NCWN to Offer Writingest State Online Conference in November

WINSTON-SALEM—True, the Writingest State Online Conference likely will not be as fun as the Network’s traditional Fall Conference.

Also true: the Writingest State Online Conference will not be as likely to kill you.

This November, the North Carolina Writers’ Network will offer its first-ever Writingest State Online Conference, a five-day festival for writers.

The WSOC will feature classes and conversations on the craft and business of writing, as well as a keynote address by North Carolina Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green, a Pre-Conference Tailgate, and a Prompt Party to

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The Writers’ Network News welcomes letters and contributions from readers and prints them as space permits and at the discretion of the editor. Send your comments, questions, and suggestions to: Editor, Writers’ Network News, c/o NCWN, PO Box 21591, Winston-Salem, NC 27120 or Calendar@ncwriters.org. Published items may be edited for clarity and length.
I want to write a book. How do I start?”

I have lost count of the number of times I have been asked this question. As a high school English teacher, it is expected, but I tend to get the request from just as many adults as young people. If I am candid, this question exhausts me. An honest answer is too complex to formulate. I worry that my immediate answer tends to come across as snarky—just start writing.

Then I am reminded of the countless number of writers who have selflessly guided me in my own work. What would they say? Perhaps, they’d say the same thing—but they would say it as a beginning and not an end to a conversation. Just as any citizenship requires, our lives as writer-citizens demand we become responsible to the community that embraces us. We are both a safe place for others to be vulnerable (ask the vulnerable question) and tasked with using our own voices to amplify. We cannot assume our voices are enough. The conversations must be sustained.

Living in rural western North Carolina means that my writing community is limited. West of Asheville, writers’ groups and workshops are not often prevalent. The North Carolina Writers’ Network helps to close this distance gap. For me, it has removed my own vulnerable question—transform it into a statement so natural that I waste no time debating it. By being a member, we have already started. “If” becomes “when.” “How?” becomes “This is how she or he did it.”

Last week I stood on a marooned sailboat beached on a sliver of an island in the intercoastal waterway near Charleston, South Carolina. It rested on its side, and a good-time-loving local had strung a rope swing to its rigging, inviting visitors to unleash their inner “Hey, you guys!” Goonies moment. I had seen others make the leap, but standing on top of the slick, unsteady vessel made me question my ability to wrap my shaky legs around the swing’s plank seat and jump. The sharp, rusty metal of the wreckage heightened my trepidation.

My socially distanced (yes, I said it) friends stood on shore and cheered me on. More importantly, they instructed me. They took me step-by-step through the climb, to the positioning on the swing, to how not to smash my rather long legs into the side of the
boat on the return. They didn’t say, “Just
start swinging!”

Writers in the Network don’t say, “Just
start writing.” They share their success—
the how to avoid literary tetanus—and
they cheer your ascent over the uncertain
waters. They build a whole community’s
worth of conversation.

As an enrolled member of the Eastern
Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI), I have a
responsibility to my tribe. As the first pub-
lished novelist in the EBCI, and one of our
few published writers, it is clear where my
specific responsibility lies. As one might
expect, I feel a duty to provide a voice
(mind you, not the voice) for my culture.
However, more and more I am coming to
realize the imperative to share my writing
journey with other under-represented
voices—a journey emboldened by the sup-
port of the North Carolina Writers’ Net-
work. I want to engage my community in
a shared conversation with audiences they
may not normally have access to.

And when the time comes to employ my
own voice, I believe it is an honor to bol-
ster my community. I write policy for and
in support of tribal leadership I believe
in. I write in defense of my tribe when
attacked or undercut by outside legisla-
tors. I write to share our culture’s and our
home’s beauty with others. These are the
unpaid jobs—oftentimes my name does
not even appear on the work. This, too, is
being a writer-citizen.

NCWN has given me a new response
to the question of how to start writing a
book. Maybe it is not the book we should
be writing. Maybe it is someone else’s
story to tell. And maybe we should dare
to concern ourselves with rewriting the
narrative together. ☞

Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, an enrolled
member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee
Indians, resides in Qualla, NC, and teaches
at Swain County High School. She holds
degrees from Yale University and the Col-
lege of William and Mary. Her debut novel,
Even As We Breathe (The University Press of
Kentucky) is scheduled to release September
of 2020.
By now you’ve probably forgotten all about that letter, if you ever were aware of it. I mean the one that Harper’s published on their website the week after the Fourth of July, signed by 153 of the most prominent writers, journalists, scholars, and intellectuals of our age.

I don’t blame you for forgetting or ignoring it. We have more pressing matters—pandemics and political power—to worry about.

Why on Earth, then—you may ask, and ask rightly—am I bringing it up again now?

I bring it up again now because that letter illuminates the crisis underlying and exacerbating the other crises of our time: the crisis of authority, in which we can’t trust many we should be able to, and many don’t trust those we can and must.

But first, let me talk about the weather.

My wife and I not long ago talked about the distinction between being wrong, and being invalid. Say I look outside and see a wall of gray clouds, feel the wind picking up, and hear thunder. I tell my wife a storm’s coming up . . . but then the clouds clear, the wind dies down, the sound of thunder fades. My statement was wrong, but it was not invalid: I spoke from solid evidence. I just didn’t have enough evidence, or I misinterpreted what I had.

If I keep insisting, though, that a storm’s coming up; or if I hear fireworks, assume it’s thunder, and insist a storm’s coming up; or walk by a sprinkler, feel the drops on my skin, and decide the storm is here, then my statement’s not just wrong, but invalid, and stupid.

If, with not a cloud in the sky or rain in the forecast, I insist a storm’s coming up, because I don’t feel like mowing the yard, then my statement’s invalid because of bad faith.

Others have responded to and deconstructed that letter far more effectively than I could, usually homing in on the letter’s cautions about “cancel culture.” That term has become, by some measures, much like “political correctness”: a boogeyman divorced from the original intent and meaning. In other measures it’s like great white sharks: a real threat that’s not nearly as threatening as it’s made out to be.
To me, though, “bad faith” is at the crux of the arguments over this letter. Bad-faith arguments are a form of sophistry, discourse as a game to be won or lost, its aim not the true or the good, the reasonable or the practical or the efficient, but only the “own,” only the “burn,” only power.

Bad faith is so common we assume it everywhere, from everyone, even in the ignorant, even in the merely mistaken.

Being mistaken, or even ignorant, is no shame, unless you have easy access to key information and can’t be bothered to learn it . . . or you’re one of the most prominent writers, journalists, scholars, and intellectuals of our age, in which case it’s your well-paid job to collect as much of the key information as you can, and analyze it soundly.

A pandemic has swept a planet that already was burning, and somehow the scientific consensus on how to stop both has become a “political” issue. When we see bad faith everywhere, we see it nowhere, and so we have in positions of authority people we cannot trust, who—by word and example—sow doubt in those we not only can trust, but must, if we are to survive.

That is the scandal of the Harper’s letter, and why it is worth bringing up again now. People in positions of authority in the world of letters, the world of language and deep thought; people with the highest, most secure platforms; people who are among the most well-paid for writing well, signed on to such a poorly written letter, such a poorly thought-out statement.

They betrayed our trust. They fell down on their jobs. They took their knowledge, their “rightness,” for granted, and added to the excess of mistrust in the world.

“Now more than ever” is a cliché banal enough to cost most any writer their job, and for good reason . . . except when we’re facing multiple existential crises at once, the Great Influenza and the Great Depression and Krystallnacht and the Summer of ’68 all falling atop each other while the Siberian Arctic tops 100 degrees. In that case we can say, with not ‘good’ but excellent reason: Now more than ever, we need our thinkers to think well, to think hard, to choose their words and their stands not just with care but with love and devotion.

We need to be able to trust those well-paid to search, to examine, to analyze, to explain. We need them to take nothing for granted—not our trust, not their own rightness, not their own positions.

We are writers, too, though, and so we have our job to do, as well. We care for words: we must examine them with care, those we write and those we read. We have platforms—probably not so lofty, well-paid, or secure, but still platforms—and we have to use them with honesty, responsibility, and gratitude.

Now, more than ever. ☷
As a writer, I write. As a writer, I also read. I realize I have minor influence as a writer—my audience isn’t very large. As a reader, however, I have the opportunity to engage with stories much larger than my everyday world.

Reading is an essential aspect of being a writer-citizen.

During COVID-19, and in the throes of an election year, I decided to be more intentional about reading. Here’s my personal list of how to read as a writer-citizen.

Read beyond your favorite genre. Reading outside of your preferred genre makes you a better writer. In April, I hunkered down with a bestselling thriller authored by a friend of a friend (I wouldn’t have known about it otherwise). I enjoyed reading a fast-paced, plot-driven novel, and discovered new techniques for fiction writing. The novel also provided a fascinating glimpse into off-the-grid homesteading in rural Michigan, a completely foreign concept and geography to me (*The Marsh King’s Daughter* by Karin Dionne).

Read beyond your cultural bubble. If this summer has taught me anything, it is that historical truths can be contested, and there are limitations to the stories I use to define my worldview. I spent the first half of 2020 reading immigrant writers and other writers of color. Highlights include *A Burning* by Megha Majumdar. Mikki Kendall’s *Hood Feminism* clarified many issues urgent to Black women.

Read a regional novel. Southern writers like to think we’ve perfected the regional novel (cue Lee Smith, Ron Rash, Thomas Wolfe). We don’t own literary sense of place, however. I recently stumbled across Alice Hoffman’s *Here on Earth*. Hoffman is a bestselling literary fiction author, and this was my first introduction to her work. I enjoyed experiencing the magical side of small-town Massachusetts, a trademark of Hoffman’s writing, through her characters’ Yankee sensibilities.

Read longform work by an investigative journalist. This kind of writing can shift public opinion and inform public policy. Investigative journalism is also disappearing. The coronavirus has shuttered more than thirty struggling newsrooms since March, and 1,800 newspapers have closed since 2004. Communities lose vital advo-
cates when local journalism dies. When it comes to regional issues, I recommend anything by Barry Yeoman, who often writes about the environment. Issac Bailey is an African-American journalist based in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, who reports nationally on criminal justice and race.

