

# **KUNDIMAN**



2018–2020 Triannual Report

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR	IV
MISSION, VISION, & HISTORY	VI
WHO WE SERVE	VIII
PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW	X
PROGRAMMING TRAJECTORY	XIV
THREE-YEAR BUDGET REVIEW	XX
PUBLISHED BOOKS & AWARDS	XXIV
TESTIMONIALS	XXVI
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	XXX



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

---

Dear Kundiman family,

In the 17 years since our founding, Kundiman has established a superlative reputation as an advocate for Asian American writers and readers of Asian American literature. Kundiman believes that literature is not only a vehicle for cultural expression but also as an instrument for political dialogue and empowerment. Our public programs attract large audiences of people from all backgrounds.

During our 2017 Strategic Planning year, we identified the following priorities for 2018–2020:

- We looked to define Kundiman as a national organization and to extend our programs to more readers and writers.
- We looked to grow our part-time staff members to full time to support our sustainability and growth.
- We looked to produce programs in solidarity with other communities to ensure that American literature might become a space of greater diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and justice.

2020 was a year of manifold challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed nearly 600,000 lives in the United States and 3.8 million more people worldwide, rising anti-Asian, anti-Black, anti-Native, anti-Arab, and anti-Latinx violence, and historic unemployment in the arts sector, due to shuttered event spaces. I'm proud to say that, by the end of 2020, in spite of difficult times, we were able to bring a little light into the world.

We developed online programming, invested more in our regional groups, brought all staff to full time, and surpassed our fundraising goals to lead Kundiman to a place of new growth and sustainability. We are grateful for our community of artists, changemakers, teachers, mentors, activists, arts workers, and supporters. We cannot do this important work without you!



Cathy Linh Che



## MISSION, VISION, & HISTORY

---

Kundiman is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to nurturing generations of writers and readers of Asian American literature. Our vision is to create a space where Asian Americans can explore, through art, the unique challenges that face the new and ever-changing diaspora. We see the arts as a tool of empowerment, of education and liberation, and of addressing proactively the legacy we will leave. Kundiman values deep connection with emerging artists, excellence in mentoring and teaching, and a community responsive to a range of aesthetics, identities, and histories.

In the early 2000s, poets Sarah Gambito and Joseph O. Legaspi bonded over challenges they encountered as students and writers, and sought to create a nurturing yet rigorous environment for Asian American writers. They envisioned a space that would facilitate the creation of new work, foster mentoring relationships, and address the particular challenges facing Asian American writers. Out of those discussions, Kundiman presented its inaugural Workshop Retreat for poets at The University of Virginia in 2004.

The Retreat has taken place annually since then, welcoming over 250 fellows and over 50 acclaimed faculty members, and is now hosted by Fordham College at Rose Hill. Kundiman has also grown to encompass a Poetry Prize, Fiction fellows, a Creative Nonfiction Intensive, an Emerging Writers Mentorship Lab, a Youth Leadership Intensive, scores of readings and workshops, and nine regional chapters across the United States.

Kundiman's Retreat was modeled after Cave Canem: A Home for Black Poetry, and guided in its early days by Cave Canem's founders. Founded several years after the VONA workshops for writers of color, and a couple of years before the CantoMundo's annual workshop for Latinx poets and Lambda Literary's Writers Retreat for Emerging LGBTQ Voices, Kundiman arrives at a watershed

moment in American letters. We hope to foster support and solidarity across these groups, as well as others, including writers from indigenous communities at IAIA (Institute of American Indian Arts) and RAWI (Radius of Arab American Writers), so that together, we can bring forward the many identities and experiences seeking a voice in literature.



## WHO WE SERVE

---

Kundiman arose to give voice to our community. We believe sharing our stories leads to personal healing and collective empowerment. As artists, we have a calling to speak to our community's dreams and challenges. For the past 17 years, Kundiman has championed the expression of Asian American writers and have connected them to their readers, fostering witness, historical recordkeeping, and dialogue towards solidarity and social change.



## Writers and Readers Served

Kundiman ensures the contributions of Asian American writers are heard by the public; we connect with over 100,000 audience members annually, in person and online through our website and social media channels. Our programs are crafted to not only serve participating poets and prose writers but the diverse communities that engage with their work.

Our community also includes audiences reached through our partnerships with organizations serving artists from underrepresented communities, such as Lambda Literary, Cave Canem, CantoMundo, Asian American Writers Workshop, Urban Word NYC, PEN America, and Poetry Coalition. Through our programming and partnerships, Kundiman connects audiences to stories that reflect the realities of multicultural lives across the country.

## Our Fellows

Since 2004, Kundiman has welcomed over 250 fellows to our annual Retreat, now hosted by Fordham College at Rose Hill. Our fellows are as diverse as the communities we serve. They represent 28 ethnicities and a face of Asian America not often visible in mainstream perception: 35% earn below \$29,999 (which is below the NYC Poverty Threshold of \$33,562) and an additional 39% earn less than the median income of \$59,999. 68% of fellows identify as female, while 27% identify as male and 4% are non-binary. As artists, 74% of fellows are poets and 26% are fiction writers.

Many fellows, in our feedback forms, report feeling isolated before joining Kundiman—and find that Kundiman is a place where they are able to engage with questions of race and craft in the company of other Asian Americans, something many have not had experience with before becoming fellows. In 2018, fellows rated the Retreat at an average of 9.8 on a scale of 1–10, and made comments including, “The Kundiman Retreat is unique in providing a space for Asian American writers to be our whole selves.” After attending the Retreat, fellows report first-time publication in national literary journals, awards, and a greater confidence in pursuit of literary careers. To date, our community of fellows has published 291 books, chapbooks, and anthologies, 21% of which have been awarded a prize, nominated for one, or achieved finalist commendations.

