

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

HURSTON/WRIGHT FOUNDATION



PREPARED BY
THE HURSTON/WRIGHT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

HURSTON/WRIGHT FOUNDATION

MISSION

Now more than ever, Black writers and Black literature are vital to the national dialogue on race and culture. Our perspective, our lives, our stories are needed to bring context and understanding to the world around us. The Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation is proud to provide a safe space for Black writers to freely express themselves, to experiment with their work, to be inspired and encouraged, and to be celebrated.

We offer something special and rare. We recognize Black student writers in fiction and poetry through the Hurston/Wright College Award—the only award of its kind in the nation. We bring writers together to work with award-winning leaders in fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. And we host the annual Legacy Awards program, which highlights the spectacular array of talent in the Black literary community. Each year, the number of submissions to the Legacy Awards increases, telling us this work is needed.



OUR COMMUNITY

"I'm grateful for spaces like this, for us supporting our Black work, and not only that, but creating communities for us as well."

- Cheswayo Gabriel Mphanza, 2017 College Poetry Winner

"I can honestly attest to the Hurston/Wright Writers Workshop changing my life. I am now an MFA candidate in fiction at a top program in the country and I used much of the writing that I worked on at Hurston/Wright as part of my application."

- Jamie Lynn Harris, 2016 Writers /Week

"The funny thing is I'm something of an outsider, yet I come here and I realize I've come home. I see people who look like me, who value the written word, who value justice, who value story."

- JJ Wilson, Legacy Award Winner, 2017 Debut Fiction



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

2017 MILESTONES

- Increased Number of Workshops
- Secured Multiple Grants
- Expanded Our Outreach
- Strengthened Board of Directors



During 2017, Hurston/Wright strengthened its operations, added programs to reach a larger audience, and continued to produce world-class writing instruction as it transitioned from 25 years of executive leadership by its founders.

We added board members who brought needed expertise in grant writing, fundraising, and organizational development; hired administrative support; and implemented a new donor management system to improve processes and external communications -- a tool that dramatically increased the number of online donors in our annual year-end campaign. Hurston/Wright also secured programming and operational grants from the District of Columbia's Commission on the Arts & Humanities and from the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Hurston/Wright also expanded its outreach through a new podcast featuring acclaimed Black writers and hosted free public programs in diverse communities throughout Washington, D.C., including a birthday celebration to honor Richard Wright and a panel discussion of Zora Neale Hurston's founding of The Hilltop newspaper at Howard University.

And the 2017 Legacy Awards honored the Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden, Congressman John Lewis, and poet and publisher Haki Madhubuti.

HURSTON/WRIGHT BY THE NUMBERS

20% ↑

Legacy Award
Submissions

31% ↑

Workshop
Participants

21% ↑

Readings
Attendance

18% ↑

Total
Revenue

41% ↑

Total
Assets

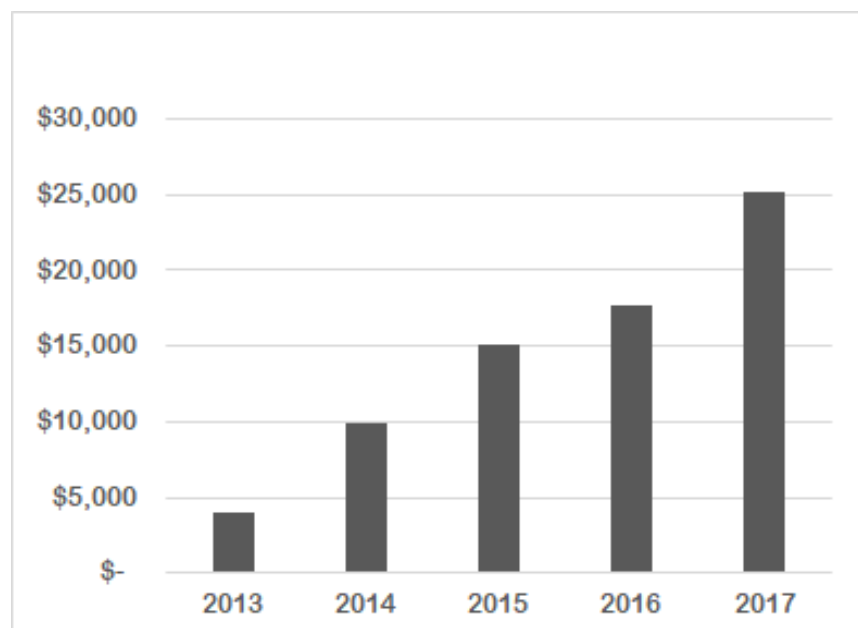
177% ↑

Net
Income

2017 was a building year with two revenue goals: (1) increased contributed revenue and (2) increased program revenue. Contributed revenue jumped by 18% thanks to individual donations, board fundraisers, and philanthropic grants. Program revenue also increased by 18% due to improved attendance at ticketed events and the addition of a writing workshop for poets.

Hurston/Wright ended the year with a cash balance of over \$25,000 -- a 41% improvement over the previous year. Improving efficiency, we also limited expense increases to only 12%, resulting in a 177% increase in our net income. Finally, as the graph shows, Hurston/Wright has maintained a steady increase in its year-end cash balance for the last five years.

5-Year Cash Balance



NEXT STEPS

2018 PLANS

Hurston/Wright has two key areas of focus for 2018: (1) continuing improvements to operations and (2) refining programming to remain true to our mission. We will use grant funds to pay for strategic planning to create a dynamic vision, communications support to increase our reach, and fundraising expertise to position us for future growth.

We also are resuming the weekend workshops in fiction, nonfiction and poetry in June 2018 and a master class series in September 2018. We will increase public literary programs that showcase exemplary work, explore contemporary issues and connect authors from across the nation to readers in the Washington, D.C., area.

Recognizing the need to make local teenagers stronger writers, we are exploring various models and partners who could help us bring a quality program to our youth.

The foundation is now better positioned to expand our capacity as we go into 2018 with renewed energy, a stronger board, and greater financial stability.



OUR GOALS

- Weekend Workshops and Master Classes
- Increase Literary Events
- Invest in Strategic Planning, Marketing, and Fundraising

OUR PARTNERS & SPONSORS



AMISTAD / HARPERCOLLINS

**D.C. COMMISSION ON THE
ARTS & HUMANITIES**

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**KAISER FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

**PENGUIN RANDOM
HOUSE**

POLITICS & PROSE

To our partners and patrons, thank you for giving Black writers from around the world a place to learn from the best, to be encouraged, and be recognized for their writing accomplishments. We have worked hard to be good stewards of your gifts, to shore up the infrastructure as well as to develop new programs.

We offer a warm and special thanks to our new supporters, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the D.C. Commission on the Arts & Humanities. All of you are integral to the ongoing efforts of the foundation.

Thank you for recognizing the value of our work.

HURSTON/WRIGHT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation, founded in 1990, is a literary nonprofit whose mission is to discover, mentor, and honor Black writers. The foundation conducts workshops, master classes, public readings, competitions and an awards ceremony. Through these programs, the foundation helps writers produce high-quality literature, preserves the voices of Black writers, creates a supportive community for writers, provides financial support to college writers, and celebrates artistic excellence.

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Marita Golden - President Emeritus

The Board of Directors

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The Hurston/Wright Foundation is a 501(c)3.

Photos by Kea Taylor of Imagine Photography

