

# City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia  
Office of the Chief Clerk  
Room 402, City Hall  
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 230083)

## RESOLUTION

Honoring the African American Children's Book Project on the Occasion of its 31st Annual African American Children's Book Fair.

WHEREAS, With a reported double-digit illiteracy rate in Philadelphia - the need never ceases to draw attention to the urgency of giving children access to books that will empower, enrich, and enlighten them on their literary journey. If you can't read, you can't succeed. The African American Children's Book Project understands that a literate population is a working, goal-oriented population thus benefiting all; and

WHEREAS The African American Children's Book Project (AACBP), which was founded in 1992, was created to promote and preserve children's literature written by and about Black Americans. To achieve these efforts The African American Children's Book Project collaborates with authors, illustrators, publishers, booksellers, educators, librarians, consumers, and corporate entities committed to promoting literacy. Books can change lives – especially when young readers see their images in the reading materials; and

WHEREAS The African American Children's Book Project understands that reading is a personal experience, and access and choice are one of the hallmarks of their programming. Their stellar youth programs include Book fairs; Book signings; Workshops; I Read To See Me program (author/illustrator virtual/in-school visits); Educating consumers on trends/resources in youth literature; Guidance on establishing home libraries; and Advocacy initiatives to promote Black American children's literature around the world; and

WHEREAS, The work of The African American Children's Book Project is in response to numerous studies that show that children who read outside of their normal school coursework tend to excel in other aspects of their lives. The African American Children's Book Project emphasizes in their programs for children pre-school to young adult the importance of not only giving access, but also giving choice of what they read. Books that will nourish and encourage them to seek greater opportunities in life. The African American Children's Book Fair is that destination to achieve this goal; and

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WHEREAS, The African American Children's Book Fair is one of the oldest and largest single-day events for African-American children's books in the country, with an average yearly attendance of more than 3,500. It is a true book fair that brings national award-winning authors and illustrators for children pre-k to young adult to Philadelphia. These presenters are American Library and New York Times bestselling authors and illustrators. They are the stars of the book industry who have produced some of the best books of our generation; and

WHEREAS, Rich or poor, no one leaves empty handed, as the books themselves are priced at a level where they are more affordable. The legendary literary Row gives away – free of charge – posters, book markers, postcards, and resource information on literary trends. Their educator's book giveaway program allows teachers and librarians to receive free books of our guest presenters to use in the classroom or libraries; and

WHEREAS, Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati is the Founder and CEO of the African American Children's Book Project. As a literary consultant, she is a much sought-after expert on trends in diverse books and how to incorporate these books into homes, schools, and libraries. She created the Book Fair because she believes that all children should have access to books that reflect their images. With the Book Fair now in its 31st year, it is clear that Lloyd-Sgambati's vision continues to resonate around the world. Vanesse Lloyd-Sgambati's effort has put Philadelphia on the literary map as an important destination for children's books. The organization's virtual events have attracted a global audience. The 2021 annual book fair attracted 3,000 viewers from Rome, Paris, London, Albania, Botswana, London and the four corners of these United States. Many wanted to come to Philadelphia to see the literary magic at work live in person; and

WHEREAS, Each year to kick-off Black History Month, the African American Children's Book Project honors people in the community who open the pages of books and keep the literary flames ablaze not only in Philadelphia, but also across the country; and

WHEREAS, This year's Book Fair will highlight individuals who have made contributions to literacy either from the written word or as corporate partners; and