Kundiman fellows have published work in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Salon*, *The New York Times*, *PBS NewsHour*, *The Best American Poetry*, *Best New Poets*, *Poetry*, and *NPR*. They are attending MFA and doctoral programs at The Iowa Writers’ Workshop, New York University, Stanford University, and the University of California at Berkeley. We are proud of our fellows’ accomplishments, and proud of the role Kundiman plays in actively uplifting underrepresented Asian American voices.



# PROGRAMMING OVERVIEW

## Scope and Trajectory, 2018-2020

---

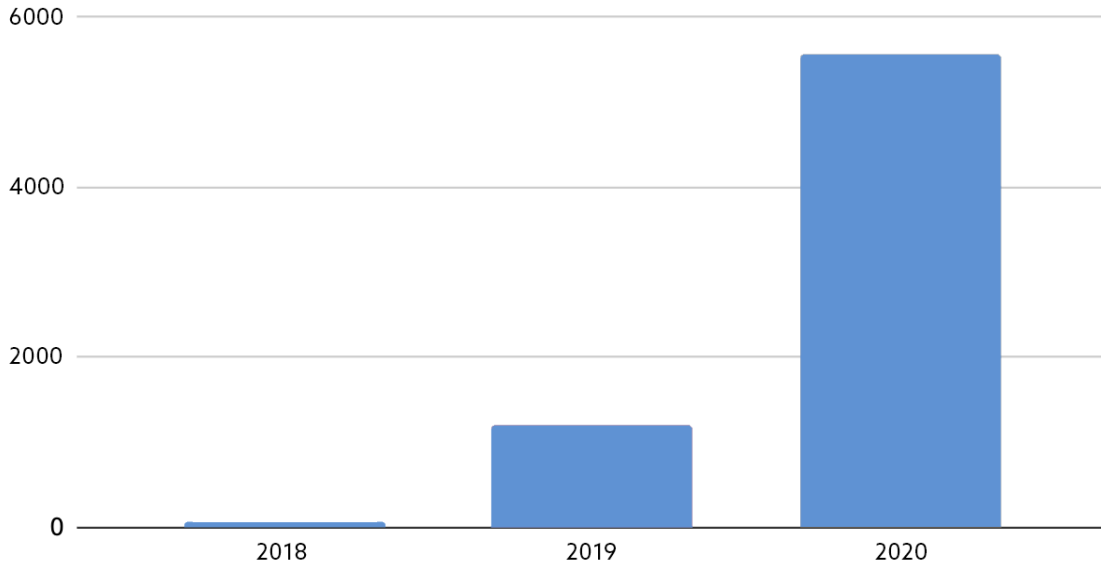
From 2018-2020, Kundiman hosted a total of **193 programs** with **over 8,500 attendees**. These programs supported **565 Asian American writers**.

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kundiman made the shift to online programming, moving long-term community programs like the Mentorship Lab to an online format, while expanding access to new virtual programs to all writers of color.

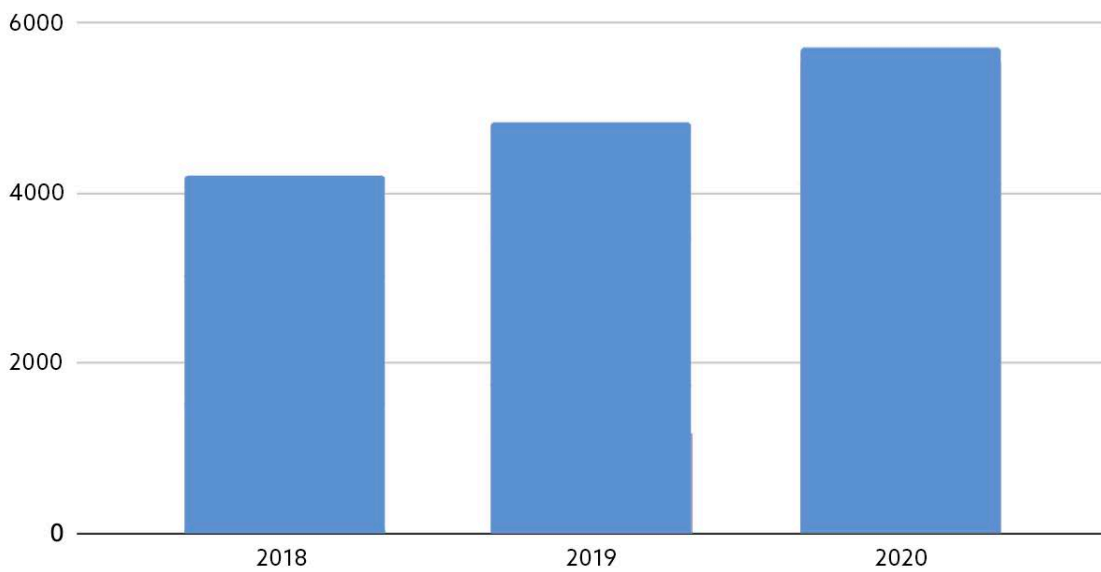
### Engagement

	2018	2019	2020
Total In-person Attendees	3990	3027	86
Total Virtual Attendees	51	1203	5,552
Total Attendees	4041	4481	5,638

