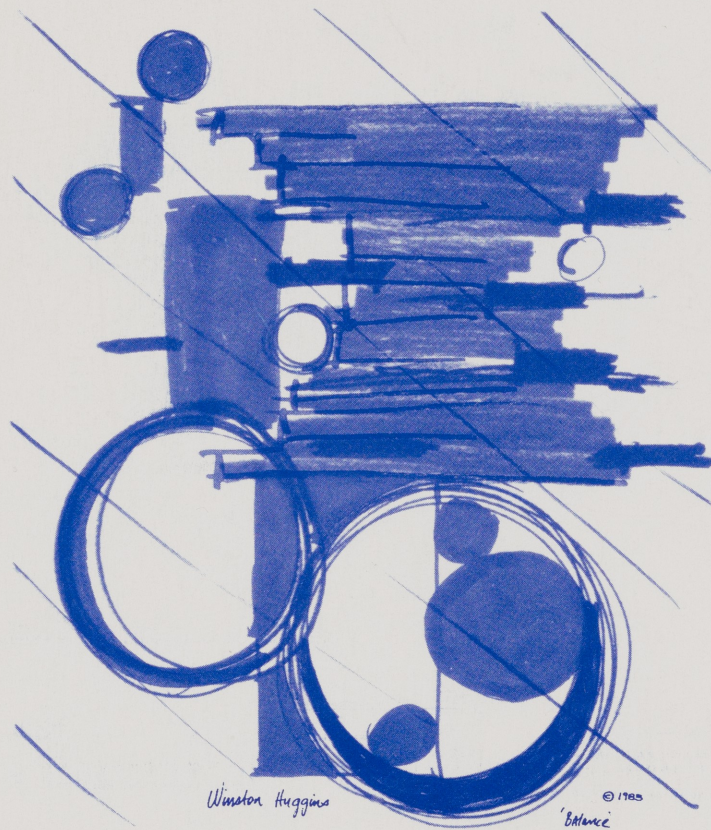


Third National Black Writers Conference

Theme:
New Directions for Black Literature
in the 21st Century
at
Medgar Evers College, C.U.N.Y.
March 22-24, 1991



Cover Design: Winston Huggins

Edison O. Jackson
President

Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell
Conference Director

**Sponsored by the Humanities Division
Funded by The National Endowment for the Humanities**

Third National Black Writers Conference Committee

Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell, *Conference Director*

Betty Brown

Steve Cannon

Keith Gilyard

Brenda Greene

Winston Huggins

Cheryl Williams Johnson

Louis Pogue

In addition, the conference committee was supported by the staff and faculty of the Humanities Division, Doris Withers, Charlotte Phoenix, Leon Johnson and Eda Hastick

Public relations provided by
Lula Strickland-Abuwi

This conference was funded primarily by the
National Endowment for the Humanities

Conference booklet printed compliments of Local 372, Charles Hughes, President

About the College

MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE was founded in 1969 as a result of the collaborative efforts of community leaders, elected officials, the Chancellor, and the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York. Named for the late civil rights leader, Medgar Wiley Evers, the College was established with a mandate to meet the educational and social needs of the Central Brooklyn community.

The College, though still committed to the fulfillment of the founders' dream of quality higher education for the diverse population of Central Brooklyn, has expanded its scope. Today, our students represent over seventy nations of the world. They come from different socio-economic and academic backgrounds and have diverse personal and professional interests. Yet, they share one common goal: the pursuit of self-actualization. To help them realize this goal, the College offers an abundance of programs tailored to their specific needs. Medgar Evers College awards both baccalaureate and associate degrees. It also provides certificate programs and non-credit courses for those seeking personal enrichment or enhanced career opportunities. A host of services, including counseling, tutoring, career planning, veterans' affairs and health care, ensure that students receive the academic, financial and personal support they require for a successful learning experience. Additionally, the Women's Center, Head Start Program, Ella Baker/Charles Romain Child Development Center, Adult and Continuing Education Program, Caribbean Research Center, and Center for Law and Social Justice provide valuable resources for our students and the Brooklyn community. Yet the greatest resources the College provides to the community are its graduates. Medgar Evers alumni return to the community as doctors, dentists, lawyers, politicians, teachers, accountants, businessmen, nurses, artists, social workers and civic leaders.