WHEREAS, Ibi Zoboi is the New York Times Bestselling author of *AMERICAN STREET*, a National Book Award Finalist; *PRIDE*, a contemporary remix of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*; and *MY LIFE AS AN ICE CREAM SANDWICH*, her middle-grade debut. She is also the co-author of the Walter Award and L.A. Times Book Prize-winning *PUNCHING THE AIR* with prison reform activist Dr. Yusef Salaam of the Exonerated Five, which was also shortlisted for the U.K.'s Yoto Carnegie Medal. Ibi is the editor of *BLACK ENOUGH: STORIES OF BEING YOUNG & BLACK IN AMERICA*. Her debut picture book, *THE PEOPLE REMEMBER*, received a Coretta Scott King Book Honor Award. Her most recent books are *STAR CHILD: A BIOGRAPHICAL CONSTELLATION OF OCTAVIA ESTELLE BUTLER*, and *OKOYE TO THE PEOPLE: A BLACK PANTHER NOVEL* for Marvel. Ibi has appeared on CBS This Morning and The Reid Out alongside Yusef Salaam, and on PBS's Book View Now. Her writing has been published in The New York Times Book Review, the Horn Book Magazine, and The Rumpus,

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among others. As an educator, she was the recipient of several grants from the Brooklyn Arts Council for her community-based programs for teen girls in both Brooklyn and Haiti. She's worked for arts organizations such as Teachers & Writers Collaborative and Community Word Project as a writer-in-residence and teaching artist in New York City public schools. Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and raised in New York City, Ibi lives in Maplewood, New Jersey with her husband and their three children; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Keeya Branson-Davis is a proud Philadelphia native with more than 30 years of experience in producing special events; implementing community programs; and developing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Dr. Keeya Branson-Davis began her career in the office of the former Mayor Edward G. Rendell. Dr. Branson-Davis went on to become the Director of Programming at the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation where she produced more than 2,000 concerts, festivals, and special events at the Great Plaza and Blue Cross River Rink. Dr. Branson-Davis has also served as a marketing and event solutions consultant, and as an adjunct professor of Tourism at Drexel University. Dr. Keeya Branson-Davis is the Corporate Contributions Manager at PECO and facilitates PECO's sponsorships, community outreach, and partnerships with more than 100 nonprofit organizations in the City of Philadelphia. Dr. Branson-Davis also leads special projects, such as PECO's *Supporting Safe Communities* initiative which aims to foster positive systemic change and enhance quality of life for the citizens of Philadelphia. Dr. Branson-Davis is a Central High School graduate (CHS 248, BA degree) and holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Philosophy from DePauw University, as well as a Master of Tourism and Hospitality Management (MTHM) degree and a doctorate in Educational Administration (Ed.D.) both from Temple University; and

WHEREAS, Paralee Knight is the Vice President of Community Relations in the Philanthropy and Community Impact team with the Wells Fargo Foundation for New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. In this role, she manages functions related to Philanthropy Operations, Wells Fargo's reputation management, stakeholder relationships and team member engagement. Paralee is also actively involved in the music industry where she is a BMI affiliated songwriter/publisher and an active member of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Recording Academy. Her community involvement includes serving on the Board of Directors for World Café Live, a nonprofit organization in Philadelphia, PA that creates innovative, boundary-crossing music programming and arts education. She also serves on the Board of Directors for the Ronald McDonald House of Southern NJ, a non-profit dedicated to providing hope, help, and home for families of seriously ill children; and

WHEREAS, The FREE 2023 African American Children's Book Fair will take place on Saturday, February 11, 2023, live in person at the Pennsylvania Convention Center from 1PM to 4 PM; and

WHEREAS, Council has no doubt that this year's iteration of the Book Fair will meet all the lofty expectations inspired by its history of excellence. We encourage all of our city's residents, young and old alike, to discover, for the first time or once again, the wonders to be found in the pages of a good book; now, therefore, be it

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*RESOLUTION NO. 230083 continued*

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor the African American Children's Book Project on the Occasion of its 31st Annual African American Children's Book Fair.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That Engrossed copies of this resolution be presented to the African American Children's Book Project, further evidencing the sincere respect of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the ninth day of February, 2023.

Darrell L. Clarke  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Gilmore Richardson

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Gilmore Richardson, Squilla, Jones, Lozada, Johnson, Phillips, Brooks, Driscoll, Vaughn, Gauthier, Council President Clarke, Councilmembers Harrity and Thomas