### Total Virtual Attendees for Programs, 2018-2020



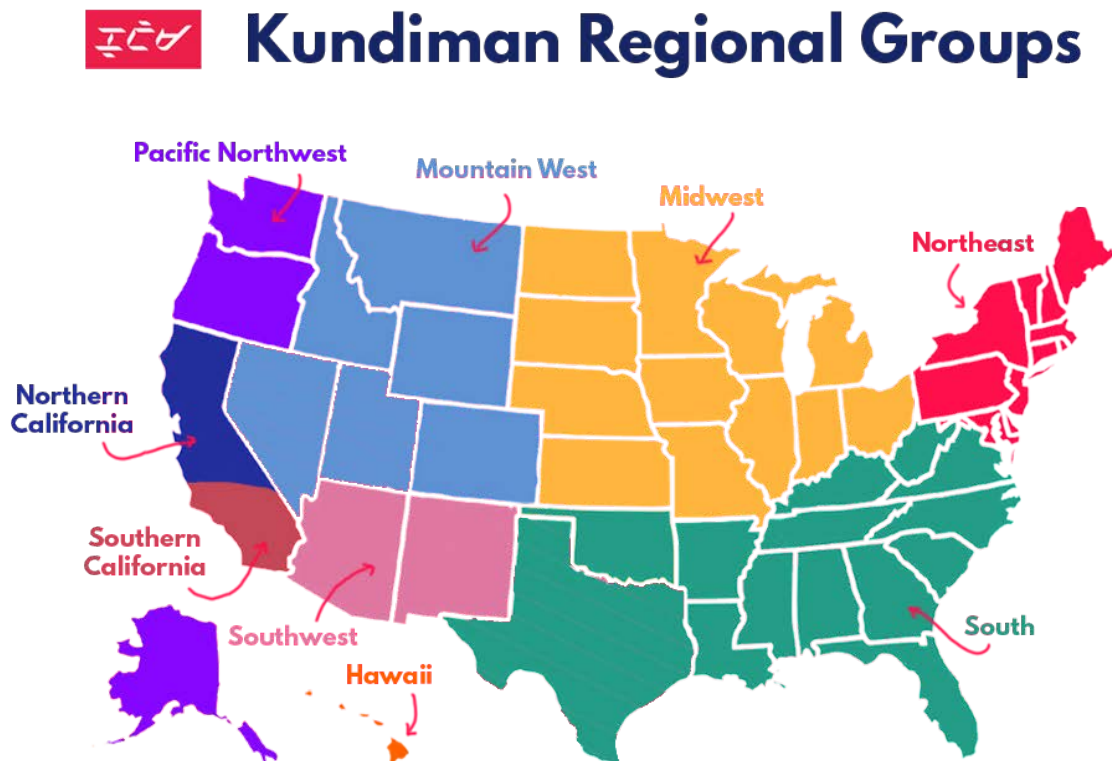
### Total Attendees for Programs, 2018-2020



## Regions Served

Annually, Kundiman hosts **30–40 Readings and Workshops** across the country, connecting diverse audiences to Asian American stories. Kundiman partners locally with community organizations and other organizations representing Black, Latinx, Arab, & Native writers, building important coalitions through collaboration and inter-community solidarity. The readings and workshops we sponsor are free or affordably priced in order to better serve all communities.

Our programming takes place in **New York City** (across Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx) and in **nine regional chapters** across the United States, connecting new audiences to Asian American literature, advancing the careers of emerging Asian American writers, and creating space for intergenerational exchange. Our regional chapters include the Northeast, Midwest, Mountain West, South, Southwest, Pacific Northwest, Northern California, Southern California, and Hawai'i.





## PROGRAMMING TRAJECTORY

---



### Advancing Activism & Solidarity

Kundiman works to foster cross-community solidarity through our programming. Our **Black and Asian American Feminist Solidarities** workshop, co-led by the Asian American Feminist Collective, demonstrated how Black feminist organizing led the way for Asian American feminism to emerge and how Asian Americans can continue to build solidarities for liberation.

Kundiman partners annually with the Poetry Coalition on programs like the **Poetry & Democracy Calendar**, which presented a month of curated content and action items on the themes of Immigration, Activism, Documentation, and Solidarity, and the **Poetry of Protest**

workshop with Purvi Shah, which examined poetic engagement with protest. We ensure that our programs are accessible to all, with half of our classes now open to all writers of color and our online programming utilizing live captioning and ASL interpretation.

## Celebrating a Multiplicity of Identities

Kundiman recognizes the multiplicity of identities, genres, and lineages that make up Asian American literature. At 2019's **Asian American Literature Festival**, we co-sponsored a **Pacific Islander Diaspora Poetry Reading** featuring writers William Nu'utupu Giles, Christopher James Sablan Diaz, and Lee Kava, as well as a Queer Literaoké session, which brought together queer writers for a mashup of karaoke and poetry. We've partnered with the New York Public Library for a reading to celebrate Bangladeshi American experiences and hosted an Exploring Multiracial Identity workshop with Alexandra Kleeman where multiracial writers fostered community and kinship. Kundiman's programs celebrate a more expansive idea of Asian American, with a wider range of perspectives and experiences than we are afforded in the mainstream.

## Increasing Visibility & Readership

Kundiman aims to increase the visibility and readership of Asian American writers online and in traditional publishing spaces. Since 2018, Kundiman and Wikimedia NYC and DC have partnered up to address the erasure of Asian American writers online through our **Wikipedia Edit-a-Thons**. Together with our communities, we have added over 88,000 words on Asian American literature to Wikipedia, a global resource that is predominantly edited by white men.

During Kundiman's **Literary Agents Night**, Kundiman fellows have the opportunity to read their work to a panel of Asian American literary agents and ask them questions about publishing. Our mission promotes equity in publishing and allows fellows a better understanding of the publishing industry, especially in regards to communicating work by writers of color to white editors. Agents Jin Auh, Clare Mao, and Ayesha Pande have all connected with Kundiman fellows during Literary Agents Night Events.

## Scholarships and Financial Support

---

### Annual Summer Retreat Scholarships

We have partnered with very generous organizations to offer tuition scholarships for our flagship program, the Kundiman Summer Retreat for emerging Asian American writers. Recognizing the additional barriers to financial access to queer members of community, in 2019, we launched our first rolling scholarship fund initiative named the Queer Scholarship Fund, which allows two queer identifying Retreat fellows to attend tuition free.