Read political satire. It is an election year, and satire is sometimes the most on-point, irreverent commentary on what feels like a very surreal moment. Enter the Aardvark by Jessica Anthony is a short, fast-paced read, and one of my personal favorite books so far of 2020. Special props to an author who turned a stuffed aardvark into a major character. Also visit TheOnion.com and McSweeney’s.net for short, daily reads.

Read something published by an indie press. Indie presses often celebrate craft and voice, so one can find unexpected treasures that larger publishers might miss. North Carolina is home to some mighty indie poetry presses: Unicorn Press, Bull City Press, and Press 53 (which publishes poetry and short stories). Blair publishes fiction and nonfiction. Their forthcoming The Baddest Girl on the Planet (March, 2021) by Heather Frese is a funny, endearing contemporary Outer Banks novel. Frese is the latest winner of Blair’s annual Lee Smith Novel Prize.

Read something suggested by your local independent bookstore. Not every community is blessed with an indie bookstore, but please give your support if there’s one near you. Booksellers are connected to the publishing industry and can suggest books you didn’t know existed. Each bookstore has its own personality. Indie bookstores give literary community, and literary citizenship, literal space to shape cities across North Carolina and the nation.
All of us here on the Network staff are excited about this Fall, 2020 issue of The Writers’ Network News, which aims to showcase the many admirable contributions of writer-citizens.

“All writing is political,” claimed Silas House, when he gave the Keynote Address at the North Carolina Writers’ Network 2011 Fall Conference.

What he meant, of course, is not that all writing is politically oriented, as in blue or red, but that writing can’t help but be political—as in socially aware—if the writing is honest and true.

Writers are, by nature, curious beasts. Whereas non-writers might go and read an article on Wikipedia if they want to learn something new, that kind of superficial understanding isn’t enough for wordsmiths like us. No, if we want to learn about something, we need to write about it to understand it fully. Only after we’ve written about it can we then participate again in the world.

If we’re any kind of writers at all, then we’re nothing if not curious: about where people come from; about why folks talk funny; about why this and not that. In this sense, then, all of us are writer-citizens.

As good readers, it’s curiosity that makes us turn the page, to see what happens next. As good writers, it’s curiosity that forces us to examine subjects from a multitude of angles; to always consider the reader; and to always be fair, big-hearted, and generous when remembering that the world stretches far beyond our little, individual islands.

Hopefully, our writing sees the light of day occasionally too, of course, once in a while, but that sort of misses the point.

From Tessie Castillo’s riveting interview on p. 12 to the examination of the writings and theatrically oriented activism of Paul Green (p. 18), this issue is stuffed with profiles of and insights from writers whose curiosity is never satisfied.

May it be so for all of us. ☺
THE FINE PRINT:

Refunds and Cancellations: Cancellations must be made in writing and arrive at the Network by 4:00 pm on Friday, November 6, 2020, for you to receive a refund of the registration fee, less 25%. No-shows or cancellations after November 6 are nonrefundable. Send all refund requests to ed@ncwriters.org.

Scholarships: Limited general scholarship aid is available for the Fall Conference. To apply, send your current CV and a statement of writing intent—describing your background and goals as a writer—to scholarships@ncwriters.org. Scholarships include:

The Mary Belle Campbell Scholarships are open to applications from poets who teach full-time. For more information, please e-mail scholarships@ncwriters.org (see p. 11).

The receipt deadline for all scholarship applications is Friday, October 16.
WSOC 2020: FEES & DEADLINES

FEES

Early Registration
Member Rates

$275 - full conference
(Five 90-minute classes + all other sessions, incl. Agents & Editors panel & Prompt Party)

$245 - full conference
For Seniors 65+, Full-Time Students, Writers 30 or Under, Writers w/ Disabilities

$155 – half conference
(any 3 classes + Agents & Editors panel)

$135- half conference
For Seniors 65+, Full-Time Students, Writers 30 or Under, Writers w/ Disabilities

$50 - Agents & Editors panel discussion ONLY

$35 - Single Class

Nonmember Rates

$400 - full conference
(Five 90-minute classes + all other sessions, incl. Agents & Editors panel & Prompt Party)

$75 - single class

DEADLINES

Friday, October 16
Deadline to apply for WSOC scholarship aid

Friday, November 6, 4:00 pm
Deadline to cancel registration (less 25%)

Monday, November 9, 9:00 am
Deadline to register for WSOC

Tuesday, November 10
WSOC begins

Friday, November 13
Deadline to submit questions for Agents & Editors panel
(NCWN does not guarantee all submitted questions will be asked.)
get creative juices flowing, online Open Mic readings and Happy Hour virtual gatherings, and an Agents & Editors panel discussion.

“This will be the first year since 1985 that the North Carolina Writers’ Network has not offered its Fall Conference, and we hope it will be the last,” NCWN executive director Ed Southern said. “We’re very excited to offer the Writingest State Online Conference, though, and suspect this will not be its last year. We prefer, though, that in years to come we offer the WSOC in addition to the Fall Conference, not in place of it.”

The WSOC will begin Tuesday evening, November 10, with an Online Happy Hour, followed by a Pre-Conference Tailgate featuring writing exercises, led by author and USMC veteran Tracy Crow, on the theme of “Awaken Our Sixth Sense.”

The conference will resume on Wednesday evening, November 11, with an Opening Conversation on “The Place & the Past” between North Carolina novelists Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle and Therese Anne Fowler. Fowler’s 2020 novel *A Good Neighborhood* explores gentrification and displacement. Clapsaddle is a Network trustee whose debut novel *Even As We Breathe* came out this summer, making her the first enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to publish a novel.

After this conversation, novelist, memoirist, Army veteran, and Wake Forest University graduate Matt Gallagher will lead a class on “Imagination and History” for writers in all genres.

The WSOC will continue into the weekend, with a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Carolina African-American Writers’ Collective (originally planned for the 2020 Spring Conference), a check-in for writers participating or interested in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), Green’s keynote address, and three sessions offering two classes each.

Instructors include poet Allison Adelle Hedge Coke, mystery writer Art Taylor, editors Lyndsay Hall and Betsy Thorpe, multi-genre author Mathieu Cailler, and debut author Leah Hampton, a past winner of the NCWN’s Doris Betts Fiction Prize.

Saturday’s sessions will begin with the Agents & Editors panel discussion, and end with online Open Mics and a “One More On & In the House” Happy Hour.

Full details and a registration form are available on www.ncwriters.org.
In 2011, the North Carolina Writers’ Network began offering Mary Belle Campbell Scholarships to allow poets who teach to attend the annual Fall Conference.

These scholarships honor the memory of the late Mary Belle Campbell and the legacy of her many contributions to North Carolina’s literary traditions.

While Fall Conference will not happen in 2020, NCWN will accept Campbell Scholarship applications for its Writingest State Online Conference 2020.

The Campbell Scholarships will further the craft and careers of up to three poets who teach full-time. Each scholarship will cover the cost of a standard registration fee. The estimated monetary value of each scholarship is $275.

The Campbell Scholarship application process will be open to those who teach full-time at the K-12 level, and who have produced a significant body of poetry. Teaching poets who live in North Carolina and adjacent states (VA, TN, GA, SC) will be eligible, but special consideration will be given to Network members.

Applications will include a CV or resume, proof of employment with a public school system or accredited school, a statement of writing intent describing both what the applicant hopes to accomplish as a poet and what the applicant hopes to learn at the WSOC, and ten to twelve poems of the applicant’s own creation (published or unpublished) that demonstrate their skill with and commitment to the genre.

A committee created by the NCWN Board of Trustees, which will include published poets and/or editors of poetry journals, will review all applications and award available scholarships. Applications will be reviewed without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religious or political affiliation, or sexual orientation.

Scholarship recipients will be allowed to attend all WSOC programs, including sessions, the Agents & Editors panel discussion, the keynote address, and more.

Applications, as well as any questions concerning the Campbell Scholarships, should be sent to scholarships@ncwriters.org, with "Mary Belle Campbell Scholarships" in the subject line.
Tessie Castillo is a Raleigh-based writer whose first book, Crimson Letters: Voices from Death Row, is an “autobiographical account of her unusual friendships with four men on Death Row, whom she met while volunteering in North Carolina’s Central Prison in 2014.” NCWN Membership Coordinator Deonna Kelli Sayed (DSK) sent Tessie (TC) questions on the topics of writing and social justice.

DSK: How did you start writing? How has your relationship to writing changed over the years?

TC: I’ve been writing since I was five years old. No matter where life has taken me—through a career in criminal justice reform, through small business ownership and single motherhood—I carve out time to write whenever I can. I have vivid memories of late nights spent clacking away on my laptop after my day job was finished and my toddler had finally fallen asleep.

I began writing on criminal justice issues specifically in my mid-twenties. I had started a job at a small nonprofit that worked to reform drug policy. As I learned more and more about the brokenness of our drug laws and prison systems, I began writing articles about these truths and submitting them to online publications. Later, I was able to pick up contracts to write criminal justice articles for nonprofit organizations. A couple of years ago, I quit my job to become a full-time freelance writer and to pursue publication of my first book, Crimson Letters: Voices from Death Row. Now I write during the day (what a luxury!).

DSK: The most unexpected, counter-intuitive experiences often change us the most as individuals (like the prison journaling class you taught). Can you identify a moment, or moments, when this happened for you as a writer?

TC: Definitely volunteering to teach the journaling class to men on Death Row was a game-changer for me. I volunteered largely out of curiosity—I like risk and wanted to meet a real murderer. But the level of depth and insight I discovered among the Death Row residents shocked me. I felt compelled to write to the newspaper about what I had learned, to advocate for the humanity of people on Death Row. As punishment for speaking out against the death penalty, the prison canceled my class and banned me from entering the prison. They couldn’t have offered a greater incentive to advocate more!
Being prohibited from helping the men share their stories just made me more determined to do it. For the first time, I woke up to the power of words. If a 500-word column in the local newspaper could rattle the prison administration that much, imagine what a book could do.

DKS: What was the process of writing *Crimson Letters: Voices from Death Row*?

**TC:** The entire process of writing *Crimson Letters* was challenging. First, we had logistical difficulties. My co-authors have no access to the internet, and at the time we began the book, they were only allowed one ten-minute phone call per year. (Halfway through writing the book, the prison installed a phone on the prison block, so we are now able to communicate by phone.) We wrote the entire book via snail mail with my co-authors writing and re-writing each chapter painstakingly by hand. It took four years to compile all the chapters.

