

THE RIPPED BODICE PRESENTS  
THE STATE OF RACIAL DIVERSITY IN  
ROMANCE PUBLISHING

2016

»————→ The Ripped Bodice is the only exclusively romance bookstore in The United States. It is owned by sisters Bea and Leah Koch. ←————«

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF ROMANCE  
NOVELS PUBLISHED IN 2016 WERE WRITTEN BY  
PEOPLE OF COLOR?

It has become abundantly clear that there are racial disparities in mainstream romance publishing. We have found it difficult to continue the conversation without hard data. We must start from a place of understanding and accountability on just how widespread this issue is. For many years the common refrain from publishers has been

*“we’re working on it.”*

Starting with 2016, every year we will track changes within industry and see if that promise proves true.

*Readers cannot buy books that do not exist.*

We need to do better as a community to confront the biases in the books that are published, widely publicized, and celebrated.

HOW DID WE COLLECT THIS DATA?

1

Identify and contact the leading romance publishers to determine if they will participate

2

Collect 2016 title data for publishers that chose not to participate from publisher and distributor websites and catalogues

3

Research more than 1000 authors to identify people of color

4

Crunch numbers, determine percentages, put report together

Is racial diversity the only kind of diversity that matters? *no*

WHY ONLY RACE?

While many groups are still woefully underrepresented in the romance genre including people with disabilities, marginalized religious groups, and members of the LGBTQ community, **we had to start somewhere.** This is a difficult subject to discuss, but racial discrimination is one of the largest to barriers to equality in any professional industry. Publishing, unfortunately, is not immune.

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## HOW DO YOU DETERMINE IF SOMEONE IS A PERSON OF COLOR?



It is important to remember that race, ethnicity and national origin are all different things. For the purposes of this report, Native American and Indigenous authors are included in the term "people of color." We understand that there are different schools of thought on this terminology and will continue to do our best to respect the wishes of Native American and Indigenous authors.

We were able to discern, to the best of our ability, members of different racial groups through information like photographs, social media and biographies from author websites. Many authors of color indicate that they identify as such in their bios or on their social media pages. All information we worked from is public.

**This is not a foolproof system** and we readily admit that.

## ♥ Why is There An Error Rate? ♥

There is a margin of error because some authors do not choose to publicly share personal information for a variety of reasons. We wanted to respect that choice, but it does mean there is some room for error. It is also probable that in the midst of hundreds of authors, we will misidentify at least a few people's race. We invite authors to inform us if they believe they have not been properly identified as a person of color.



## WHY NOT EXAMINE THE CONTENT OF THE BOOKS?



Diverse characters and settings are extremely important. We learn about our world and each other through the media we consume. However, the fictional characters in these books aren't being negatively impacted by discrimination in real life. Real people who write books are, as are the real readers who purchase them.

***We need marginalized creators getting paid to tell their own stories in publishing***

If every creator is white, the default is a white lens.
































We are deeply grateful for the participation of the following publishers:



*All publishers were offered the opportunity to participate and we hope to have increased participation every year.*

- Carina Press
- Crimson Romance
- Dreamspinner Press
- Entangled Publishing
- Harlequin Series
- HQN
- Kensington
- Mira Books
- Riptide Publishing
- Sourcebooks
- St. Martins Press