#### **Historic Summer Retreat Scholarships**

- Dark Noise Collective Scholarship, 2019
- The Freya Project Scholarship, 2018
- West Coast Kundiman Scholarship, 2015, 2018

#### **Current Summer Retreat Scholarships**

- The PAWA Manuel and Penelope Flores Prize, 2015-2019, 2022
- Queer Scholarship Fund, 2022

When organizational resources are unable to meet the financial needs of our fellows, we offer them a platform to assist their fundraising efforts through the Fellows' Crowdfunding Campaign. Through this platform, fellows are able to reach out to their networks, as well as Kundiman's wider audiences, to raise funds for the Retreat, including their tuition and travel expenses to New York City.



## Youth Leadership Intensive Scholarships

With the introduction of the Kundiman Youth Leadership Intensive in 2018, our pilot youth development program for high school students, Kundiman focused its efforts to ensure the economic diversity of its participants by partnering with a group of very generous donors to offer scholarships.

### Historic Youth Leadership Intensive Scholarships

- The Sill and Ark Teung Chin Scholarship, 2018
- The I-Ping and Chun-Chih Chiu Scholarship, 2018
- The Solomon Verdes Memorial Scholarship Fund, 2018
- The Leela and Narayan Korwar Memorial Scholarship, 2018
- The Peace Scholarship Fund, 2018
- The Hoa Thi Le & Hue Nguyen Che Scholarship, 2019

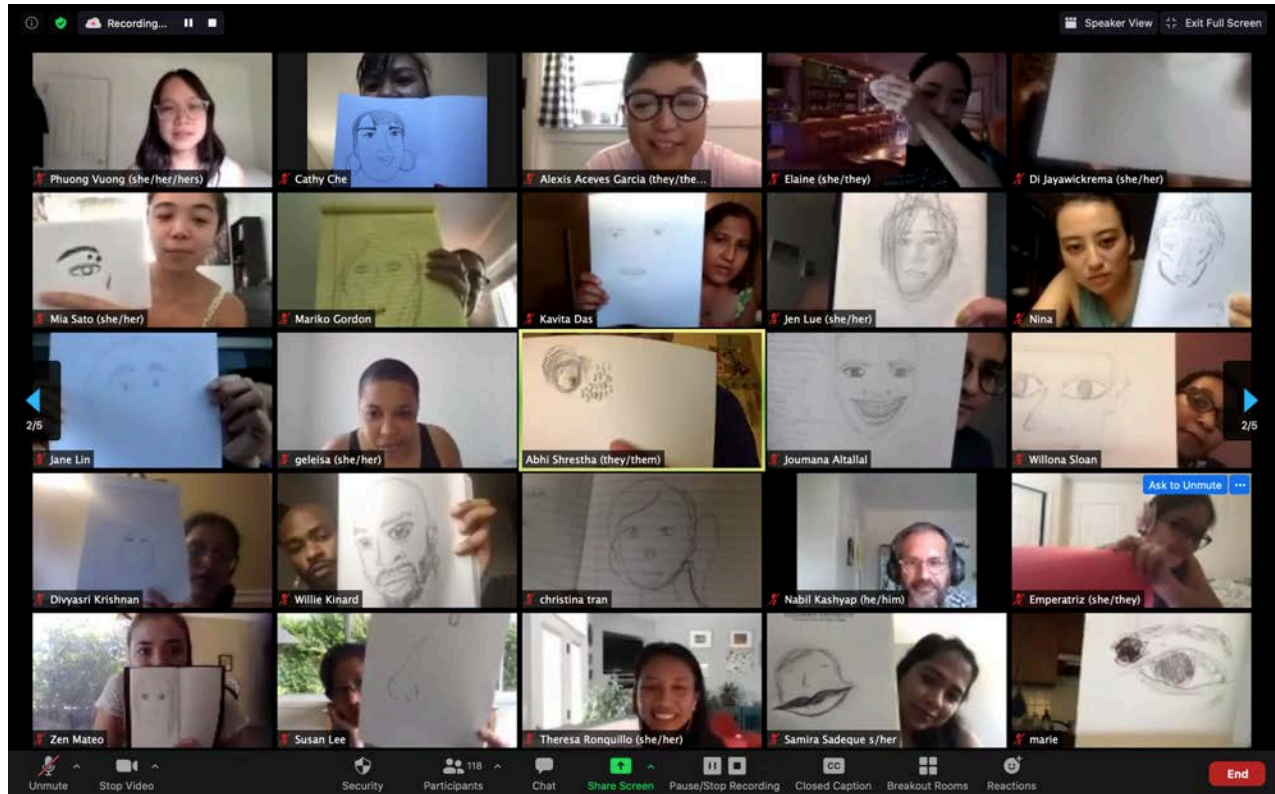


## Class and Workshop Scholarships

From 2018–2020, Kundiman provided 100 scholarships for attendees of our classes and workshops. As our programs grow, we look to increase financial access to all members of our community.

In 2020, we were able to offer at least one scholarship spot for each 12-participant workshop and several scholarships for all our 3-hour Craft Classes.





## Kundiman Fellows' COVID-19 Relief Fund

In response to the economic hardships that members of our community faced because of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Kundiman led a campaign to provide critical relief to those in need. Through this fellow-initiated effort, Kundiman was able to redistribute \$3800 to Asian American writers.