Second, we are five different co-authors with five distinct personalities and priorities. I made sure to involve my co-authors in each step of the writing and publication process, which included soliciting their feedback on logistical decisions such as content, chapter order, and publisher contracts. We often disagreed—sometimes vehemently. Since we couldn’t meet in person, these disagreements took the form of long, protracted letter-writing campaigns spanning weeks or months during which we all tried to argue our points. It was exhausting and often discouraging. Most of us, including myself, either quit the project or threatened to quit at some point during the process.

Third, the prison administration tried to thwart our efforts, including prohibiting my co-authors from viewing the full manuscript before publication and banning the book from the North Carolina prison system. The most surprising part of the process is that we made it. I consider the publication of this book nothing less than a miracle.

DKS: What role can writing and storytelling play right now in America and in local communities across NC?

**TC:** Writing saves lives. I’ve seen it happen, not just with Death Row but with all the writing I have done on criminal justice
issues. We can argue statistical points all day about wasted resources, inefficient systems, and lives impacted by our broken criminal justice policies. But people gloss over data. Stories stick.

I believe that the death penalty exists because so few people know anyone on Death Row. We don’t know about the complex stew of choice and circumstance that brings a person to Death Row or the many ways in which prisoners try to redeem themselves once they are there. I believe the criminal justice system is as broken as it is because so few of us hear the stories of people whose lives are impacted. We think the system is fair, at least most of the time. Stories can change that. The goal of Crimson Letters is to draw back the curtain through stories, to reveal that people inside prison are not so different from those of us on the outside. And since they are just like us, we should treat them how we would wish to be treated.

DKS: The theme of this newsletter is “writer-citizen.” What does that mean to you?

TC: When I write, I fight. We live in a society that fails so many of our most vulnerable members in countless ways. Writing can expose the flaws, it can connect us, it can be a call to action. As a writer, I feel that I have a responsibility to use this platform to be involved in my community and to advocate for change. I believe that all writers, on some level, feel this responsibility and act on it.

DKS: If you could offer any advice to writers, what would you say?

TC: That’s a hard question because I feel like all the old tropes have driven me through my writing career: Write what you love, write what you know, don’t do it for the money. I guess I would say write what you must write. There is a compulsion in many of us to write, and it’s not
always the same stuff that drives markets and book sales. I was told many times that my book would never be published because no one cares about men on Death Row or because the themes are too dark, but I wrote it anyways because I had to get it out of me. And although I can’t say at this point that the book is a financial success, every day I hear from someone who has been touched or changed by it. I can see the way it breathes hope into my co-authors. These men who have been ignored for twenty or thirty years behind bars are now invited to speak to lawyers, professors, other writers and fellow citizens. I don’t regret for a moment that I wrote what I had to write, not what I was told to write.

As an international journalist, Tessie Castillo writes articles from around the world that explore criminal justice, drug policy, and racial justice. She previously worked as a harm reduction advocate in North Carolina and played a central role in legalizing syringe exchange programs and expanding access to overdose prevention medication in the state. In addition to writing, Castillo enjoys farming, traveling with her six-year-old daughter, and reading books that challenge her thinking. She and her co-authors (who can call in from prison) are available for speaking engagements. Learn more about Tessie Castillo at www.tessiecastillo.com.

NCWN ONLINE SERIES!

"Persuasive Writing" with Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
Tuesday, October 20, 7:00 pm EST

"Fiction" with Jacinda Townsend
Wednesday, December 9, 7:00 pm EST

"Creative Nonfiction" with Tessie Castillo
Tuesday, January 12, 2021, 7:00 pm

WITH MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED!
We are definitely living in interesting times. While I would have said the same thing in January, I pine for both the pleasures and challenges of what I now consider much simpler times.

As we observe and experience this unique moment, the role of the writer may seem at once evident, yet complex. One should capture the detail and emotion borne out by the magnitude and multitude of these events, to provide a mirror with which to view ourselves and a portrait to be examined with the clarity of hindsight. However, I believe that the best use of both our poetry and our prose is not to measure the arc of history, but to help shape it. That is the work of advocacy.

I serve as the Executive Director of Arts North Carolina, the statewide advocacy organization promoting public funding and policy for nonprofit arts organizations and comprehensive arts education. This work not only supports writing in a variety of ways but depends on writing for its very success.

Advocacy is essentially communication with the intent to garner support for a cause or idea, usually from someone with the ability to affect the desired change, such as an elected official. Writers are particularly suited to this endeavor because if words can change minds through literature and oration, they can change our world through policy and legislation.

The rule of thumb for this work is “Never tell a story without a number, and never give a number without a story.” The idea is to capture both attention and empathy through a narrative of an individual’s struggles and triumphs that most succinctly illustrates the point. Everything is more effective when it is authentic, and even more authentic when it is personal.

But the “number” is simply a fact, a scientifically vetted data point that turns the narrative of the one into the tale of the many. For example, we can recount the journey of a student whose path was blocked by obstacles from the start, yet who found their way to the studio or the practice room, and eventually to the concert hall or the board room. But when we add that our most disadvantaged students who are actively involved in the arts are five times more likely to graduate from high school and twice as likely to graduate from college, then every child can become the hero of the story if only we invest in equitable accesses to arts education. By gently plucking at the heartstrings with the personal and then
TO MEASURE, AND SHAPE, THE ARC OF HISTORY

amplifying its resonance through research and reason, we can challenge convention, empower ideas, and make the change we want to see.

Advocacy, however, is most effective when it transcends presentation and becomes conversation. While elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, our ability to engage in active conversations through assembly, a free press, and direct interactions is how our greatest achievements have risen from that foundation, and how we continue fighting for the promise of our ideals. If we are going to effect substantive change, we need to step out of our echo chambers and into the offices and inboxes of those that we, the people placed in power. When we make a request, we say “please” and especially “thank you,” even when not afforded the same deference. If we treat our leaders as our friends, then that is what they will become, and that is how we build relationships.

While I personally work specifically to strengthen and celebrate the arts, advocacy can center on any topic and every goal. Advocacy is often discussed in terms of using one’s voice, though when done correctly it also employs one’s ear, heart, mind, and spirit so that truth can be spoken to power, and power can be distributed equitably. As we struggle to overcome our current obstacles and divisions, the words we enlist to converse and compromise will write the history of this moment. History is not written by the victors; it is written, like everything else, by the writers.

Nate McGaha has served as the Executive Director of Arts North Carolina, the statewide advocacy organization for the arts, since 2017, where he works for public funding and policy for the arts and arts education. Prior to that, he was the Executive Director of Carolina Ballet in Raleigh. Before coming to the Raleigh area, he was the Director of Operations at Charlotte Ballet for seven years after serving as that company’s Resident Lighting Designer since 1996. Nate was also the Production Manager and Lighting Designer for the Chautauqua Ballet Company in the summers from 1997 through 2009 and toured internationally with Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson’s Complexions Dance Company. He is a graduate of UNC School of the Arts where he received a BFA in Design and Production.
Editor’s Note: Those who came to the NCWN 2018 Fall Conference in Charlotte will remember the abbreviated performance of Ian Finley’s play Native, produced by EbzB Productions. Finley’s play dramatized the attempted collaboration between novelist Richard Wright and playwright Paul Green—a North Carolina native, UNC alum, and NC Literary Hall of Fame inductee—to adapt Wright’s novel Native Son for the stage, and explored the limits of empathy, representation, and even the best of intentions.

In keeping with this issue’s theme of “Citizen Writers,” we’re pleased to publish this excerpt of a paper by Margaret D. Bauer, NCWN trustee and editor of the NC Literary Review, which the South Atlantic Review published in 2010. This excerpt describes how Green’s active involvement in public issues fueled his art, and how his art fueled his activism. We do not share this to endorse Green’s views or positions—many of which would seem far less progressive now—but rather his courage and compassion in integrating his artistic and public visions.

... Residents of North Carolina are most likely to associate Green with the symphonic outdoor drama The Lost Colony (1937), which continues to be performed in Manteo every summer. Paul Green is actually responsible for the origin of both outdoor drama and symphonic drama, but it takes very little digging to realize that Green’s influence is even more significant than the creation of two literary genres. As one of the first generation of the Carolina Playmakers, Green embraced Frederick Koch’s dictum to write about the folk of his region, and I can tell you, having read numerous one-act plays submitted to the North Carolina Literary Review for the 2009 issue’s special feature section on drama, that Green’s folk plays continue to influence playwrights—at least in North Carolina. Also, when Green wrote about “the folk,” his plays inevitably explored the social injustices his characters endured. And furthermore, not only did Paul Green write about race relations and poverty, so too did he view his responsibility, as a poet/priest with some little fame to his name, to do something about what he wrote about. Not only did he expose his region’s social prejudices in his plays, novels, and stories, but so too did he expose social injustice in the media, statewide and nationally.

I begin with Green’s written and dramatized “exposés”: although readers may find more than one caricature or stereotype in Green’s folk plays (usually employed for comic relief within an otherwise dark drama), Green did not
romanticize his characters. Many are embittered or corrupted by their plights, and the tone of his work is reminiscent of Thomas Hardy . . .

In a 1995 article on the “Tragic Power and Poetic Influence” of Green, Frances W. Saunders lists the “number of evils” Green explores in his Pulitzer Prize play (“In Abraham’s Bosom”): “poor to nonexistent educational facilities, racial injustice, the tenant farmer system, poverty, brutality, and murder,” all of which resulted in audiences finding the play “distressing and unsavory.” Saunders adds, “To southerners, the fact that a native son had aired such taboo subjects on Broadway did not make the play any more palatable.” But, Saunders also notes, “The admiration of some of Green’s colleagues and pride in the honor he had brought to the university in the form of a Pulitzer Prize helped to moderate the resentment among less enthusiastic North Carolinians."

