

Charnelle Pinkney Barlow – Arts

Nominees for the Arts award include women who make a significant contribution to the field of arts in our community, whether through their artistic talent or influencing others in their own artistic abilities. Today we honor storyteller and illustrator **Charnelle Pinkney Barlow**.

Charnelle is an amazing illustrator of children's books and has authored her own books for children as well. Her client list includes such publishing powerhouses as National Geographic and Random House, but the most important "clients" to her are the children. Charnelle writes on and illustrates important topics centering on love, acceptance, diversity, and learning. She presents life lessons in a gentle, engaging format designed to inspire and speak to the hearts of all children.

Art runs through Charnelle's veins, as she follows in the footsteps of her award-winning children's book illustrator grandfather. She also loves to learn, often diving deep into a topic before turning it into a charming story that parents will enjoy as much as the children. Charnelle may write "kids' books," but the topics transcend age. As she said in one interview, "Conversations about race, racism, and diversity need to happen early and as often as possible. Books help support these much-needed conversations. Children's books have the ability to show and celebrate the beauty of diversity in a way that other modalities can't."

Charnelle and her books can be found all over Pekin, as she and her husband are often seen supporting the local Farmer's Market and Pekin Main Street events, and her books can be purchased at several of our local bookstores or sometimes found in the YWCA's Little Free Library. For sharing her talents with the world, we present the YWCA Arts Award for 2025 to **Charnelle Pinkney Barlow**.