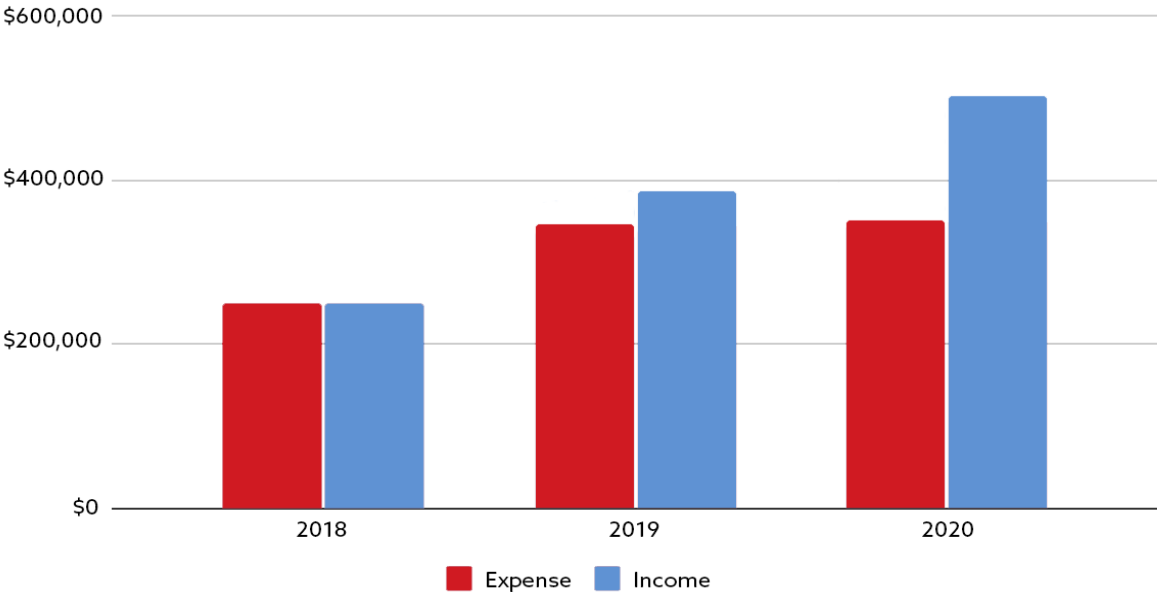
# THREE-YEAR BUDGET OVERVIEW

## 2018–2020

With the support of the board, staff, partner organizations, and our community, Kundiman’s budget more than doubled between 2018 and 2020. Our programming expenses have increased since 2018, largely due to our commitment to compensating our readers, workshop instructors, and staff fairly. In 2020, we offered more online programming, particularly classes, which in turn required more staff time to prepare—but also brought in significant tuition revenue. In 2020, one-time COVID relief in the form of PPP loans and emergency grants accounted for a significant portion of our revenue. In addition, other grants—including multi-year grants—make up an increasingly large portion of our income.

In the past three years, we’ve received new grants from organizations including the Jerome Foundation, Mosaic Fund, and the Rona Jaffe Foundation. Kundiman is committed to organizational sustainability—which means expanding our funding sources, continuing to pay readers and workshop instructors, and bringing on more paid staff to support excellent programming.

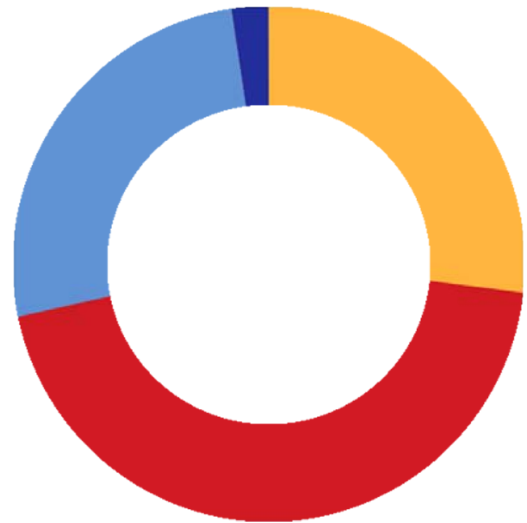
### Kundiman Expense & Income, 2018–2020



## 2018 BUDGET REPORT

### Revenue

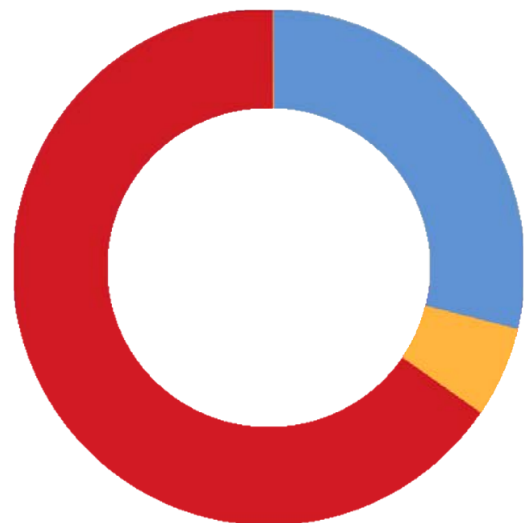
	Amount
Individual Giving	\$111,479
Grants	\$66,854
Earned Income	\$65,272
Corporate	\$5,454
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$249,059</b>



- Individual Giving: **44.8%**
- Earned Income: **26.2%**
- Grants: **26.8%**
- Corporate: **2.2%**

### Expenses

	Amount
Programming	\$162,664
Development	\$71,796
General and Administrative	\$14,548
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$249,008</b>

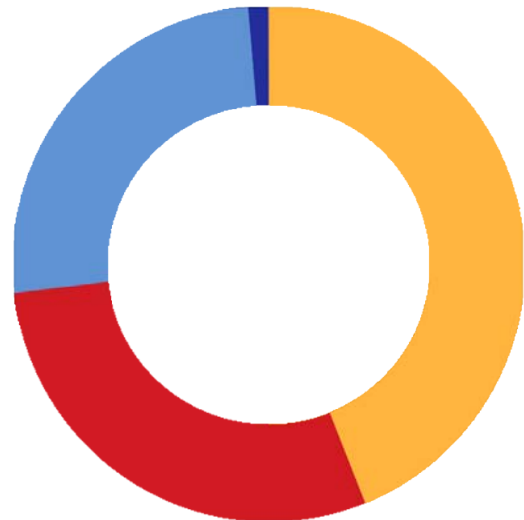


- Programming: **65.3%**
- Development: **28.8%**
- General & Administrative: **5.8%**