. . . But Green not only supported the (James Weldon) Johnsons and (Richard) Wrights of his artist world, he also sought to help the (real-life) Bigger Thomases of his home state, bringing attention to the horrors of chain gangs and the inequality among the races reflected on death row. Green found one incident so disturbing that he wrote about it in both his 1935 novel *This Body the Earth* and his 1936 play *Hymn to the Rising Sun*. He also tells about it in interviews: a reporter took Green to a prison, where he met two African American inmates, whose feet had suffered frostbite so extreme that they had to be amputated. The men had been forgotten by the drunken prison warden and left to spend a cold night in a steel cage used to haul the chain gang to and from a work site. In the play, Green drew from his own Army experiences—recalling a particular captain he had served under in World War I—in order to explore the character of a guard in a place like this prison. The play was performed in New York by the Let Freedom Ring Actors’ Troupe of Chicago as part of the Federal Theater Project—it had been recommended for production by Richard Wright, and Will Geer (later the grandfather on the television series *The Waltons*) played the brutal captain. Not only did Green write about this incident, but also, back home in North Carolina, he
had threatened to alert the media to the crime against the actual maimed inmates he would later write about: if the governor didn’t take action against the inhumane treatment of these prisoners, Green promised to spread photographs of them, with their bandaged stubs, from Hollywood to New York. I have seen the photographs, so he could easily have gone through with his threat. The governor agreed to give the men a pension. So Green “confined” himself to immortalizing the incident in literature.

Green’s primary goal was to help relieve the suffering of the individuals whose plights were brought to his attention. He once had a disagreement with Theodore Dreiser over how best to help the Scottsboro Boys and wrote chastising the writer “and your ignorant but well-wishing friends” for “hang[ing] your political theories around [these men’s] necks,” which Green believed was not helping to stop their impending execution: “You keep on stirring up trouble by linking your half-baked Marxism and social therapies to the race question, and thereby prepare seven blind and dumb but suffering victims for more certain sacrifice. . . . [I]t would be an ever-lasting sin for you to use the bones of seven Negro boys to hammer the drums of a social revolution” (Avery, ed. 201-202). James R. Spence describes Green’s intent “then and in later fights [as being] to save the individual, without regard for long-range social goals” (169). Green was a civil rights activist, not an armchair/academic Marxist. As Alma A. Ilacqua put it in an “in memoriam” essay, “Green could never have been accused of retreating into an ‘ivory tower’ existence. He was always actively involved not only in academia and letters, but in the welfare of his fellow man” (85).

This essay’s title, “From the Newspaper Page to the Broadway Stage,” is intended to reflect Green’s tendency to write about what was going on in the world around him. One story that goes “from the Broadway stage to the newspaper page” shows how well Green captured reality in his drama: in March 1934, when Green was called to help a possibly wrongly accused man who faced the death penalty, the Raleigh News & Observer headline noted the “Parallel in Paul Green Play,” and the story of the playwright’s defense of the convicted man began by commenting upon how the situation surrounding the crime echoed Green’s In Abraham’s Bosom. Life had imitated art in this case.

The Paul Green Papers, in the Southern Historical Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, include much correspondence related to Green’s tangible efforts to save individual prisoners from execution—some justly, many unjustly convicted—and to the attention Green demanded be paid to the inequality on death row: many, many more convicted black criminals were sentenced to death than white. While work-
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PAUL GREEN IN THE POET/PRIEST TRADITION

Paul Green in the Poet/Priest Tradition

ing on a movie in Hollywood or a play in New York, Green would receive and send telegrams related to such efforts. At home, he would use his political connections to get an audience with the governor; he was also able to correspond with President Truman on the issue of the atomic bomb—another form of death penalty that he vehemently argued against. As Saunders puts it, “Paul Green was a person of unfailing courage and integrity at a time when he was one of less than a half-dozen people in North Carolina to speak out and write about controversial social issues.”

. . . While Green’s writings might not be read so often anymore, his legacy continues. In the tradition of Green’s activism beyond the stage, which brought his name to the newspaper page (and more important, brought the press’s attention to the victims he championed), the Paul Green Foundation remains active not just in supporting the theater arts in North Carolina but also in the field of human rights . . . following in the tradition of poet/priest Paul Green, who took seriously the responsibility of a writer to act as well as write. ©

Margaret Bauer has served as Editor of the North Carolina Literary Review for almost 25 years. This work introduced her to the writings of Paul Green. She has edited a biography of Green for the deceased author’s family and a critical edition of Green’s play The House of Connelly. She currently serves as Vice President of the Paul Green Foundation’s Board of Trustees. Bauer welcomes content on Green submitted to NCLR. Such content, if accepted for publication, is eligible for the Paul Green Prize, funded by the Green Foundation. NCLR published the first Green Prize essay, by Rachel Warner, in NCLR 2020.
Although I’d been active in local, state, and national literary organizations beginning in my thirties, my activism became a major focus of my life when I moved to Moncure in December, 1998.

I was sixty-one. I had saved money to buy my first home. I found only one I could afford that was within easy driving distance of Chapel Hill and Durham, where I had friends and teaching work. When I first visited the small, brick house with three acres, I liked it, the creek below it, and the space for a garden and chickens, but I learned that a low-level nuclear dump was planned for the area. I decided to buy it and join the fight against the dump.

The local community and N.C. Warn had already been fighting it for ten years. By the time I had the house ready to live in, we’d won that fight. The seven Southern states would not get to dump there.

I had joined the fight and written some letters. But activism was to become a major part of my life for the next twenty years.

I continued to teach and write poetry and mystery novels. Soon, the environmental fights got into my books. *Nuclear Apples* (safe nuclear storage); *Political Peaches* (local elections); *Killer Frost* (injustice at a Black college); *Farm Fresh and Fatal* (genetically modified foods); *Tormentil Hall* (xenophobia in Wales); *Don’t Frack Here* (warding off fracking); and my latest, *Pernicious Poll* (about the voter ID bill). The fourteenth I hope to have out in November this year: *A Teen’s Christmas in Wales* (the challenges of bringing up teens).

I’m publishing these mysteries independently, but I do have readers and reviewers. I like to read and host workshops in libraries and bookstores. Over time, I think I’ll have more readers.

In my actual experiences fighting for more justice and less poison in our air and water, no one ever got killed, but passions ran high. It’s not hard to imagine murder. In the present fight against coal ash dumping in our area, people have died, and there have been poisons put into our air and drinking water for decades. We’ve hired lawyers, lost some and won some court battles. Black and white worked together to raise money and hold fish fries, hot dog sales, gospel sings, protests, yard sales.

In our present COVID-19 pandemic, we are more handicapped. However, we’ve used e-mail and phone calls and shared news—both discouraging news and news that was cause for celebration.
Inside of me, the conflict continues: how to be a good activist, take care of my writing, and publish more of it?

When I was raising three children, the fight was between being a good mother and a good writer. I was active in literary politics in those years. I co-edited *Hyperion Poetry Journal* (1970-81) and founded the nonprofit Carolina Wren Press (1976-91). I led the national small press organization, Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (1976-79); helped found the North Carolina Writers’ Network (1983-87); and was its first chair. I especially nourished and published new women writers and Black writers and published quite a few in anthologies and single volumes. One writer I published back in 1981 is now very well-known, our state’s poet laureate: Jaki Shelton Green.

I turned over direction of the press in 1991, but it still publishes, in 2018 acquiring the backlist and trademarks of John F. Blair, Publisher, and operating under the name Blair, still with a focus on diverse books. I also enjoyed saying things to people in authority that other people were thinking but no one was saying.

I did learn that, if you pick up a weapon, your opponent may do that, too.

I’ve been hated, but the director of the NEA Literature program told me, “If you’re making enemies, it means you’re getting something done.”

I’ve tried to quit so much activism, but then I think of the little children being poisoned, the elderly dying before their time. I look back, and I’m not sorry at all for the mischief I’ve made, the things I’ve shaken up, the speeches, the love I’ve given and received. I’ve been keeping a diary all these years, and Duke University’s Sallie Bingham Women’s History and Culture Center has many, and when I die, will have all my papers and diaries.

One of my private goals echoes Muriel Rukeyser’s: “If one woman told the whole story of her life, the world would split open.” Why not? 

JUDY HOGAN has published thirteen mystery novels; *Baba Summer*, her first volume of four memoirs about her Russian experiences; *Grace: A China Diary, 1910-16*, which she edited and annotated and was published by Wipf and Stock (2017); and seven volumes of poetry, including *Those Eternally Linked Lives* (2018). Her papers and forty years of diaries are in the Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture at Duke University. She founded and served as editor at Carolina Wren Press, 1976-1991. She has taught creative writing since 1974 and lives and farms in Moncure, NC. Visit her on the web: www.postmenopausalzest.blogspot.com or www.judyhogan.org.
My arrival at the church of Pauli Murray started with a Lunch-and-Learn ticket.

I’d moved to North Carolina more than a decade before that lunch, with a job that required me to work remotely for a Washington, DC, office. At the time, the arrangement was novel. Every morning, I’d click the buttons that got my modem to warble into an internet connection, then I’d cruise the Peruvian and Colombian press I monitored as a researcher for Human Rights Watch.

My office overlooked my across-the-street neighbors. It’s safe to say that I knew more about their home-to-work-to-home schedules than I did about the history of North Carolina or Durham, my adopted home.

Buying that lunch ticket was a way to remedy that.

In Durham’s West End, I’d seen Murray’s childhood home, then a dilapidated multi-apartment dwelling backed onto Maplewood Cemetery—for many decades, whites-only. As importantly, I’d read Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family, Murray’s memoir of growing up Black in segregated Durham.

The memoir riveted me as much for Murray’s engaging voice as for the message she meant to impart. Murray was a tremendously gifted writer, able to draft persuasive legal analysis (inspiring such titans as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and Ruth Bader Ginsberg); searing poetry, fiction, autobiography (Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage); and richly detailed family history. Her message in Proud Shoes is, like much of what Murray wrote and did, well ahead of her time.

The subtitle is as important as the title. From the cover, Murray lays claim to a deeply American identity that so many Black people have marched for and still must fight to claim.

My lunch led to a planning session with Barbara Lau, the lunch presenter and one of the designers of the Face Up: Telling Stories of Community Life project, part of Duke’s Center for Documentary Studies. Face Up paired artist Brett Cook with Murray’s neighborhood and helped build a sense of community through art, creating murals of Murray as a child, civil and human rights activist, and (the
final act of a very full life) the first Black woman ordained as an Episcopal priest.

Murray was also gay and possibly trans-gender, an identity she researched but never realized.