## WHAT PERCENTAGE OF BOOKS PUBLISHED IN 2016 WERE WRITTEN BY PEOPLE OF COLOR?

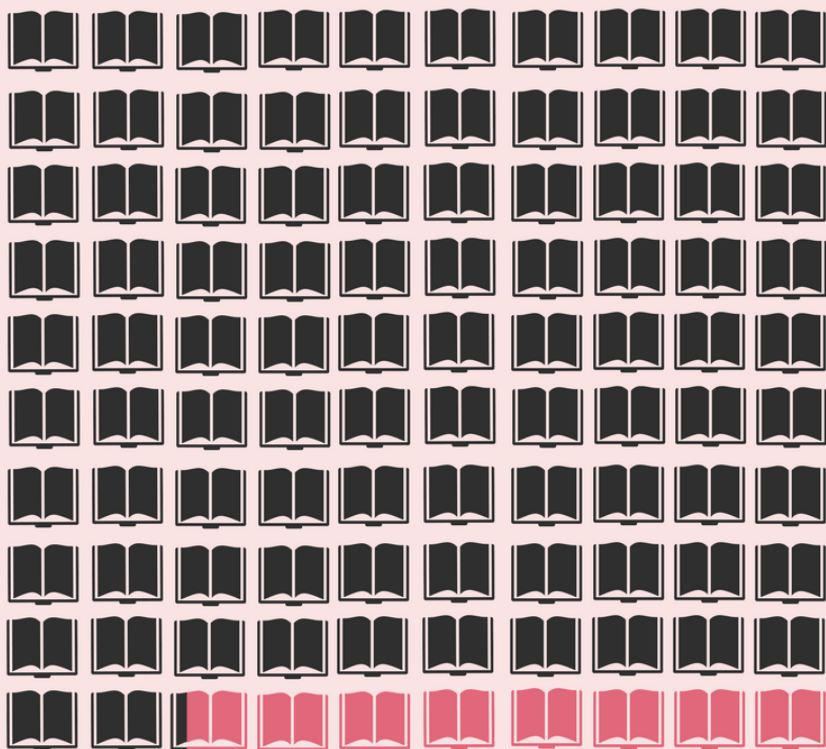
	Avon Romance	2.8%
	Bella Books	6.6%
	Berkley	3.9%
	Bold Strokes Books	7%
	Carina Press 	5.4%
	Crimson Romance 	12.2%
	Dreamspinner Press 	5.8%
	Entangled Publishing 	8.9%
	Forever & Forever Yours	17.5%
	Gallery <small>includes Pocket &amp; Pocket Star</small>	5.5%
	Harelquin Series 	8.3%
	HQN 	0%
	Kensington 	19.8%
	Mira Books 	4.4%
	Montlake Romance	1.9%
	Random House <small>includes Ballantine, Bantam, Loveswept &amp; Flirt</small>	1.8%
	Riptide Publishing 	1.4%
	St. Martin's Press 	6.3%
	Sourcebooks 	2.9%
	Tule Publishing	0%

 title data graciously provided by the publisher

+/- 2% margin of error

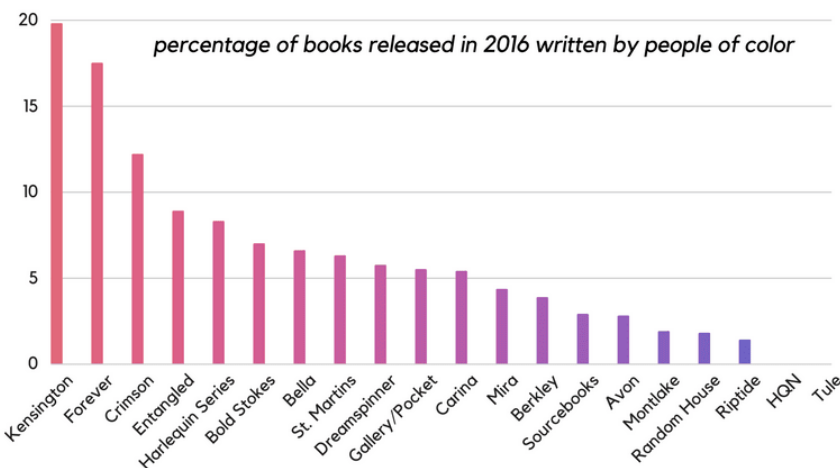
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*For every 100 books published by the leading romance publishers in 2016, only 7.8 were written by people of color.*

percentage of books released in 2016 written by people of color



*50% of publishers surveyed had fewer than 5% of their books written by people of color.*

Out of 20 publishers surveyed,

*only 3*

*had at least 10% of their books written by people of color.*