## 2019 BUDGET REPORT

### Revenue

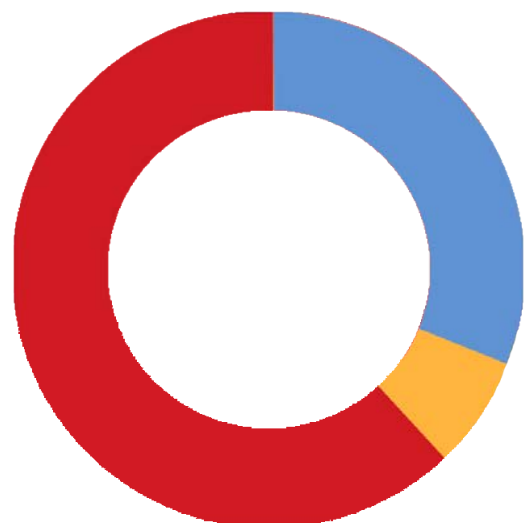
	Amount
Individual Giving	\$111,914
Grants	\$169,848
Earned Income	\$98,209
Corporate	\$5,434
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$385,405</b>



- Individual Giving: **29.0%**
- Earned Income: **25.5%**
- Grants: **44.1%**
- Corporate: **1.4%**

### Expenses

	Amount
Programming	\$214,008
Development	\$107,098
General and Administrative	\$24,467
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$345,573</b>

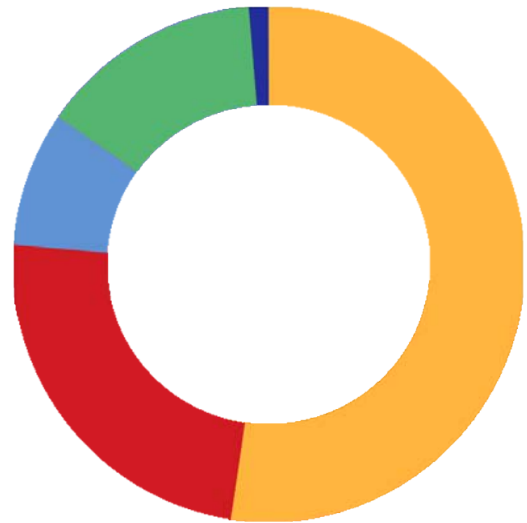


- Programming: **61.9%**
- Development: **31.0%**
- General & Administrative: **7.1%**

## 2020 BUDGET REPORT

### Revenue

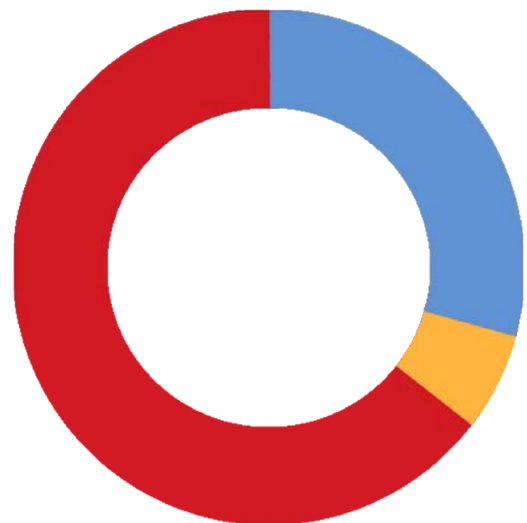
	Amount
Individual Giving	\$120,710
Grants	\$263,465
Earned Income	\$42,745
Corporate	\$6,617
Covid Relief	\$70,221
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$503,758</b>



- Individual Giving: **24.0%**
- Earned Income: **8.5%**
- Grants: **52.3%**
- COVID Relief: **13.9%**
- Corporate: **1.3%**

### Expenses

	Amount
Programming	\$227,152
Development	\$102,668
General and Administrative	\$21,286
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$351,106</b>



- Programming: **64.7%**
- Development: **29.2%**
- General & Administrative: **6.1%**