Face Up was intentional and deeply collaborative, centering on community engagement more than any product. Several of the murals feature Murray and were in part made by neighbors. Lau and I decided to ground a new project in the fledgling Duke Human Rights Center, to do human rights at home and centered on the house. We never planned on a period reconstruction. With the support of local activists and leaders, we wanted a project that embodied Murray’s activism and engaged in deep history-telling and a commitment to justice.

For me, the work linked to larger human rights questions on how we deal with a violent past. In countries like South Africa, Chile, Hungary, and Northern Ireland, among others, communities that have lost loved ones and seen their neighborhoods and countries razed struggle to tell those stories in ways that promote rights and justice. A Murray quote from Proud Shoes—and included on the mural closest to her family home—guided my thinking. “It has taken me almost a lifetime to discover that true emancipation lies in the acceptance of the whole past,
Accepting the Whole Past:

in deriving strength from all my roots, in facing up to the degradation as well as the dignity of my ancestors.”

Like so much of Murray’s legacy, we are only now catching up. Murray taught me that we have to engage with terrible stories, not hide them, to truly understand ourselves and grasp the dignity of the fight for social justice. In South Africa, that means grappling with the legacy of apartheid and acknowledging it in architecture, art, the legal system, and what is said in museums, monuments, and schools. The same can be said for Chile, which has a Museum of Memory and Human Rights to document the human rights atrocities of the past and teach its citizens about their fundamental rights.

Other countries, including the United States, have yet to truly come to terms with the past. That is true nationally as well as in North Carolina, where our school children still don’t learn about the 1898 Wilmington massacre by white people of Black residents; or the depth and violence of lynching, memorialized in the Montgomery, Alabama-based Equal Justice Initiative’s National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

Murray also taught me to be cautious and deliberate in this work. That was brought home to me recently, when professors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s history, political science, sociology, and Peace, War, and Defense departments announced that they were asking to change their building’s name to honor Murray. Americans have been on a history binge as we’ve watched statues and names come down, some pulled and others carefully winched or chipped away. The discussion over why and what the statues mean is necessary and long overdue. Less common, though, is a nuanced discussion of what’s next. What names and monuments do we want to uplift?

Murray had complex feelings about Durham and UNC. As Murray describes in Proud Shoes, her great-great-grandfather, a UNC alumnus, was a plantation owner who raped Harriet, Pauli’s great grandmother. Harriet was also raped by the second son, Sidney, also an alumnus. Pauli’s great-aunt, Mary Ruffin Smith, donated land for the campus. Cornelia, Harriet’s daughter and Pauli’s grandmother, was born enslaved, and Smith had her baptized at Chapel of the Cross, an independent church on the UNC campus.

When Pauli applied for admission to UNC’s Ph.D. sociology program in 1939, UNC president Frank Porter Graham personally wrote the rejection based on her race. In 1978, the university offered Murray an honorary degree, but before the degree could be conferred, the federal government threatened to cut funding to UNC over the
issue of expanding the number of Black students. Pauli attempted to broker a resolution, but when that failed, she withdrew her acceptance.

Would she agree that UNC has now done enough to merit her name? What about other Black people who helped change UNC? Among them is Floyd McKissick, who in 1951 was one of the first four Black law students at UNC and later went on to lead the Congress of Racial Equality and become a judge. Or Karen Stevenson, the first Black woman to be granted a Morehead Scholarship in 1975 and also a Rhodes Scholar, the first woman from the university and the first Black woman in the nation to receive the honor.

Barbara Lau now directs an independent center that not only has purchased and partially renovated the Murray home, but has (with a lot of help from activists) won the site recognition as a national treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and a National Historic Landmark in 2016. This is precisely the work that has raised Murray’s profile enough for UNC to take notice—and is a model for how we should be telling the stories of the people who have made the change we still need to perfect.

My Lunch-and-Learn ticket was perhaps one of my most astute investments, though I couldn’t have known it at the time. Those of us who have come to know Murray and her work soon realize that we are only just beginning to catch up to this trailblazer. North Carolina should be proud to call her one of our own.

To donate to The Paul Murray Center, go to https://paulimurraycenter.networkforgood.com.

*Editor’s note: Pauli Murray was inducted into the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame in 1998.

Robin Kirk teaches human rights at Duke University and is on the board of the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice. Her fantasy novel, *The Bond*, won a 2018 Foreward Bronze Award. The second book in the series, *The Hive Queen*, will be released in September 2020. Follow her on Twitter @roobinkirk, on Instagram on @robinakirk, or at www.roobinkirk.com.
“Citizenship Award” is often given to middle-grade students who demonstrate excellent character to their teachers, peers, and community. These students take responsibility not only for themselves but for their environment and everyone in it. They may help a new student make their way through the maze of hallways or pick up trash in the cafeteria. These little actions, over time, are the foundation of their citizenship. They may not always be the top student, the athlete, or even the popular kid. Although grades and popularity are usually the focus of a middle school student, I have always thought character outweighs the power of intellect.

Teachers ponder the potential of students who receive a citizenship award. How will this one make the world a better place? Will they step into leadership roles? Will they rise against the forces of oppression? Will they celebrate the triumph of good? How can I, as a teacher, better prepare them to positively impact the world?

After six years of working in the K-12 U.S. public education system as a Language Arts teacher in multiple states, the primary goal is the same everywhere: educators need to prepare students to be good citizens. Although I see the value of standards, testing, objectives, rigor, athleticism, social development, and self-discovery, those items come second to raising the leaders of tomorrow. The question I find myself asking is how do I do that? How do I guide this young person through an ever-changing maze of life obstacles while also meeting the guidelines of our state with minimal resources?

If I had to choose one way to empower the good student citizens of the world, I would teach them to become writer-citizens.

Words can shape the world into the place we wish it would be. Powerful voices of the past echoed through our eighth grade Civil Rights poetry unit, like Maya Angelou’s poem “Caged Bird” and Langston Hughes’s “Harlem,” which begins with the famous question “What happens to a dream deferred?” Their choice words stirred the pot of societal change. Throughout history, strong writers have swayed the multitudes with well-timed and well-placed words.

I look at the class and ask them, “What will you choose to do with your words?
Will you heal the world, hurt it, or leave it in silence?” Usually after a stagnant moment, a brave student makes ripples in the pond. Someone asks me how he could hurt the world with his words. I ask the class, “Can you hurt the world with your words?” Another student retorts that you cannot hurt people, especially not the world, with words. A supporter defends his response with an infamous childhood rhyme in perfect iambic pentameter. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” I wish.

Many students nod, silently remembering scolding teachers, disappointed parents, and mocking peers whose words have taken them down a notch. Pain is inevitable in life, and most of it is caused through what we say or what we keep to ourselves.

I look at my good citizens, waiting for them to speak, to fill the world around them with words, words that give hope, words that give power, words that challenge the forces of oppression and impact the world for good. I gaze into my conscience as an educator. I wonder how to take a standard, an objective, a test, and teach them this profound and abstract idea for which I feel responsible. Many of the students before me, even the good citizens, have been scrambling to fit into the standards box, to meet the objective, to pass the test. The sense of humanity, the power of words, are often set on the back burners for the sake of checking off boxes. Yes, they met the standard, they mastered the objective, but did they become the ideal citizens of tomorrow?

Teachers like me hold their breath, hoping that in the chaos of government tests, changing policies, budget cuts, increasing class sizes, we’ve taught our students to be citizens as well.

For me, my goal is to raise writer-citizen students. Whether they write poetry, e-mails, essays, articles, diaries, blogs, novels, tweets, or whatever new form of writing technology develops, I hope they write as citizens.

It may look different than picking up the trash in the cafeteria or helping a lost student in the halls. It may be healing a nation, guiding the young, inspiring the downtrodden, challenging oppression, celebrating freedom, or savoring moments of fleeting life and teaching their readers to do the same.

Raising writer-citizens is the one of the most important responsibilities that we have. ☀

After six years in a middle-school classroom, Amara Hosinski now teaches English as an adjunct instructor at Wake Tech Community College in Raleigh. She is originally from Indiana but has lived in the Triangle area since 2017. As an intern with NCWN, Amara works for graduate credit hours as she pursues her MA in English Studies at East Carolina University. Her first memoir, Risk, in 2016 was published under Epiphany Publishing Co. in Indianapolis. The sequel, Sharp Teeth: The Monster within Ministry, is up for editorial review in August. Though Amara juggles work, a family, and grad school, she plans to continue writing her stories.
who will be the messenger of this land
count its veins
speak through the veins
translate the language of water
navigate the heels of lineage
who will carry this land in parcels
paper, linen, burlap
who will weep when it bleeds
and hardens
forgets to birth itself

who will be the messenger of this land
wrapping its stories carefully
in patois of creole, irish,
gullah, twe, tuscarora
stripping its trees for tea
and pleasure
who will help this land to
remember its birthdays, baptisms
weddings, funerals, its rituals
denials, disappointments,
and sacrifices

who will be the messengers
of this land
harvesting its truths
burying mutilated crops beneath
its breasts

who will remember
to unbury the unborn seeds
that arrived
in captivity
shackled, folded,
bent, layered in its
bowels
we are their messengers
with singing hoes
and dancing plows
with fingers that snap
beans, arms that
raise corn, feet that
cover the dew falling from
okra, beans, tomatoes

we are these messengers
whose ears alone choose
which spices
whose eyes alone name
basil, nutmeg, fennel, ginger,
cardamom, sassafras
whose tongues alone carry
hemlock, blood root, valerian,
damiana, st. john’s wort
these roots that contain
its pleasures its languages its secrets

we are the messengers
new messengers
arriving as mutations of ourselves
we are those messengers
blue breath
red hands
singing a tree into dance

Anthony S. Abbott

The winner of the 2015 North Carolina Award for Literature, Anthony S. Abbott is the author of seven books of poetry, two novels, and four books of literary criticism. He joined the English department of Davidson College in 1964, becoming Charles A. Dana Professor of English in 1990. His other prizes include the Brockman-Campbell Book Award and the Novello Literary Award. Abbott also has served as president of the Charlotte Writers’ Club, the NC Poetry Society, and the NC Writers’ Network.
1. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to yourself as a young writer, what would it be?

I never was a young writer. My first book of poems was not published until 1989, when I was fifty-four years old. I really did not begin to write poems until I was in my forties, and I really taught myself from scratch. I did not really think about writing poems or fiction until my daughter died in 1967, and I realized gradually over time that I needed to find a language for my grief, my love, my loss, and my memories, and poetry was that language. So, I had to learn how to write poetry, step by step.

