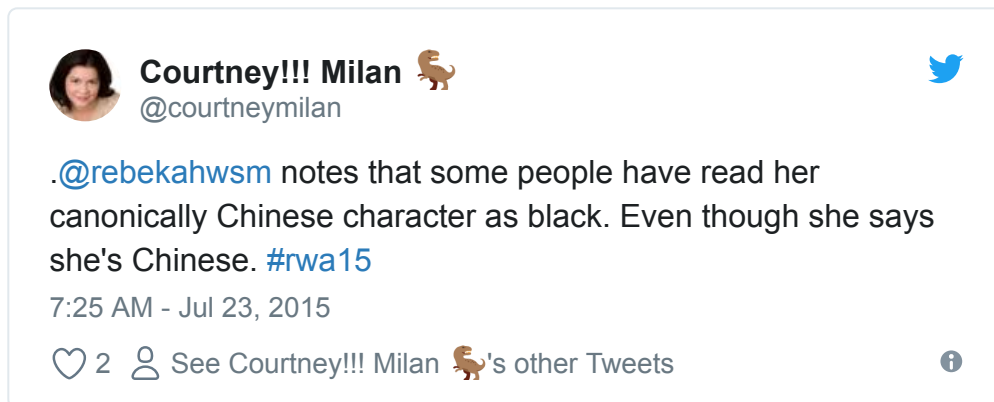
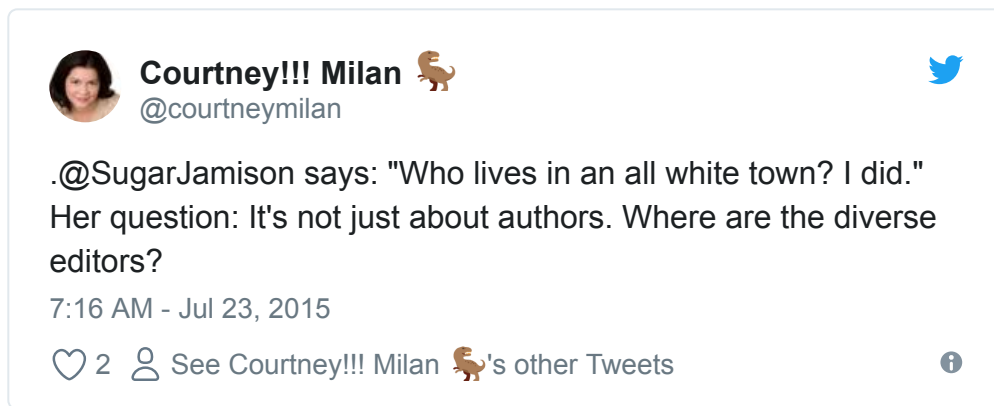
♡ 14 💬 15 people are talking about this

 **Kelly Maher**
@kmmaher

.@rebekahwsm "by being inclusive, we're helping ourselves as a human community." #RWA15

7:15 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 3 👤 See Kelly Maher's other Tweets






Kelly Maher
@kmmaher

.@FarrahRochon African-American shelves in bookstores is the most blatant form of segregation still in existence #RWA15

7:28 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 2 👤 See Kelly Maher's other Tweets

Does the character's diversity need to be essential to the story?




Jessica Scott
@JessicaScott09

Diversity does not have to be the defining characteristic. It doesn't "have to be about race". #rwa15 #DiversityInRomance

7:31 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 👤 See Jessica Scott's other Tweets



Kelly Maher
@kmmaher

.@AlishaRai "if the only thing you see about me or my characters are that we are Indian-American, that says something about *you*." #RWA15

7:31 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 7 👤 See Kelly Maher's other Tweets




Maggie Coughlin
@MaggieSheWrote

I hate when people say "diversity for diversity's sake". Do you think when we were made, we were created for diversity's sake? #RWA15

7:32 AM - Jul 23, 2015


♡ 👤 See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🐶
@courtneymilan

From @AlishaRai: When you read a book about white people, do you ever say "There wasn't enough Dave Matthews band or bad dancing in here"?


7:31 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 26 💬 26 people are talking about this ⓘ

 **Jessica Tripler**
JessicaTripler

"When you're reading a book about white characters, do you say 'there's not enough Dave Matthews band in here'"? @AlishaRai #RWA15

🐦 3 YEARS AGO

 **Liana De la Rosa**
@LianainBloom

Does a character's diversity have to be a big deal? Alisha Rai says no because it's not the character's defining characteristic. #RWA15

7:33 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 3 👤 See Liana De la Rosa's other Tweets ⓘ

 **Courtney!!! Milan** 🐶
@courtneymilan

From @SugarJamison: "I don't go to Target thinking 'I'm a black woman at Target.'" #RWA15 #DiversityInRomance

7:34 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4 👤 See Courtney!!! Milan 🐶's other Tweets ⓘ



Jessica Scott
@JessicaScott09

Acknowledge that characters of color will face situations differently, though. Be aware. [#DiversityInRomance](#) [#RWA15](#)

7:33 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 5 👤 See Jessica Scott's other Tweets

Audience question on "black tax." :(



Courtney!!! Milan 🦖
@courtneymilan

There's a question about why black lines are priced higher. Why is there a "black tax" on black lines? Good question. [#RWA15](#)

7:37 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 17 💬 16 people are talking about this





jenn n
@jennIRL

commenter just brought up dirty secret of publishing: "black tax," ebooks in black lines are pricier than comps in other lines [#RWA15](#)

7:37 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 👤 See jenn n's other Tweets



What are some things to keep in mind when writing diverse characters?

 **Susanna Fraser** 
@susannafraser

When you're writing an ethnicity other than your own, seek out a beta reader from that group once work is polished & LISTEN TO THEM. #RWA15



7:42 AM - Jul 23, 2015 · Manhattan, NY

♡ 3  See Susanna Fraser's other Tweets 

 **Ana Coqui** 
@anacoqui

.@AlishaRai "Make sure you are not making people do your work for you." On reaching out to POC beta readers and listening to them #RWA15

7:43 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Ana Coqui's other Tweets 



Adrienne Mishel
@DrenzPen



Micro aggressions. If you plan to write characters outside your race, read up on this topic first. [@AlishaRai](#) #RWA15

7:43 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 11 👤 See Adrienne Mishel      's other Tweets

 **Ana Coqui** @anacoqui 

"If you don't have black friend...get one!" @FarrahRochon on writing diverse characters a white author. #RWA15

7:40 AM - Jul 23, 2015



♡ 2  See Ana Coqui's other Tweets 

 **Ana Coqui** @anacoqui 

"Be okay with people saying no." @rebekahwsm #RWA15



7:44 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 2  See Ana Coqui's other Tweets 

 **Jessica Scott** @JessicaScott09 

It's okay to be wrong. #DiversityInRomance #rwa15

7:45 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡ 4  See Jessica Scott's other Tweets 

 **Maggie Coughlin** @MaggieSheWrote 

So glad to see this panel was packed! Could have gone 2 hours!! #RWA15 #WeNeedDiverseRomance

7:46 AM - Jul 23, 2015

♡  See Maggie Coughlin's other Tweets 

♡ 4

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