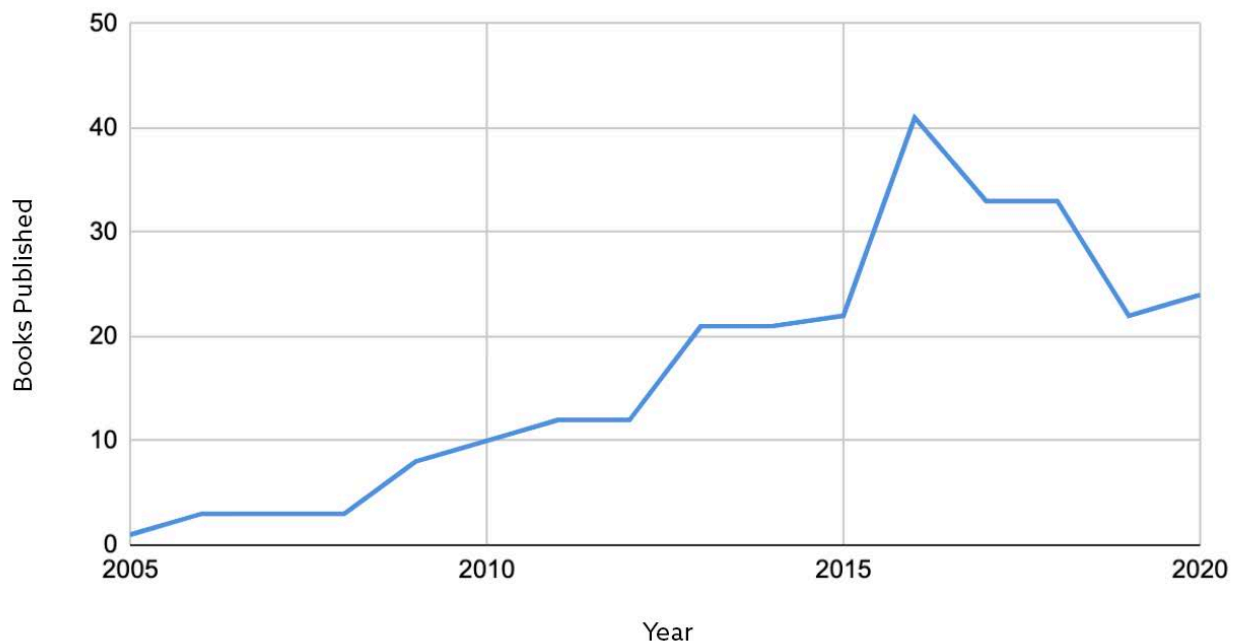
## PUBLISHED BOOKS & AWARDS

### Kundiman Fellows' Achievements

---

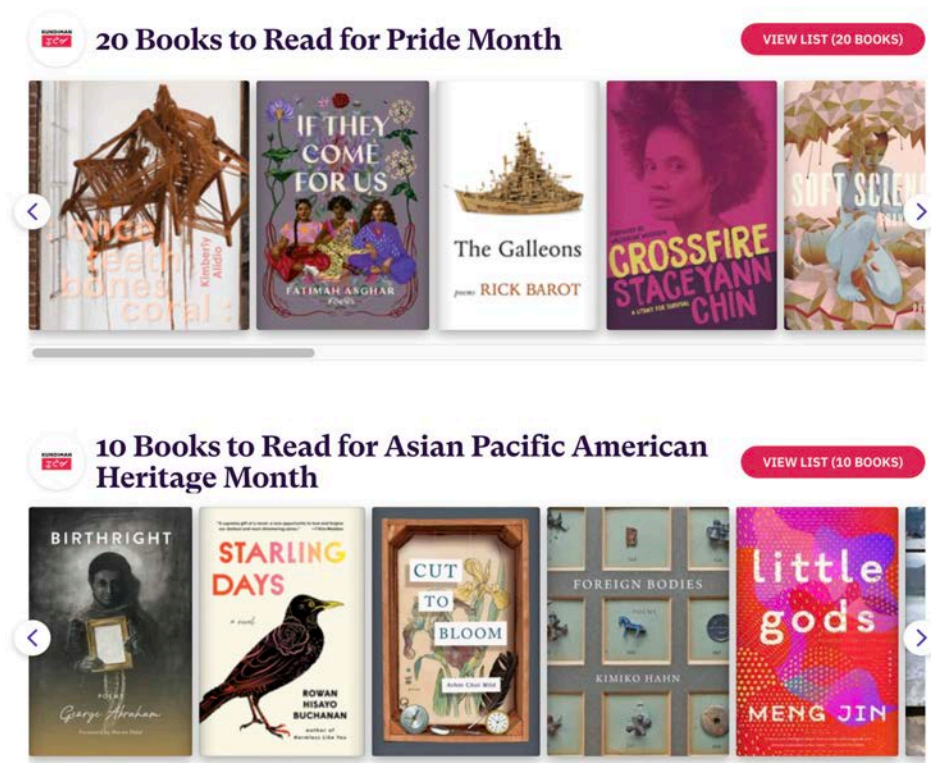
Our fellows are making a tremendous impact in literary publishing. Since Kundiman was established in 2004, Kundiman fellows have published **291 books, chapbooks, and anthologies** (including forthcoming publications) in the fields of poetry and fiction. Of these publications, **five were nominated for prizes** (1.72%), **sixteen were finalist selections** (5.5%), and **forty were awarded** (13.75%).

### Books Published by Kundiman Fellows



## Awards

Our fellows have won awards from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Whiting Foundation, and Rona Jaffe, and have been, most recently, finalists for the National Book Award, the Kate Tufts Discovery Prize, and the Dylan Thomas Prize.



## Publicity Partnerships

In 2020, we partnered with Bookshop.org to release 16 Kundiman booklists in celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Pride Month, our Black & Asian Feminist Solidarities Workshop, and more. Each list spotlighted contemporary works of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and cross-genre literature by Kundiman fellows, faculty, and other AAPI authors, totalling 520 books. A portion of proceeds from all Bookshop list purchases was donated to Kundiman.



## TESTIMONIALS

### Kundiman's Impact

---

Our fellows, as well as craft class and workshop participants, can attest to the impact of our programs, from the annual Kundiman Retreat to new online offerings open to all writers of color.

#### Zahir Janmohamed

Kundiman changed my life. At first, I had a ton of doubts about attending the summer Retreat. Am I, as an Indian American, really Asian? Is my writing good enough? And what is the whole point of writing fiction in a time of rising hate crimes? It turns out, I was not alone in feeling these anxieties. Because at Kundiman—and only at Kundiman—I finally met writers who wrestle with the same questions as I, writers who wonder if their voice is even worthy of being heard or published in America. Where else but Kundiman could I be this vulnerable? I know my classmates and friends are tired of hearing me say this but it's worth repeating again and again: I owe it all to Kundiman. And I would give anything, and everything, for this community.