2. How does your lifelong interest in religion inform your writing, and vice versa?

When my granddaughter told me she no longer believed in the church, I told her not to give up on Jesus. There is a section of my new poetry book called “The Book of Jesus,” which looks at Jesus from different perspectives. The miracle of Jesus himself, who he was, what he taught, how he fought against the establishment of his time, has always been an important part of my poetry. Poetry is a perfect medium for recording the struggles of faith. It is a kind of prayer and a kind of question asking—not so much answers as inquiries and wonderings, sometimes even profound wonderings.

3. Name one author that not enough people read.

Haven’t a clue about this one. I don’t know which authors not enough people read. Don’t know what people read. I have done courses on Jane Kenyon, Maxine Kumin, and James Wright, for example. And any one of these might be an author not enough people read…

4. What do you do between projects to rejuvenate and replenish for your next work?

Interesting question. My new book of poems, which I hope to have out this fall, came about because I decided to go back into all my files and put together a new file of all the unpublished poems that had been in old files with books that had been published earlier. For example, I published books in 2009, 2011, and 2014, and I had poems that I wrote in those years that were not included in any of those books. I also had new poems I was writing in response to the life I was living in that moment. Poems about retirement, moving into a retirement community, poems about driving for the Red Cross, poems about COVID-19… The point is that poems come out of life, and you have to have a life. If you don’t have a life, you have nothing to write about… So the answer to your question is—LIVE.

5. Ten years from now, what is your hope for the literary community, both in NC and beyond?

My hope is that writers will be honest and open and care about writing, not about publishing. Writers can be the prophets of our culture. They can find the words to describe what we are thinking and feeling and needing—they can move beyond politics and professional advancement to finding the language of our deepest and most personal feelings and have the courage to write the truth, even if it is uncomfortable.
Charles Frazier grew up in the mountains of Western North Carolina. *Cold Mountain* (1997), his highly-acclaimed first novel, was an international bestseller, won the National Book Award in 1997, and was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film by Anthony Minghella in 2003. His next three novels—*Thirteen Moons*, *Nightwoods*, and *Varina*—all were *New York Times* bestsellers, as well.
Class of 2020

1. What is your favorite hobby, and do you find that it influences your writing?
Mountain biking—the best way not to think about what I’m working on.

2. Name one author that not enough people read.
Reynolds Price.

3. What do you do between projects to rejuvenate and replenish for your next work?
After a book tour, the last thing I want to do is travel, so I hang out in Asheville or at our small farm near the Santos trail system in Florida and ride my bike a little extra.

4. Ten years from now, what is your hope for the literary community, both in NC and beyond?
I’d like to hope that the community continues to find new ways to thrive in the next decade, but given the current state of things, I’d settle for: it still exists.
Bland Simpson is Kenan Distinguished Professor of English & Creative Writing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has played piano with the Red Clay Ramblers since 1986. His books include *The Great Dismal, The Mystery of Beautiful Nell Cropsey, Into the Sound Country, Ghost Ship of Diamond Shoals, The Coasts of Carolina, Two Captains from Carolina*, and *Little Rivers & Waterway Tales*, and his theatrical collaborations include *Diamond Studs, Hot Grog, Life on the Mississippi, King Mackerel & The Blues Are Running, Cool Spring, Tar Heel Voices, Kudzu*, and *Fool Moon*. Simpson’s awards include the North Carolina Award for Fine Arts (2005) and the NC Humanities Council's John Tyler Caldwell Award in the Humanities (2017).
1. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to yourself as a young writer, what would it be?
Read more; take more notes more often; travel to more places both already known to you as well as those yet unknown; attend more talks, speeches, shows, dance performances, and concerts, always remembering Henry James’ great motivating comment: “Where emotion is, there am I!”

2. How does your passion for music, and your success as a musician, inform your writing, and vice versa?
Having worked as a lyricist, a songwriter, and a piano player all my life, having done many hundreds of performances, I lean heavily on all that vivid, internalized experience whenever writing: searching for rhythms, sounds, lyrical qualities; the lively arts are all bound up and mixed together in what I’ve written, and, of course, vice versa—kind of like air in a jug.

3. Name one author that not enough people read.

(Editor’s Note: Ehle is himself a 1997 NCLHOF inductee.)

4. What do you do between projects to rejuvenate and replenish for your next work?
Read as broadly as I can; create advance notes and files, many of which will ultimately go toward a first draft of the next work; teach and work with young people at UNC-Chapel Hill, a totally inspiring enterprise; and get out and about, afield and afloat in the natural world.

5. Ten years from now, what is your hope for the literary community, both in NC and beyond?
As best we can, that we will show maximum encouragement to younger writers who are coming along and, particularly, show the welcoming way as immigrants from all over the world, our newest arrivals, begin to publish, all in a sustained effort whereby the works of writers and musicians in the literary and theatrical arts—whether longtime American citizens or brand new ones—help point and find the way(s) to an effectively working plural democratic society, the just and moral society we must become for North Carolina and for our region and nation not only to survive, but also to thrive.
After World War II service in the Army Air Corps, Max Steele graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1946, later studying French language and literature at the Sorbonne while serving as advisory editor to *The Paris Review*. His only novel, *Debby*, won both the Harper Prize and the Mayflower Award in 1950, but he was best-known for his short stories, collected in four volumes. He began teaching at UNC in 1956 and retired in 1988, seventeen years before his death.
Max Steele’s legacy as an author and professor resonates in North Carolina. He was born in Greenville, South Carolina, in 1922 and passed away in Chapel Hill in 2005. His fiction inspired many.

He wrote one novel, *Debby*, which was also titled *The Goblins Must Go Barefoot* by the Perennial Library in 1960, as well as a children’s book, *The Cat and the Coffee Drinkers*. He was best-known for his story collections *Where She Brushed Her Hair* and *The Hat of My Mother*. Steele earned the Harper Prize, the Saxton Memorial Trust Award, the Mayflower Cup Award, and O. Henry Prize.

He taught at several educational institutions across the U.S., including the University of California at San Francisco, Bennington College, and the South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts. He began teaching at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1956 and retired in 1988. During his time at UNC, Steele cultivated the creative writing department into a nationally recognized undergraduate program.

He received the Standard Oil Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching. Fellow writing instructors said Steele, “was expert at the craft of writing and editing, helping students zero in on ‘one good word instead of five weak ones’.” Doris Betts, an instructor, author, and fellow North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame inductee who worked with Steele, said, “They [students] never read fiction the same way again.”
Baltimore-born and -raised, Carole Boston Weatherford composed her first poem in first grade and dictated the verse to her mother on the ride home from school. Her father, a high school printing teacher, printed some of her early poems on index cards. Since her literary debut with *Juneteenth Jamboree* in 1995, Weatherford’s books have received three Caldecott Honors, two NAACP Image Awards, an SCBWI Golden Kite Award, a Coretta Scott King Author Honor, and many other honors. Weatherford has received the Ragan-Rubin Award from the North Carolina English Teachers Association and the North Carolina Award for Literature. She is a professor at Fayetteville State University.
1. If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to yourself as a young writer, what would it be?

Be patient and persevere; your poetry and stories are your power. When I was in second or third grade, my father, an industrial arts teacher, had his students print some of my poems on postcards on the printing press in his classroom. I did not aspire then to be an author. As a girl, I had no clue that the people who wrote the books that I loved to read were alive and getting paid. Most of the authors definitely did not look like me. I was in my twenties when I set my sights on getting published. I had the audacity to think that I could be an author because my father had already published me.

2. How do your passion for teaching, and your experiences in the classroom, inform your writing, and vice versa?

I am most productive and efficient when I manage to integrate my work. As a practitioner, I bring experience to the classroom. Ever the student, I also bring a sense of wonder about whatever the subject may be. When I teach a children's and adolescent literature course, I am studying mentor texts along with my students. When I teach creative writing or the hip-hop that I designed, I am noting moves that other writers make. Sometimes I tackle the assignments that I give my students. A few manuscripts have come right out of my classes.

3. Name one author that not enough people read.

Poet Marilyn Nelson. I consider all her books as mentor texts, especially *Carver* and *A Wreath for Emmett Till*.

4. What do you do in between projects to rejuvenate and replenish for your next work?

I work multiple manuscripts simultaneously, so I am rarely between projects. I replenish by taking long walks, traveling to parks and historic sites, visiting museums, and listening to music that feeds my soul.

5. Ten years from now, what is your hope for the literary community, both in NC and beyond?

North Carolina has been fertile soil for me as a writer. As a poet and nonfiction author, I hope that the state will be as conductive to emerging voices as it has been to my literary career. I also hope that more writers of color will add their narratives to the stories and history of our state. Lastly, I hope that North Carolina’s young people will be able to devour an even larger feast of diverse books.
Regional Rep Round-Up

Albemarle-OBX

Wade Hopkin, Regional Rep, wadehopkinNCWN@gmail.com

When: Third Wednesday of the month, 12:00-2:00 pm

Where: Online (e-mail for invite)

Critiques of the members’ latest submissions. The two main questions we focus on in our evaluations are: “What works in the story?” and “What can the author do to improve the writing?” Until the epidemic has subsided, all meetings will use Zoom online. Please e-mail Wade for updated information.

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A Writer’s Guidepost

When: First Saturday of the month, 12:00-1:00 pm

Where: Online (e-mail for invite)

This online session covers different writing problems facing the emerging writer. Past topics have included: “Fashioning Characters Based on Plot and Premise” and “What is Conflict Versus Tension?”

Buncombe County

Tessa Fontaine, Regional Rep, ncwnbuncombe@gmail.com

Recurring monthly events are currently on hold, but in the future, will include readings, lectures, workshops, open mics, and social hours. All are welcome!

Cabarrus-Rowan Counties

Vincent Vezza, Regional Rep, vincent.vezza@gmail.com

When: Monthly

Where: Online

Check Facebook page for updated event info: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1936971126391810.

