



# LETTER FROM OUR CHIEF READING INSPIRER



#### Dear Friends:

Reading Holiday Project, like many nonprofits, has faced a host of pandemic-related challenges, yet we have continued inspiring Black boys and other vulnerable children to read. In FY 2019, Reading Holiday Project added 93 barbershop partners, served more than 9,000 children, and distributed 11,800 children's books. FY 2020, brought a record number of small business closures and significant program disruptions, which negatively impacted many of our participating barbershops and community partners.

## Helping Our Barbershop Partners

After U.S. barbershops began to close in Spring 2020, we worked with our barbershop partners to organize two 1-hour virtual barber events:

- The Future of Black Barbershops: A conversation about re-opening.
   This panel discussion featured 4 barbershop owners discussing their experiences opening back up.
- Accessing COVID Relief Funds. In this webinar, a business consultant provided barbers with helpful information and guidance related to accessing COVID Relief funds.

## Reading Holiday Project Reached More Children

During FY 2019 and FY 2020 Reading Holiday Project distributed a total of 14,580 books, reaching more than 10,300 children across 56 cities and 23 states. Pre-pandemic, we partnered with 200+ barbershops and a variety of community partners including, local nonprofits, school districts, city governments, and library systems. Pivoting, Reading Holiday Project has begun distributing book packets filled with boyapproved books at barbershops to help kids start home libraries. We are working to reestablish contact and relaunch in several target cities.

#### An Innovative New Summer Program

Responding to unprecedented disruptions to learning caused by the Coronavirus, Reading Holiday Project designed and piloted a free 3-week virtual literacy program called Reading So Lit Summer. During July and August 2020, Black male early childhood educators led fun virtual literacy lessons for 39 boys of color from across the U.S. Omar, the father of one participant, said: "I learned why my son loves Captain Underpants - it's as silly as he can be - and that the genre is OK for beginning readers. Comics get a bad rep."

# Sustaining Our Critical Work

Monthly and annual support from individuals like you and investments from foundations have helped Reading Holiday Project continue distributing fun books to children in need and inspiring kids to read for fun. Continued innovation and expansion of our transformative work requires significant financial investment and increased organizational capacity. As you learn more about Reading Holiday Project, please consider joining our mailing list, recommending your local barbershop, making a donation, or sponsoring a barbershop.

A major focus in FY 20 was to begin the process of legally changing the organization's name from Reading Holiday Project, Inc. to Barbershop Books, a name most familiar to our supporters. As our work moves forward, this change will become more evident.

Educationally,

Alvin Irby

Founder & Chief Reading Inspirer

Reading Holiday Project, Inc.



Alvin Irby is a former kindergarten teacher turned social entrepreneur, international speaker, comedian, and author. He is Founder and Chief Reading Inspirer at Barbershop Books, a literacy organization that inspires Black boys and other vulnerable children to read for fun. His work creating child-friendly reading spaces in barbershops earned him the National Book Foundation's Innovations in Reading Prize. Irby's TED Talk "How to inspire every child to be a lifelong reader," has been viewed over 1 million times. Alvin Irby holds an MS in Childhood Education, an MPA in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy, and a BA in Sociology.





# **BARBERSHOP BOOKS FY19**

- Barbershops Added: 93
- Boys Reached: aprox 8,200 boys (approx 40 boys per shop)
- Books Distributed to barbershops: 6,624
- Total Active Barbershops: 210

# **BARBERSHOP BOOKS FY20**

- Barbershops Added: 12
- Boys Reached: 4,360 (approx. 40 boys per shop)
- Books Distributed to barbershops: 1,475 (Does not include 2,325 books distributed to CBOs)
- Total Active Barbershop: **109** (includes 84 active barbershops plus 20% of the 154 unreachable barbershops)







# SUMMER BOOK GIVEAWAY FY19

Books distributed: 2214

Number of students: 730

Students, Community

Partners: 11

Number of volunteers: 13

#### **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Northside Center for Child

Development

**MOSAIC PREP** 

The Boys Club of New York

(Gerry)