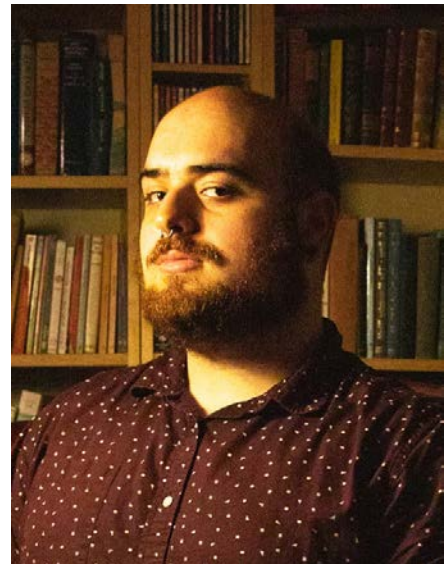
## Jenny Xie



Kundiman is a vital, vibrant community with a huge heart. Everyone I met—from new attendees to returning members, and staff members to faculty—was incredibly generous in spirit, encouraging us to take up space with our bodies and words, whereas so much of my day-to-day life is spent making my presence more compact, more “presentable.” It’s a place that nurtures the spirit as the wellspring of the writing life, and provides historical and social context for APIA writers who are finding their place in a literary tradition. The writers you meet here are ferocious and bright. I’m so grateful a place like this exists.

## George Abraham

Kundiman continues to provide deeply needed spaces for poetic development and reflection, even in the midst of global catastrophe. As an instructor, I was honored to work with a community I love so much, and who has made me into the poet I am to this day. I couldn’t have possibly understood just how much folks needed this online workshop space, in the midst of this pandemic—meeting each week with everyone was a kind of balm and healing space, much like the physical spaces curated by Kundiman. As an Arab arts leader and organizer myself, I hope to emulate a lot of the community-building practices I’ve learned from Kundiman, as there is truly no other space like it for Asian diasporic writers right now.



## Laurel Chen

Kundiman is an essential space. A place of generosity and giving and rooting for each other. I had so many doubts and fears going into my first Retreat—about my writing, my place in the world, and any sense of belonging I could claim towards a community. Kundiman was and continues to be a balm. I’ve never felt so replenished, so deeply and thoughtfully cared for and cared by a community that’s taught me to be a kinder and more courageous writer and person. I didn’t have to prove myself at Kundiman and was nourished and nurtured by everyone around me. Being a Kundiman Fellow is an honor and a gift that I will always treasure.



## Seema Yasmin



The Kundiman Retreat blew the roof off my expectations—and my expectations had been set sky high by fellows who attended previous Retreats. We were welcomed with warmth and generosity, we were fed at three-hourly intervals, we were nurtured and encouraged by critically-acclaimed writers, we were educated by artists who shared expertise on craft and the writing life. It was a lot to absorb in five days—in calorific, literary, and friendship terms—but on the fifth day I began to write a novel that I was previously too nervous to write. I have a feeling the warmth, kinship, and calories of the Kundiman Retreat will fuel me for years to come. I feel honored to be in conversation with such phenomenally talented and generous artists. Thank you for the gifts of confidence, craft, and community.

## Terisa Siagatonu

As a Pacific Islander writer/spoken word poet, I went into this experience very cautiously. I typically feel marginalized in AA/PI spaces, so I was nervous about experiencing that here in Kundiman. I left this experience with new friends, new perspectives on my writing, and a deeper love for my identity and this community of Asian Pacific American voices. I was incredibly grateful for the mentorship I received from each faculty member, and the investment that each of them had in my goals, growth, and future. I feel motivated to help other Pacific Islander writers apply for a chance to experience a space that welcomes them as much as Kundiman welcomed/welcomes me. The compassion I aspire to have for myself moving forward is one that whispers fiercely: “You deserve to be here in all that you are, Terisa. Bring your entire story with you. Write.”



## Ocean Vuong

Having grown up rather isolated from other Asian Americans, I wrote mostly alone and in seclusion—and even prided myself on my hermetic individualism. What I discovered, however, during my time at Kundiman, was that community was only a by-product of a deeper desire to ask the more complex and exhilarating questions—those that would propel poetics beyond one’s own heritage without forgetting its importance. At Kundiman, I looked into the face of another Asian American poet and, without saying a word to her, knew that we are both here because we have written ourselves into visibility, because for every one of us there are thousands who will never be heard. Ever since I started writing I ask myself: Can art ever be worth the loss it took to beget it? I think it will take a lifetime, maybe even many, to answer that. But Kundiman is a great place to begin.

## THANK YOU

Kundiman thanks the following supporters for investing in our programs and vision.

---

### PARTNERS

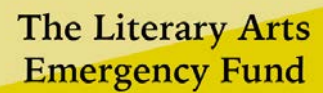
We thank the Fordham College at Rose Hill Dean's Office and Tupelo Press for their partnerships which make Kundiman's Retreat and book prize possible.

We would also like to thank AWP, Bryant Park's Reading Series, CantoMundo, Cave Canem, Dodge Poetry Festival, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, The Fine Arts Work Center at Provincetown, Hugo House, Kaya Press, Letras Latinas, Miama Writers Institute, New York University, Palm Beach Poetry Festival, The Poetry Coalition, Poetry Foundation, Split this Rock, Sierra Nevada College's MFA Program, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, Vermont Studio Center, for serving as programming and community partners with Kundiman.

### LEAD DONORS

Amazon Literary Partnership  
Asian Women's Giving Circle  
Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund  
New York City Department of Cultural Affairs  
Fordham College at Rose Hill Dean  
The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation  
The Jerome Foundation  
Literary Arts Emergency Relief Fund

New York State Council on the Arts  
The New York Community Trust Mosaic Fund  
National Endowment for the Arts  
The Poetry Coalition  
The Poetry Foundation  
Race Forward  
The Rona Jaffe Foundation



**DESIGN AND PHOTOGRAPHY**

Triannual Report designed by Steven Duong and Kenji C. Liu  
Photographs by Margarita Corporan, Mike Keo, and Jess X. Snow