

LEE & LOW BOOKS

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Press Release

LEE & LOW BOOKS ANNOUNCES 2021 NEW VOICES AWARD WINNERS

New York, NY—January 18, 2022—LEE & LOW BOOKS is proud to announce that Maleeha Malik of Baltimore, Maryland, is the winner of the company's twenty-second annual New Voices Award. Her picture-book manuscript *At Home in My Skin* features a child with vitiligo—a skin disorder that causes depigmentation—who embraces their individuality by drawing connections between their skin's ever-changing patterns and the designs in nature.

Maleeha Malik is a second-grade teacher who is pursuing a master's degree in children's literature at Hollins University. Her manuscript was inspired by her experiences living with vitiligo and a solo camping trip she took where she found patterns in nature that mimicked those on her own skin. Malik hopes young readers, especially those with noticeable skin conditions, will read *At Home in My Skin* and know they belong in this world—that there is space for everyone to love and thrive in their unique skin. Malik will receive a prize of \$2,000 and a publication contract.

LEE & LOW BOOKS is also excited to announce that Jessica Mehta from Hillsboro, Oregon, will receive the New Voices Award Honor for her picture-book manuscript *One of Kokum's Kids*. Inspired by Mehta's experience adopting her daughters, *One of Kokum's Kids* explores the everyday life of an Indigenous/Native child in the foster care system and the meaningful friendships and bonds they build with others in their community.

Jessica Mehta is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and a multiple-award-winning interdisciplinary writer, artist, and storyteller. She wants readers to understand that every adoption story is unique. However, Indigenous/Native children in foster care and adoption must deal with some particular challenges, especially since these systems are inherently colonial ones. She hopes *One of Kokum's Kids* will further the conversation about the disparities experienced by Indigenous/Native children in the foster care system. Mehta will receive a prize of \$1000.

The New Voices Seal was redesigned in 2022 to commemorate our co-founder Tom Low who [passed](#) in 2020. Tom Low was a staunch supporter of new voices and conceived the idea of the New Voices Award as a way for Lee & Low Books to stay true to its roots of nurturing unpublished writers of color and Indigenous/Native writers.

Congratulations to **Maleeha Malik** and **Jessica Mehta**!

Download a copy of the press release [here](#).

ABOUT THE AWARD: Established in 2000, the New Voices Award encourages writers of color to submit their work to Lee & Low Books, which takes pride in nurturing authors new to the world of children's book publishing. Published past winners include [*It Jes' Happened: When Bill Traylor Started to Draw*](#) by Don Tate, winner of the Ezra Jack Keats New Writer Award Honor; [*Bird*](#) by Zetta Elliott, an ALA Notable Book; [*Juna's Jar*](#) by Jane Bahk, a Spring 2015 Junior Library Guild selection; and [*Take A Picture of Me, James VanDerZee*](#) by Andrea Loney, an NAACP Image Award nominee. For more information, visit our [New Voices Award](#) page.

Authors of color who write for older readers are encouraged to learn about our [New Visions Award](#) for middle grade and young adult manuscripts as well.