**PS 57** 

**PS 112** 

Children's Aid

PS 197

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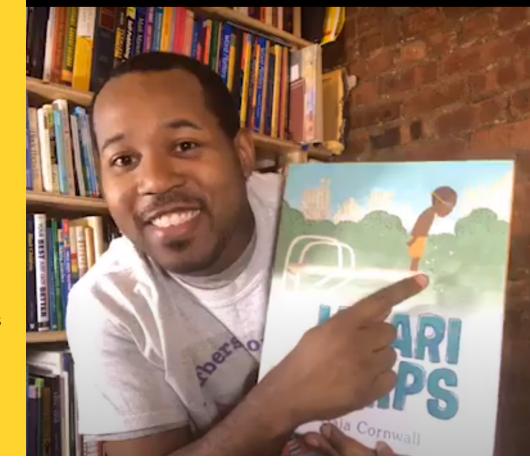
**Candlewick Press** 





# BARBERSHOP BOOKS STORYTIME FY20

**44** Barbershop Books Storytime Videos (968 mins of reading or approx. 22 mins per video)



# **Videos**



Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak



Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola Part 1



Tito Puente Mambo King by Monica Brown



Pink and Say Part 3 by Patricia Palacco



Bimwili & The Zimwi by Verna Aadema



Pink and Say Part 1 by Patricia Palacco









**PARTICIPANTS: 39 BOYS** 

# **Parent Responses:**

# Did you learn anything new about your child's reading preferences?

"I learned why my son loves *Captain Underpants* - it's as silly as he can be - and that the genre is OK for beginning readers. Comics get a bad rep."

"Mathias' taste stayed fairly consistent, only he gained more vocabulary describing it. He can now articulate the genre and category."

"My child has shared that he enjoys stories of animals that are based on true stories."

"Yes. He likes action books. He likes non-fictitious name books; books that give him information."

"I learned he enjoys graphic novels. He learned more about the different genres."

"Yes! He prefers fiction with a lot of adventures."

# Would you recommend Reading So Lit Summer to other parents?

100% of parents responded yes

# What did you like most about RSL Summer?

"He was able to participate in a program with peers and an instructor that reflected him. He really enjoyed participating in the program. He told me after today's class that he wished it would have continued until school started back up."

"I loved that there was a Black, male educator reading to the boys. Representation matters.

"Unfortunately, many Black boys go through school without having a teacher who looks like them."

"I'm grateful Zaiden and the other boys had the opportunity to experience this program with Mr. Irby."

- "The interactive sessions and the children's engagement and excitement."
- "The fact that the virtual room was full of Black boys being led by a Black male teacher."
- "I liked that the program allowed my son to to interact with other little boys that look like him."
- "Mr. Irby's obvious joy and excitement about teaching these boys."
- "How the teacher was entertaining."
- "I love the Black on Black male shine. The African-American teacher, reading to Black boys and discussing the love of books is such a priceless, game-changing experience for the boys that will be very likely to have a positive impact on their academic trajectory and their lives. Thanks SO much to Alvin Irby for creating this amazing and important institution, and thank you, also, from the bottom of my heart, for making it free and accessible.
- "That it was free, that it was all males involved and it was interactive and fun."

# **Boys' Responses:**

100% of the boys surveyed responded yes to the following questions:

- Was Reading So Lit fun?
- Do you think other boys should do the Reading So Lit program?

#### What did you like about Reading So Lit?

- "Reading together and answering questions."
- "Reading Captain Underpants."
- "My favorite part was when we read *No David*. I like the art and when David splashed the water. I liked the teacher and my friends, because they're nice!"
- "My favorite part was being able to see my teacher and other kids."
- "Searching for the French fries during class."
- "The whole thing."
- "The books that were chosen, especially What If you Had Animal Teeth?"
- "The teacher was very funny and I didn't get bored."
- "Reading the books together."
- "The books and the dancing."
- "We enjoyed the "Lit Work" homework."

# **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Community Partners sponsor 10 or more reading spaces in barbershops in communities across the country.

Charles County Public Schools
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
City of Chattanooga
Columbus City Council
Great Start Wayne
LA County Library
Literacy Partners
Teaneck Public Schools
Urban Dreams for Des Moines
Wilmington Public Library



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FINANCIALS			
	FY18	FY19	FY20
Revenue	\$ 42,079	\$ 228,725	\$ 239,016
Expenses	\$ 127,532	\$ 138,748	\$ 214,737
Gain/Loss	\$ 14,547	\$ 89,977	\$ 24,279
Program	NA	\$ 134,174	\$ 191,457
Administration	NA	\$ 4,574	\$3,989
Fundraising	NA	NA	\$ 19,291

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