Medgar Evers College is committed to quality in its administration, faculty, staff, students, alumni and the community it serves. The College continues to foster excellence in its academic programs and in community service.

From the Conference Director

On behalf of the administration, faculty and staff of Medgar Evers College, I extend deepest appreciation to the National Endowment for the Humanities for its invaluable support of the National Black Writers Conference. In particular, we are greatly indebted to Dr. Wilsonia Cherry, Senior Program Officer at the NEH, for her insightful guidance and direction and her unflagging faith in the value of this project.

I acknowledge also the key members of the conference planning committee: Keith Gilyard, Brenda Greene, Steve Cannon, Louis Pogue, Betty Brown, Cheryl Johnson and Winston Huggins. These persons spent long hours with me selecting our stellar panels of writers and scholars, researching the topics of this conference, brainstorming the issues we wanted raised, and attending to the minutest details to make NBWC '91 a pleasant and rewarding experience for you. I depended upon them absolutely and thank them publicly.

We set three goals for this conference. One, we wanted once again to create a forum for dialogue between the public and Black writers, this time on issues related to new directions and agendas for Black literature in the 21st century. Two, we wanted to encourage more active support by the public of the Black literary arts. Three, we wanted to bring writers and their critics together to discuss their mutual concerns.

As we planned this conference, what concerned us primarily was the mounting evidence that something has gone awry with the state of Black fiction in the United States. We noticed that when we asked people, both within the Academy and outside of it, to name Black writers they had heard about or read, they could list barely a handful. We noticed that there were hardly any books by Black writers in bookstores. Even in the sections set aside for Black Studies, there were mostly general studies books about Blacks and very little fiction or poetry. It became apparent to us that literature by Black writers could rarely be found in university departments other than in Black Studies departments and that one only had to look at the borrowing dates of books in libraries to confirm the dismal reality.

To many literary critics and scholars, the public is not entirely to be blamed for this apparent lack of interest in Black literature. Rather, as panelist and 1990 National Book Award recipient Charles Johnson contends, this situation is partially the result of the sad stagnation of themes and techniques in the bulk of 20th century Black literature. Blyden Jackson, in his essay, "The Negro's Image of the Universe as Reflected in His Fiction," which was reprinted in *Black Voices* in 1960, notes: "It seems to be that few, if any, literary universes are as impoverished as the universe of Black fiction. [Of greatest interest] are the things that cannot be found there." Charles Johnson adds that Cultural Nationalism and the Black Aesthetic movements in the second half of the 20th century have produced "little 'good art' and even less capable of lasting."

These are strong indictments against Black fiction made primarily by Black literary critics. They point to a provincialism in Black literature which rarely transcends issues of race, producing stereotypes of both Blacks and whites—whites, because they are rarely given depth of characterization, and Blacks because, by and large, they exist as foils to bounce off larger sociological and political issues that Black writers perceive to be of major concern to the Black community. As such, they preclude the exploration of the total humanity of the Black character and negate the diversity of American culture.

Yet others disagree, placing the blame on the absence of serious, critical study of Black literature; on public apathy; on a lack of interest in reading; on the decline in literacy within the Black community, and, particularly, on the politics of publishing and distribution which continue to ostracize the Black writer.

In an interview for *Time* (May 22, 1989), Toni Morrison pointed her finger at educators and literary critics for failing to inform the public of the worth of literature written by Black writers. She commented: "There is a very, very serious problem of education and leadership. But we don't have the structure for the education we need. Nobody has done it. Black literature is taught as sociology as tolerance, not as a serious, rigorous art form."

Others contend that the fault lies with the publishing industry. Since the 1970's relatively few books by Black writers have been published, fewer still by Black male writers. At the 1988 conference, editors pointed out that few major publishing houses hire Black editors. In fact one editor indicated that there are fewer than ten (10) Black editors in major publishing houses in New York, the publications capital of the world. Black writers are often forced to seek alternative small presses which usually do not have the resources or marketing skills to produce and distribute their works adequately.

