



## Writing with Authenticity: Our Commitment to Honouring Lived Experiences

As writers, we know that stories have the power to connect, inspire, and create understanding across cultures and experiences. At NOWW, we strive to celebrate authenticity and encourage writers to bring their most honest, unique voices to the page. It is important to acknowledge and recognize the impact of privilege, stereotypes, and misrepresentations in writing.

Our contest is open to writers from all backgrounds, and many submissions delve into aspects of identity—whether cultural, sexual, gender-related, or involving physical or mental health.

### What This Means

In the context of storytelling, privilege (racial, gender, socioeconomic privilege, and more) can impact the narratives that are told and how they are presented. Here are a few ways in which privilege can influence storytelling:

- **Representation Bias:** Those with privilege may unintentionally perpetuate biased representations of marginalized groups in their stories. This can result from a lack of awareness or understanding of the experiences of those who do not share the same privileges.
- **Stereotyping:** Without a nuanced understanding of marginalized communities, storytellers with privilege may rely on stereotypes or oversimplified portrayals, reinforcing harmful narratives.
- **Appropriation:** Privilege can lead to cultural appropriation, where aspects of a marginalized culture are borrowed without proper understanding or respect. This can result in misrepresentation and perpetuation of harmful stereotypes.

Recognizing your privilege involves acknowledging your own biases, actively seeking diverse perspectives, and amplifying voices that have been historically marginalized. Collaborating with individuals from underrepresented communities, engaging in thorough research, and approaching storytelling with cultural sensitivity are essential practices to counteract the potential negative impacts of privilege on storytelling.

NOWW aims to foster a space where stories rooted in personal experience can shine. Stories that stem from genuine, lived realities have a unique depth and perspective that enrich the literary community. We believe this approach:

- **Promotes Authenticity:** Lived experiences provide valuable, nuanced insights, which help foster a more understanding and empathetic readership.



- **Encourages Sensitivity:** Asking writers to consider their connection to their subject matter encourages careful reflection and responsibility in storytelling.
- **Builds a Respectful Community:** By focusing on genuine lived experiences, we aim to build a contest environment that respects and honors diverse identities and perspectives.

NOWW welcomes submissions from all voices, with special encouragement for those whose identities are often underrepresented in literature.

### **Questions?**

We understand that identity and experience can be complex. If you have any questions feel free to reach out to us at [nowwcontests@gmail.com](mailto:nowwcontests@gmail.com). We're here to support you in sharing your authentic voice!

Thank you for helping us build a literary community grounded in respect, authenticity, and openness.