Cape Fear Coast

Christine Moughamian, Regional Rep, cmoughamian@yahoo.com

When: One Saturday a month (TBA), 1-Hour Event – Fee-Free

Where: NE Regional Branch Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Rd., Wilmington

Website: https://www.meetup.com/writers-618

The Wilmington Write to Publish Group Meetup

Do you write fiction, non-fiction, poetry? Whatever your genre or level, you’ll enjoy our Presentations and Panels with bestselling authors, publishing, marketing experts. Stimulate your creativity with our prompts (photos/words) and share your work at our Open Mics (Zoom or live). Gain hands-on experience by participating in tailored activities and Q&A sessions.

Christine Moughamian, award-winning memoirist and organizer of The Wilmington Write to Publish Group Meetup, facilitates our events for added networking and friendship building.

Unwrap a Dark Chocolate Promise (offered at all events) and be inspired by the hidden message . . .

Durham-Orange Counties

Jorge D. Cortese, Durham Regional Rep, cortesejd@gmail.com

Linda Janssen, Orange County Regional Rep, janssenla@gmail.com

When: One night a month, 6:00-8:00 pm

Where: Chapel Hill Public Library, 100 Library Dr., Chapel Hill, or regional branches of Durham County Libraries
Regional Rep Round-Up

Orange and Durham County Regional Reps Linda Janssen and Jorge D. Cortese host a joint, monthly writing event for writers of all levels, ages, genres, and interests, which is free and open to the general public. Drawing on the immense pool of talent residing in our state, recent presenters have included distinguished NC laureates and award-winning and bestselling authors such as Valerie Nieman, Sarah Johnson, Nora Gaskin, Jorge D. Cortese, Maureen Kadish Sherbondy, Dawn Reno Langley, and Nancy Peacock. Upcoming events will include Tracie Barton-Barrett, Anna Jean Mayhew, Brian Biswas, and a panel of Fantasy/Horror writers. Our workshops cover fiction and nonfiction, with topics as varied as finding the portal to a story, using novel forms of outlining, writing ekphrastic poetry from art, Mystery and Suspense fiction, writing about hot-button issues, and the power of landscape. We also host panels to learn from local experts in different areas of writing and publishing. These events have been running continuously for six years.

**Henderson County**

Charlie Wilkinson (edensvc@aol.com) and Meagan Lucas (meagan.lucas@gmail.com), Regional Co-Reps

We look forward to resuming our regular monthly gatherings when facilities re-open and when evidence gives us confidence that we can meet safely. Please contact us at opmiclit1@gmail.com for updates.

**Bleeding Lessons**

When: First Wednesday of the month, 6:00-7:30pm

Where: Hendersonville Community Co-Op Community Room, 60 S. Charleston Ln., Hendersonville

From the quote, “There is nothing to writing, you just sit down at the typewriter and bleed,” this meeting is a craft focused discussion lead by a different facilitator every month on a topic of each facilitator’s choosing. Typically, attendees are led in a short lesson, then discussion, writing exercises, and optional sharing of work. Past subjects have included: creativity, characters, detail, dialogue, etc.

**In the Company of Writers**

When: Second Wednesday of the month, 6:30-9:00 pm

Where: The Brandy Bar, 504 7th Ave E., Hendersonville

The evening showcases featured writers and poets reading from their work and then engaging in spirited discussion with the audience, followed by an open mic, with live music before the featured writers, during the break, and after the open mic. A regular get-together of the Henderson County region of the North Carolina Writers’ Network.

**Open Mic Night**

When: Third Monday of the month, 6:00-7:30 pm

Where: Kaplan Auditorium, Henderson County Library, Hendersonville

Sign-ups start at 5:30 pm and reading begins at 6:00 pm. Writers of all sorts and levels are welcome to share about five minutes of prose or poetry.

**Wake County**

Alice Osborn, Regional Rep, Alice@AliceOsborn.com

When: Last Friday of the month, 10:00 am

Where: Center for Excellence, 3803-B Computer Dr. - Ste. 106, Raleigh

Website: http://meetup.com/wonderlandbookclub

Wonderland Book Club

Back in the olden days, January, 2020, Wonderland Book Club started the year off by meeting at Raleigh’s largest independent bookstore, Quail Ridge Books. We had an overflow crowd for A.J. Mayhew’s novel, Tomorrow’s Bread, and enjoyed a delightful Italian lunch a few doors down at Vivace. I had just sent out the announcement for our March meeting, but the next day canceled it, the first of many, many cancellations. Because of the need to keep Wonderland going in

**Haywood County**

Merry Elrick, Regional Rep, merrylerick@mac.com

Website: https://www.facebook.com/mountainwritersnc

Currently on hiatus. When we do get back together in person, it will likely be at Panacea coffee shop in Waynesville, second Tuesday of the month, at noon.
a pandemic, I signed up for a Zoom pro account and scheduled our first-ever Zoom Wonderland with my good friend and fellow NCWN Trustee, Michele T. Berger, to discuss her very appropriate novella-for-our-times, Reenu-You, about a raging epidemic. Since April, we’ve been meeting monthly on Zoom and having a blast, bringing in readers from all over the country and soon to be all over the world. Our participants ask the intriguing questions, and our authors share their art as only you can in an intimate setting—it’s almost like we aren’t divided by screens and distance at all! For the time being, we’ll continue to meet via Zoom, and I hope you can join us for our next meeting. We are always open to all.

Sign up as a free member at http://meetup.com/wonderlandbookclub to view our schedule, book/author information and Zoom registration links. Finishing the book is encouraged, but not required. We currently have a few author spots open for 2022.

E-mail me at alice@aliceosborn.com if you’re interested!

2020 Wonderland Book Club Featured Authors:

Friday, Sept 25: Elaine Neil Orr, Swimming Between Worlds
Friday, Oct 30: W. Jason Miller, Langston Hughes
Friday, Nov 13: Joanna Evans, Sinai Unhinged
Friday, Dec 4: Leslie Tall Manning, Knock on Wood

Any NCWN member interested in volunteering as a Regional Rep should contact Ed Southern, NCWN Executive Director, at ed@ncwriters.org.
# Regional Rep Round-Ups

## Find a Regional Rep Near You!

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DRIVE
RECOGNITION
FOR THE ARTS

Support North Carolina’s arts with the Arts NC license plate.

www.thecreativestate.org
We had a great time hosting the first-ever Squire Online 2020 Writing Workshops! By studying one genre with one instructor with the same cozy writing group over the course of a long weekend, this event—even entirely online!—still managed to build strong writing relationships and allowed for deep study of the craft.

But don't take our word for it....

"One of the best writing workshops I have attended."

"NCWN is the best! I learned and learned this weekend—so refreshing in the midst of our sheltering at home! I am inspired, informed, and loaded with resources as a result of my workshop."

"The experience for me was above my expectations—excellent!"

"This was a great workshop! It was well organized and structured. The instructor was very good and the participants were actively engaged and helpful. I felt that the workshop was well worth my time, and I would highly recommend it. Thanks!"

"Pleasant, relaxed, friendly, but also professional, informative, useful."
Thank you, NCWN, for making a great creative pivot to produce The Cabin Fever Conference 2020.

We relocated to North Carolina shortly after publishing our memoir. The writers in Cabarrus and Rowan counties welcomed us and immediately encouraged us to share our writing experience with them. As new members, this was our first NCWN conference.

The Cabin Fever Conference 2020 came one month into a global shutdown. All book events were cancelled. We were all in chaotic circumstances, needing resilience to perform the new work from home with all of the distraction and stress brought on by the pandemic.

As a pediatrician trained as an ADHD Life Coach, Audrey was particularly attracted to the “Narrative Medicine” session while struggling to find ways to help during this pandemic.

Worldwide, Narrative Medicine is becoming a critical writing genre because it tells “The Stories of Illness & the Power of Reflective Writing” that resonate with most writers and creative artists. Writers will record their thoughts and feelings to help themselves, providers, patients, and caregivers while struggling through this COVID season.

Aimee Mepham, the Director of the Story, Health, and Healing Initiative at Wake Forest University, gave us the tools to focus our creative thinking to communicate our concerns about the pandemic that has engulfed us all. She shared “The Ship Pounding” by Donald Hall as an excellent example of Narrative Medicine as a poem. She highlighted the critical elements for writing Narrative Medicine pieces, and she urged us to share our work with her. This helped us to define our path in reaching out to families and children affected by the pandemic.

Bridgette A. Lacy, in her workshop “Writing Your Life,” confirmed that the life stories we told in our book were universal. The process that she presented, how to turn a notion into a story, was the process we followed in bringing our story to print to educate a broader audience.

Bridgette suggested we first choose a subject that we know and value. Our objective was to write our family story, showing vulnerabilities as well as successes, while
Bridgette left us with encouraging words: “Practice makes progress” and “Match your flower to the best pot.”

Cameron Kent, in “Public Speaking for Authors,” gave us the template for all of our current and future public speaking opportunities both as authors and for all of our other volunteer activities. Quinn Dalton, in “Making a Scene,” really emphasized the method of storytelling and setting the scene in ways that keep the reader’s or the listener’s interest. These two instructors provided information and techniques that we have immediately put into action.

As they suggested, public speaking is a way to promote our book. Audrey has already had one opportunity to speak on a topic related to our book, which has resulted in the sale of twenty-four copies. Several other speaking opportunities are coming up this summer.

Thank you, NC Writers’ Network, for reenergizing us to continue to work and reach out rather than isolating ourselves during the pandemic. Although we missed the anniversary celebrations, keynote speakers, and networking, we learned much more than we expected.

Thank you, NCWN, for supporting our creativity as we began A Season of Cabin Fever.

Married more than forty-five years, Audrey and Larry Jones are parents, grandparents, and fun-loving mates who enjoy each other’s company in civic volunteer activities, cultural activities, and frequent travel. In 2018, they wrote their memoir Falling Through the Ceiling: Our ADHD Family Memoir. They wrote the memoir to reflect seriously on their sons’ actions, starts, and misfires as young adults pursuing college educations and meaningful employment as they all lived with the challenges of ADHD. During the pandemic, they created virtual workshops with experienced professionals to provide easily implementable tips to support and to diminish stress for teachers, parents, families, and adults consistent with the mission of their not-for-profit, Enable Tables Media and TASTE of Success Coaching: www.enabletables.com/adhd-coaching.

Enable Tables Media: Enabletables.com Facebook @fallingthroughtheceiling Twitter @enabletables Instagram @FallingTTC
Everyone has a story. What’s yours?

