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Columbia High School Junior Publishes Book That Beckons Children To Find Their Forests

Audrey Noguera's "Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest" gains national exposure, slated to be published in Spanish soon

MAPLEWOOD, N.J. – Years ago, legendary folk songwriter Woody Guthrie sang, “This land was made for you and me,” making the point that America’s natural beauty was for everyone to enjoy.

Now, another writer has published a book with a similar message that is getting national attention – and she is still in high school.

Audrey Noguera, a Columbia High School junior, is the co-author of “Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest,” a book that beckons children to discover forests no matter where they live.

“I want to make sure everyone knows that they have access to the forests,” said Noguera about her motivation to write the book.

Fulfilling this mission has set Noguera on a journey that has taught her the trials and triumphs of being a successful writer – from struggling to find the perfect rhymes in her text, to meeting readers at book signings, to landing a recent [television interview on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*](#).

But it is her personal experiences of the natural world that give “Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest” its authenticity.

When Noguera was a child living in Brooklyn Heights, she didn’t spend much time in nature. Her first meaningful experience in a forest came after her family moved to South Orange when she was 10 and her father, – now her co-author, Taylor Margis-Noguera – took her to see the South Mountain Reservation.

Although Noguera was a little skeptical that she would be as enthusiastic about the place as her father was before the trip, her first visit to the reservation left her feeling “amazing.”

“It was unlike anything I had ever experienced before,” she said. “After that, I ended up spending more time there and falling in love with it.”

As Noguera’s book points out, a kid in Brooklyn or any city doesn’t need to move to a new home to find a forest. Urban forests – the trees that grow among city dwellers – as well as parks and other greenspaces can provide children and families with the same amazing feelings Noguera



had at the South Mountain Reservation. To help young readers find their forests, the book includes online resources to help them plan trips with their families, including a website, discovertheforest.org, that lists forest locations when a user enters their zip code.

“Spending time in a forest really positively impacts you,” she said. “It can make a difference in your mental health and how you’re living your life.”

Writing a children’s book is anything but child’s play, as Noguera found out when she began working on “Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest” in August 2022.

“All of it rhymes,” she said. “That was definitely a challenge.”

Searching for perfect rhymes and maintaining factual accuracy led to some long afternoons on the porch of her grandmother’s home in Long Beach, California, where most of the book was written, she said.

There were moments when I didn’t think we were going to find one of those rhymes,” said Noguera. “But I think overall, especially looking back over the experience of writing it, it was really, really wonderful.”

The opportunity to write “Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest” came through Encantos Media Studios, a publisher of children’s books focused on diverse stories and characters. The company had partnered with The U.S. Forest Service and the Ad Council (producer of many public service announcements including those featuring Smokey the Bear), who had launched a campaign to attract more people of color to the nation’s forests.

The book’s illustrations by Abigail Gross show people, especially children, of diverse ethnic backgrounds. That is something that has been making a distinct impression on young readers, as Noguera saw when she held a book signing at the Target store in Union.

“Kids were pointing out that they could see themselves in the book,” said Noguera. “That’s exactly what I wanted to accomplish – to make sure that kids from all backgrounds felt represented and that they could enjoy the forest too.”

Currently, “Tiny Travelers Find Your Forest” is only available at Target. A Spanish version of the book, “Encuentra Tu Bosque,” is expected to be published in late March.

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