While Ishmael Reed shares the views of Charles Johnson on the provincialism of much of Black literature, in his response to our invitation to him to serve as one of the keynote speakers at NBWC '91, he urged that we consider panel discussions on the status of publishing, as he put it: "how to counteract the propaganda war being waged against Blacks by the media." On the other hand, Louis Reyes Rivera, a Brooklyn-based poet who is also a panelist at this conference, wrote to us scathingly about what he perceives as our own exclusivity or provincialism: the tendency to select panelists who have been published by major publishing houses or who have gained recognition from the majority media. He contended that attention is given only to those "published by the White 100 and not by the Black 1000."

Yet, there is reason to be hopeful for the future of Black literature. Witness the extraordinary work produced by the more than forty Black writers who participated in our National Black Writers Conference in 1986 and 1988, among them Maya Angelou, John Oliver Killens, Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker Alexander, Derek Walcott, John A. Williams, Mary Helen Washington, Richard Wesley, George Lamming, Amiri Baraka, Percy Sutton, Gil Noble, Lonne Elder III, Ntozake Shange, David Bradley, Michele Wallace, Sherley Anne Williams, Nicolosa Mohr, and Les Payne.

Witness the success of panelists for NBWC '91: Charles Johnson won the 1990 National Book Award; John Edgar Wideman's novel *Philidelphia Fire* was named one of the ten Best Books of 1990 by *Time* magazine; our keynote speaker Alice Walker won the Pulitzer Prize in 1983; Arnold Rampersad received the 1989 American Book Award and Henry Louis Gates Jr., was awarded the MacArthur Prize. A review of the biographies of our panelists in this booklet and the bibliography we have prepared confirms that we are moving forward towards the 21st century in new and better directions.

I hope you will find the discussions at this conference stimulating and that you will share your views with us and the writers. I encourage you to visit the conference bookstore. I am certain that no where else will you find such a varied selection of books by and about Blacks.

Thank you for being here.

Best Wishes,
Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell
NBWC Conference Director

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

*Friday, March 22, 1991
(at the Bedford Auditorium)*

- 5:00 p.m. On-site Registration
6:00 p.m. Welcoming Reception
7:30 p.m. Conference Opening

WELCOME: Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell
Conference Director

Dominic Nwasike
Acting Dean of Academic Affairs

REMARKS: Edison O. Jackson
*President of
Medgar Evers College*

ADDRESS: Alice Walker

*Saturday, March 23, 1991
(On Campus)*

8:00 a.m. On-Site Registration (ongoing)

9:00 a.m. WELCOME:
Margaret Baker Green
*Chairperson of the
Humanities Division*

REMARKS:
Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell
Conference Director

ADDRESS:
Ishmael Reed

PANEL 1: THE BLACK WRITER IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

10:45 a.m. — 12:45 p.m.

Arnold Rampersad
Mari Evans
Les Payne
Stanley Crouch
Marlene Nourbese Philip

Place: Carroll St. Auditorium
Moderator: Steve Cannon

PANEL II: LITERATURE AS A SOURCE FOR FINDING THE MORAL CENTER IN A CHANGING WORLD

10:45 a.m. — 12:45 p.m.

Haki Madhubuti
William Harris
Doris Jean Austin
Barbara Smith
John A. Williams

Place: Bedford Auditorium
Moderator: Safiya Bandele

12:45 p.m. —

2:00 p.m. Lunch

PANEL III: THE USE OF BLACK HISTORICAL FACT IN LITERATURE

2:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Charles Johnson
John Edgar Wideman
Marita Golden
Paul Carter Harrison

Place: Bedford Auditorium
Moderator: Brenda Greene

PANEL IV: THE USE OF FOLKLORE AND THE CREATION OF MYTH IN BLACK LITERATURE

2:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.

Quincy Troupe
Arthur Flowers
Trudier Harris
Eugene Redmond
Frances-Anne Solomon
Place: Carroll St. Auditorium
Moderator: Norman Loftis

PANEL V: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR BLACK WRITERS IN THE 21st CENTURY

4:30 p.m. — 6:30 p.m.

Trey Ellis
Michele Wallace
Louis Reyes Rivera
J. California Cooper
Mary Helen Washington

Place: Bedford Auditorium
Moderator: Keith Gilyard

PANEL VI: THE BLACK WRITER: PUBLISHING, DISTRIBUTION, MARKETING

4:30 p.m. — 6:30 p.m.

Marie Brown, *Literary Agent*
Erroll McDonald, *Publisher*
Toni Banks, *Distribution Agent*
Joe Johnson, *Editor*

Place: Carroll St. Auditorium
Moderator: Cheryl Williams Johnson

6:30 —

7:30 p.m. Reception

Bedford Bldg.