Torchflame Books

A North Carolina publisher for the NC writer.
Learn more at torchflamebooks.com

Offering 3 publishing models to best serve you:

Traditional. Hybrid. Author-publisher.
The North Carolina Writers’ Network Board of Trustees has elected two new trustees: Stephanie Andrea Allen and Mike Wiley. Both were elected unanimously. They will be seated at the next board meeting, in September.

Stephanie Andrea Allen, Ph.D, is a native Southerner and out Black lesbian writer, scholar, and educator. She founded BLF Press in 2014 while she was still in graduate school, realizing that the challenges that women faced in regards to publishing still existed, (lack of diversity in publishing; the [false] notion that lesbian literature was now “mainstream;” lack of access to agents, editors, and other publishing professionals; and more than anything, the notion that their stories were somehow unworthy or had no literary merit), and decided that she could do something about that.

Stephanie recently co-founded the Black Lesbian Literary Collective, a not-for-profit collective collaborative focused on creating a nurturing and sustainable environment for Black lesbian and queer women of color writers.

Stephanie holds a Ph.D in American Studies from Purdue University; an M.A. in English from Auburn University; and a B.A. in English from Columbus State University. Her scholarship examines the marginalization of Black lesbian cultural productions and the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality that contribute to the invisibility of Black lesbians in popular and literary culture. You can learn more about Stephanie at www.stephanieandreaallen.com.

Acclaimed actor and playwright Mike Wiley has spent the last decade fulfilling his mission to bring educational theatre to young audiences and communities across the country. In the early days of his career, Wiley found few theatrical resources to shine a light on key events and figures in African-American history. To bring these stories to life, he started his own production company.

Through his performances, Wiley has introduced countless students and communities to the legacies of Emmett Till, Henry “Box” Brown, and more. His recent works include a one-man play based on Tim Tyson’s memoir Blood Done Sign My Name and The Parchman Hour, an ensemble production celebrating the bravery and determination of the Freedom Riders who risked their lives to desegregate Southern interstate bus travel in 1961.

Wiley has a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is the 2010 and 2014 Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to his numerous school and community performances, he has also appeared on Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, and National Geographic Channel and has been featured in Our State magazine and on PBS’ North Carolina Now and WUNC’s The State of Things.

NCWN trustees are required to be members and serve three-year, renewable terms. ©
That’s a wrap! Congratulations to the winners and honorable mentions of this year’s annual contests, sponsored by NCWN. Our hats are off to the talent, dedication, and craft of all the writers who submitted.

Here is recap of the contests, their winners, and notable competitors.

Jacobs/Jones African-American Literary Prize

This year’s winner is Barbara Johnson-Davis, who received Honorable Mention in 2019. She received $1,000 for her story, “The Last Straw.” The story describes a young girl from rural North Carolina who is forced to make a costly choice between seeking an education and working on her family farm. “The Last Straw” will be considered for publication by The Carolina Quarterly.

Bridgette A. Lacy, the final judge, selected “Redemption Song” by Carolyn Tucker for Honorable Mention. According to Lacy, Tucker’s work “…reflects North Carolina’s stormy landscape on two levels: damaging hurricanes and the mass incarceration of Black men.”

The Jacobs/Jones African-American Literary Prize is open to any African-American writer who resides in North Carolina. According to the award’s creator, Cedric Brown, “The goal of this prize is to convey the rich existence of Black North Carolinians” through a fiction or creative nonfiction work of no more than 3,000 words.

This award honors the lives of Harriet Jacobs and Thomas H. Jones. Both were born into slavery in North Carolina. Jacobs hid in an attic for seven years before escaping to the free states, and eventually published her autobiography. Jones published his memoir and spoke as a preacher and abolitionist to raise money to free his eldest son.

This competition opens again for submissions on November 1.

Rose Post Creative Nonfiction Prize

The Rose Post Creative Nonfiction Prize is given for a piece of writing that extends beyond the boundaries of traditional journalism.
Jeanette Cabanis-Brewin’s essay, “Plum Song,” won first place, and Cabanis-Brewin received $1,000. *Ecotone* will consider the essay for publication.

Final judge Jane Wong described the essay as “full of gratitude for each plant, each creature.”

Judy Goldman won Second Place for her family-focused essay, “Champ.” Third Place went to Patricia Poteat for her essay, “Lullaby.”

Wong said Poteat’s piece “expands its metaphorical power.”

This competition honors reporter Rose Post, who won awards for her writing and earned the NC Press Women’s top annual award four times. Her honors include the O. Henry Award from the Associated Press (three times), the Pete Ivey Award, the School Bell Award for educational coverage, the 1989 Ernie Pyle Award, the Scripps Howard Foundation National Journalism Award for human-interest writing, and the 1994 National Society of Newspaper Columnists’ Award.

This contest opens for submissions on November 15.

**Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize**

The Great Smokies Writing Program at UNC-Ashville administers the Network’s Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize, which recognizes works of fiction of no more than 3,000 words.

Rachel Taube won this year’s prize for her story “The Gentle Clack of a Fox’s Teeth.” She received $1,000, and her story will be published in *The Thomas Wolfe Review*. Final judge and NC Literary Hall of Fame inductee Randall Kenan said Taube’s story “feels like a fresh take on the South and confronts a very serious controversial subject with humor and wit and pathos. This writer is wise.”

Kenan also selected “Patriotism” by Jason Gray and “The Runaway” by Sarah David for Honorable Mention.

Thomas Wolfe, this contest’s namesake, wrote fiction that “put all the experience of the human heart on the head of a pin,” according to his contemporary William Faulkner.
The Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize opens for submissions on December 1.

**Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition**

This award honors poet and critic Randall Jarrell, an inductee to the North Carolina Literary Hall of Fame. This contest accepts single poem entries.

For her poem “Argument,” Dannye Romine Powell took First Place, winning $200 and publication in *storySouth*.

Final judge Nicole Stockburger said, “This poem struck me with its ability to move down the page effortlessly but also carry a type of tension that had me holding my breath.”

“New Year’s Eve” by Tina Barr was Runner-Up. There were two honorable mentions: “Navigation” by Michael Boccardo and “Canoe Song” by Mark Caskie.

Randall Jarrell wrote nine books of poetry, four books of literary criticism, four children’s books, five anthologies, a bestselling academic novel, a translation of Goethe’s Faust, Part I, and a translation of Chekhov’s The Three Sisters, produced on Broadway by The Actors’ Studio.


Thank you to all the writers, judges, publications, and sponsors who made these competitions possible. ☺

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**Network News**

**Doris Betts Fiction Prize:**
Submissions accepted Sept. 15 - Oct. 31

**Jacobs/Jones African-American Literary Prize**
Submissions accepted Nov. 1 - Jan. 2

**Rose Post CNF Competition:**
Submissions accepted Nov. 15 - Jan. 15

**Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize:**
Submissions accepted Dec. 1 - Jan. 30

**Randall Jarrell Poetry Competition:**
Submissions accepted Jan. 15 - Mar. 1

**Sally Buckner Emerging Writers’ Fellowship:**
Applications accepted May 1 - June 30
The North Carolina Writers’ Network offers an ongoing literary critiquing, editing, and manuscript consultation service for its members. Through this program, developing or emerging writers have the opportunity to open a dialogue about their work with established writers and editors of varying backgrounds and areas of expertise. (For more information and a detailed list of critiquer bios, please visit our website at www.ncwriters.org.)

Our critiquers are selected according to high criteria, including extensive publication and/or editing experience. For more information and a detailed list of critiquer bios, please visit www.ncwriters.org.

KAREN M. ALLEY—nonfiction, fiction
ELLYN BACHE — line editing, fiction
REBECCA BOSSON — plays, screenplays
GREGG CUSICK—fiction (flash, short, long)
GOLDA FRIED—fiction, screenplays
ERIC GLAWE—screenplays
KATHY GOODKIN—poetry
LINDA HOBSON—fiction, nonfiction
VIRGINIA HOLMAN—narrative nonfiction, memoir, fiction
SUSAN STAFFORD KELLY—line editing, fiction
STEPHEN KIRK—fiction, nonfiction
STEVEN MANCHESTER—line editing, fiction
RUTH MOOSE—fiction, poetry
ELIZABETH OLIVER—flash fiction, short fiction, nonfiction, line editing
ALEXIS ORGERA—children’s, YA, poetry
ALICE OSBORN—speculative fiction, fiction, memoir, poetry
A.D. REED—nonfiction, fiction
DAWN RENO LANGLEY—line editing, fiction, nonfiction
AMY ROGERS—fiction, nonfiction
DEBRA SIMON—line editing, nonfiction, fiction
ROBERT WALLACE—fiction, nonfiction
TAMRA WILSON—fiction, nonfiction

Critiquing and Editing Service Fees

All manuscripts, print or electronic, must have a minimum of 5 pages.

Fees: Pages 1 - 50: $3 per page. Remaining Pages: $2 per page. Administrative Fee: $30 for printed submission / $15 for electronic submission.

How to send your manuscript: All prose manuscripts should be double-spaced, single-sided, with 1-inch margins and in 12-point Times New Roman font. Poetry must be single-spaced with a limit of only one poem per page. Please indicate your first preference plus two backups for a critiquer. Otherwise, we will select an appropriate critiquer based on availability.

Submit electronic manuscripts by completing the online registration form first, then attaching the manuscript (in Word) to an e-mail addressed to critique@ncwriters.org, with “Critiquing & Editing Service” or “C&ES” in the subject line. Submit printed manuscripts, including check or money order made payable to NCWN, and SASE for return of critiqued manuscript, to: NCWN Critiquing Service, P.O. Box 21591, Winston-Salem, NC 27120.

For more information, please contact the Network at (336) 293-8844 or at ed@ncwriters.org.
To Those Who Came to Our Aid

Thank you for your COVID Spring donations....

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Founded in 1985, the nonprofit North Carolina Writers’ Network is among the largest statewide literary arts organizations in the country. The Network's mission is to connect, lead, and promote emerging and established writers through workshops, conferences, readings, literary competitions, online resources and services, a Critiquing and Editing Service, and more. Its Center for Business and Technical Writing provides on-site workshops tailored to the specific needs of North Carolina companies. For $80 a year ($60 for seniors, full-time students, writers with disabilities, and writers 30 or under), members receive a newsletter, weekly e-updates, a range of resources and services, and discounts on all Network-sponsored programs and events.