This is our story.
It was right after the election.
And we felt our core liberal values were under attack; specifically, around the issues of diversity, inclusion, and representation.
What does it mean that America had elected an off-the chain racist president?
What does it mean we work in an industry with hiring practices that result in an almost entirely white majority?
What does it mean that we belong to an industry that - through the omission of every other group’s narratives - supports the idea that “white is normal,” and that “white speaks for everybody.”
(For the record, it does not.)
We didn’t like any of the answers we had.
So, we founded a 501 (c) (3).
We founded Inkluded.
We founded Inkluded to take action; to act against our sea of trouble.
Now, let me take a step back – I’d be remiss if I didn’t define “we” or who I mean by “we.”
We is Andrea Morrison, Alexandra Hightower, Julia Kardon.
We is Mackenzie Brady Watson, Mary Gaule, and Natalie Guerrero.
And, later, we became Vedika Khanna, Mia Roman, and Jenny Chen.
We founded Inkluded in 2017 to increase diversity in publishing and immediately went to work. These are some of the things we do:

1. We present overviews of the book business to kids in grade school, teens in high school, and college students.
2. We raise thousands of dollars for like-minded groups.
3. We host readings that showcase BIPOC authors.
4. But, the thing that we do that best reflects our mission is Inkluded Academy.

Inkluded Academy is an 8-week publishing course offered every summer to college graduates who are BIPOC.

It’s taught by a racially mixed faculty of publishing professionals and each day-long class covers a specific job in publishing, including:

1. Agenting
2. Editorial
3. Managing Editorial
4. Production
5. Subsidiary Rights
6. Scouting
7. Sales
8. Marketing
9. Publicity
10. Contracts
11. Royalties

It’s a rigorous curriculum with homework assignments, in-class assignments, class participation, comprehensive lectures, and Q&A.

The matriculants get feedback on all their work, are asked to revise, then get more feedback.

Each matriculant is assigned a mentor who advises and supports them throughout and beyond the program.

We provide career counseling. We do cover letter, resume, and interview work. And, write many, many recommendations in support of their hiring.

Inkluded Academy is free. And the matriculants receive a stipend.

Inkluded Academy has graduated two classes: We have placed all but one of the matriculants from our first class.

The graduates of our second class will be participating in a paid externship with a major publishing interest.

But, be clear: it is our intention to have all of our graduates placed by the end of 2021.
On another front, Inkluded will be presenting a series of master classes that we’ll be doing in conjunction with a major university here in the city.

These classes will be both instructional and have a BIPOC point-of-view. So, we’ll instruct on how to generate reader’s reports and pitch letters. And, we’ll instruct on how to generate a P&L sheet. But, we will also talk about the editorial, publicity, sales, and marketing challenges that surface when the players involved are BIPOC.

With the few moments I’ve left with you all, I want to talk about what you can do to support what we are doing:

THIS IS FOR PEOPLE IN THE POSITION TO DO THE HIRING:

1. Hire our graduates.
2. Once they are hired, support their retention and advancement.
3. Hire BIPOC and once they are hired, support their retention and advancement.
4. Challenge and disrupt the requirements that the person you hire has to: 1) be an Ivy League graduate, 2) be a graduate of an expensive publishing program, 3) be from your hometown, 4) look like you, 5) be like you, 6) have hair like yours, 7) make you comfortable (that’s what sofas are for). And, while you are at it, ask yourself why you have these requirements in the first place. I’ve made hundreds of successful hires in my career without ever needing to use any of the aforementioned as a requirement for employment.

THIS IS FOR THE COWORKERS OF BIPOC EMPLOYEES:

1. Be a great colleague – Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. – These are a fantastic way to start.
2. Ask for input – not only do you profit from the ideas that are shared with you, you are disrupting the racist practice of ignoring BIPOC colleagues.

THIS IS FOR EVERYONE

1. Buy books written by BIPOC authors – the better they sell, the more they’ll be published.
2. Support these titles on social.
3. Participate in events like these – be heard. The folks up here on this panel want to amplify your voice, but that assumes you are providing it.
4. Use the influence you have in the circles you are in to advance the mission of equality, equity, diversity, inclusion, and representation. Regardless of whether you are an intern, assistant, or associate – your voice matters and is a valuable tool that’ll help facilitate change.
5. Continue to put our feet in the fire – don’t let us slide with anything.
6. Naturally, give us money. (We promise we won’t spend it on candy.)
Thank you all for your attention.