ALL LITERATURE IS PROTEST

— Richard Wright, Native Son

www.hurstonwright.org • info@hurstonwright.org • The Hurston/Wright Foundation is a 501(c)3
I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background.
— Zora Neale Hurston

BLACK WRITING TODAY

A new generation of Black voices has emerged in the 21st century to tell our stories, celebrate our culture, preserve our heritage, and speak to critical issues.


Black literature has found audiences in television and film such as Ava DuVernay’s Queen Sugar, inspired by Natalie Baszile’s novel, and Octavia Spencer’s Self-Made, inspired by A’Leila Bundles’ On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker.

We are in a rare, but welcome moment where society is urging for Black voices to be amplified. From social media calls-to-action and supportive statements from corporations, to appeals from elected officials and campaigns by community organizers, there has been a public call to uplift Black perspectives and commentary.

We welcome that call to action.

CHAIRPERSON’S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Thirty years ago, the Hurston/Wright Foundation started as a space to nurture Black writers. We recognized the overwhelming need to foster and encourage their voices and craft — to help discover and mentor a thriving pipeline of writers who center Black culture and experiences in the literary art they create.

Today, we find ourselves at what could be a positive and seismic inflection point in racial literacy and justice around the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all deeply reflective about life, giving us the opportunity to consider what really matters and what kind of world we want to live in. Specifically, the world has united in protesting against the enduring injustices withstood by the Black community. The need is greater than ever for strong voices to express our plight and advocate for change.

As Richard Wright taught us, “all literature is protest.” We cannot slow down or go dark now, because this work is crucial. But we need your financial help to ensure that the work is not silenced.

Well-resourced, legacy arts organizations have the means to amplify talented voices. Yet these spaces often exclude, overlook and silence artistic expression from oppressed and marginalized communities.

It is our responsibility, as keepers of the culture, to remain self-determinant when it comes to developing and recording our stories. The Hurston/Wright Foundation is committed to practicing sound stewardship of resources so we can define ourselves and speak loudly from our own platforms and institutions.

I am asking for your financial support to ensure programmatic growth, literary impact, and continued long-term sustainability.

Audrey Hipkins, Board Chair
HURSTON/WRIGHT TODAY

Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright are two of the world’s most celebrated writers. Their works captured the lives and the perspectives of Black people in a very complicated society. Their gift to the world is a longstanding legacy. The mere mention of their names inspires a literary call to action for readers who want to celebrate great literature as well as for writers who want to hone their skills.

The Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation is a Washington, D.C.-based literary arts nonprofit organization. Since 1990, when it was created by author Marita Golden and bibliophile Clyde McElvene, the Foundation has been a catalyst for increasing diversity in the Black literary community and inside the publishing industry. Hurston and Wright are ideal namesakes because of their unique voices, fierce intellect, and different perspectives on life in America.

A mecca for emerging Black writers and fans of Black literature, the Foundation offers diligent instruction, careful critique, intensive writing, and opportunities to sharpen skills while in a community of Black writers. Award competitions, public readings, and an annual celebration of excellence round out the Hurston/Wright experience.

THIRTY YEARS

The Hurston/Wright Foundation’s mission and vision remain unchanged: we will support emerging and established Black writers, promote the cultural impact of Black literature, and expand our partnerships to increase our reach. We are excited to continue our dynamic legacy by expanding our highly regarded workshops, author readings, and annual ceremony honoring accomplished and up-and-coming writers.

To fulfill this charge, we must create a sustainable institution with strong financial reserves. We need your help to accomplish this.

In essence, the Foundation:
• Helps writers produce high-quality literature
• Creates a supportive community for writers
• Provides financial support to emerging writers
• Celebrates artistic excellence
• Connects readers to influential authors

Since the Foundation began in 1990:

339
Recognized with Legacy Award nominations

94
Students honored with College Writing Awards

1k+
Writers participated in Hurston/Wright workshops

2k+
Readers attended Hurston/Wright public readings

Literature is a struggle over the nature of reality.
— Richard Wright
CELEBRATING THIRTY YEARS
OF LITERARY EXCELLENCE

1990–1995
• Marita Golden & Clyde McElvene create the Hurston/Wright Foundation, incorporated in Washington, DC. The foundation is headquartered at George Mason University. —1990
• The College Writers Award is established. The first winner is Paul Derek Moore of Georgetown University. —1991
• William Henry Lewis is the first College Award winner to publish a book, In the Arms of Our Elders. —1993
• The Foundation forms a partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University and moves its headquarters to Richmond, VA. —1995

1996–2000
• The summer writing workshop debuts at Virginia Commonwealth University. The Foundation receives its largest individual gift of $5,000 from author John Grisham. —1996
• The Writers Week Workshop, held in California at Saint Mary’s College, becomes the nation’s first bi-coastal workshop. —1998
• Crystal Wilkinson and Michele Bowen, graduates of Hurston/Wright’s first Writers Week, sign book contracts. —2000
• Writers Week Workshops move to Howard University in Washington, D.C. —2000

2001–2005
• The Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, the brainchild of novelist E. Lynn Harris, debuts. Borders Books underwrites the awards. —2002
• Gumbo: An Anthology of African American Writing, edited by Marita Golden and E. Lynn Harris, is published by Broadway Books, a division of Random House. —2002
• Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie wins the Debut Fiction Award for Purple Hibiscus. —2002
• The 15th Anniversary and Legacy Awards ceremony in New York City honors photographer Gordon Parks and literary agent Marie Brown with North Star Awards. —2002

2006–2010
• Terry McMillan headlines the 20th anniversary and Legacy Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. —2010
• A new public reading series honors our namesakes. The first commemoration is for Richard Wright. —2013
• Former U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey conducts the first cross-genre Hurston/Wright Master Class. —2015
• A new partnership with Busboys and Poets and Politics and Prose produces public readings by workshop leaders and Legacy Award nominees. —2015
• Actress S. Epatha Merkerson hosts the 25th anniversary celebration, with Edwidge Danticat receiving the North Star Award. —2015

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2016–2020
• The College Award, underwritten by Amistad/HarperCollins Publishers, goes to poet Joy Priest, who will publish her first book in 2020. —2016
• 200 people gathered to pay tribute to legendary author Ernest Gaines. —2016
• Workshop alumni organize a panel to celebrate Hurston/Wright during the Association of Writers and Writing Programs convention. —2017
• Zora Neale Hurston’s birthday commemoration draws an overflow crowd to Sankofa Bookstore to discuss Hurston’s work at Howard University. —2018
• Foundation convenes a public reading in partnership with MahoganyBooks to reach readers in an underserved area of Washington, DC. —2018
• Author M.K. Asante leads a presentation for charter school students. WPFW public radio simulcasts his Q&A with students. —2019
• ESPN’s “The Undefeated” partners with the Foundation to launch the Crossover Award to identify new voices in creative nonfiction. —2020

OUR REQUEST FOR SUPPORT
We need your support on this journey of continued literary excellence. Only with increased funding, individual donations, and corporate support can we amplify our commitment to serving more writers and developing the best in Black writing. We invite you to have a conversation with our Board Chair, Audrey Hopkins — info@hurstonwright.org

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.

Founders: Marita Golden and Clyde McElvene
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