9:00 p.m. —

until Readings

Sunday, March 24, 1991

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Conference Wrap-Up

Panelists: All Panel Moderators
(Humanities Faculty)

Moderator: Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell

Biographical Sketches and Photographs of Conference Panelists, Honorees and Key Staff



Doris Jean Austin, novelist, journalist, former newswriter for NBC Radio, writes for *Essence* magazine, the *Amsterdam News*, *The City Sun*, and the *New York Times Book Review*. The *Times* selected her first novel *After the Garden* as a "Notable Paperback" for 1988. Her second novel *Heirs & Orphans* will be published this year by E.P. Dutton. She has taught Creative Writing here at Medgar Evers as well as at Columbia University. She is the Executive Director of New Renaissance Writers Guild, a Harlem-based professional writers organization. She is on the Council of the Authors Guild and a member of PEN American.



Safiya Bandele is Director of the Medgar Evers College Center for Women's Development, organized in 1982 as a campus-based support service providing individual and group counseling, educational forums and events, and print and audio-visual materials on women's issues.

Director of the Center since its inception, Ms. Bandele provides over-all supervision for a ten-person staff and for programs which include specialized projects for AIDS Education and women's alcohol/drug education.

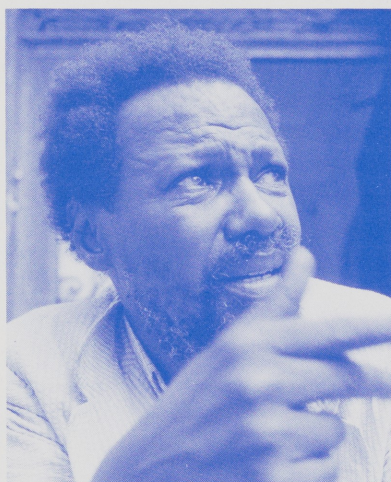
Ms. Bandele, also an adjunct lecturer in the college's Humanities Division, has lectured extensively on issues affecting women of color.



A native of New Rochelle, NY, Toni Banks has worked in book-related enterprises for more than twenty-five years. These include Bookazine Book Company, Freedom Bookstore, Harlem Liberty House, and, for the past eighteen years, McGraw-Hill. She is affiliated with Sisters Against South African Apartheid (S.A.S.A.A.), Black Women in Publishing, and the Literary Society.



Marie Dutton Brown began her career in publishing as a General Publishing Trainee at Doubleday in 1967 and worked there as an Editor from 1972-1981. Among the books that she has edited were *Drums For Life* (Chester Higgins), *Black Women Writers* (Mari Evans), *Black-Eyed Susans* and *Midnight Birds* (Mary Helen Washington) and *Black Life in Corporate America* (George Davis). In addition to her publishing experience, Marie Brown has served as Editor-in-Chief of *Elan Magazine* and has served as an assistant buyer at *Endicott Booksellers*. Currently, she is President of *Marie Brown Associates*, a literary agency and editorial consulting service, which she founded in 1984. Her clients include Harry Allen, Robert Allen, Donald Bogle, Johnnetta B. Cole, Audrey Edwards, Louis Edwards, Essence Books, Tom Feelings, Eloise Greenfield, Verta Mae Grosvenor, Barbara Neely, Ellease Southerland, and Barbara Summers.



Steve Cannon is a professor in the Humanities Department at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. His highly praised novel, *Groove, Bang and Jive Around* was published by Olympia Press in 1970. Other of his works have been included in *American Rag*, an anthology of African American writers edited by Quincy Troupe and in *Giant Talk*, an anthology of Third World Literature edited by Mr. Troupe and published by Random House. Mr. Cannon is on the Board of Directors of the Kenkeleba Gallery and has written introductions for two of their recent exhibition catalogues. With Ishmael Reed he is co-editor of Reed and Cannon Communications, Inc., a publishing company specializing in emerging writers.



J. California Cooper is the author of four books: *Family*, *Some Soul to Keep*, *Homemade Love*, and *A Piece of Mind*. *A Piece of Mind*, her first collection of short stories, was Alice Walker's first publication for Wild Trees Press, and was cited by the American Library Association as one of the notable books of 1985. She has written seventeen plays, many of which have been produced and performed. She was San Francisco Playwright of the Year in 1978, named Best Fiction Writer of the Year by Southwestern Booksellers of America, and received the American Book Award in 1989.



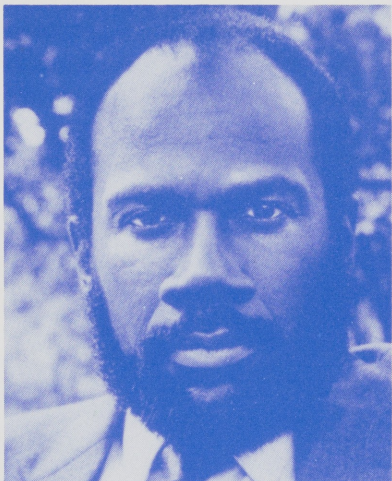
Stanley Crouch was born December 14, 1945 in Los Angeles, California. From 1965-67, he worked as an actor and playwright in the Watts Repertory Theatre Company under the direction of Jayne Cortez. From 1968 to 1975, his livelihood came from teaching at the Claremont College at Pitzer, in the Black Studies Center, and in the English Department of Pomona College. While in Claremont, Crouch wrote and directed ten plays and led a jazz band that included Arthur Blythe, James Newton, Bobby Bradford, David Murray, and Mark Dresser. In 1975, Crouch moved to New York City, where he was soon employed by *The Village Voice*. In 1990, Oxford University Press published his collection of essays and reviews, *Notes of a Hanging Judge*, perhaps the most highly acclaimed book of its kind printed that year. For the last eight years, he has been working on an extensive biography of Charlie Parker, which should be published in 1992. In 1991, he will publish an anthology entitled *Fire At Will*, which will include highly critical essays on subjects as far removed as Leni Riefenstahl and Miles Davis. Perhaps in 1992, his novel, *First Snow In Kokomo*, will appear, an epic stretching from the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties to the middle eighties.



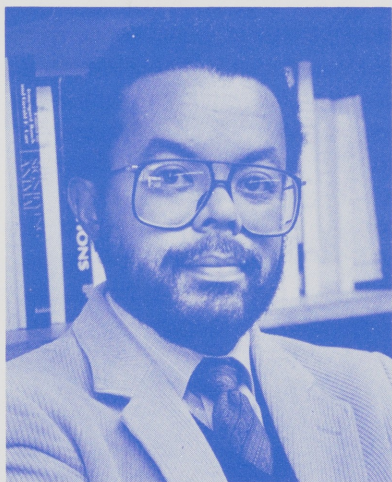
Trey Ellis was born in Washington, DC in 1962. He is the author of *Platitudes* and several screenplays. He is currently at work on his new novel, *Home Repairs*.



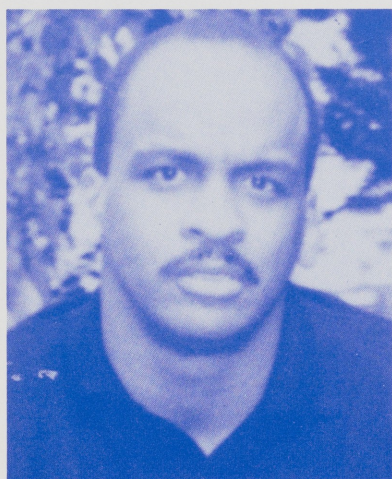
Mari Evans, educator, writer, musician, resides in Indianapolis. Formerly Distinguished Writer and Assistant Professor, ASRC, Cornell University, she has taught at Indiana University, Purdue University, Northwestern University, Washington University, St. Louis, the State University of New York at Albany, the Univ. of Miami at Coral Gables, and at Spelman College. She is the author of numerous articles, four children's books, several performed theatre pieces, two musicals, and four volumes of poetry, including *I Am a Black Woman*, *Nightstar* and *A Dark and Splendid Mass*. She edited the highly acclaimed *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*. Her work has been widely anthologized in collections and textbooks.



Arthur Flowers is the author of *De Mojo Blues*. His second novel, *Another Good Loving Blues*, is scheduled for 1991 publication by Viking Press. He is a recipient of a 1990 National Endowment for the Arts award in fiction. Flowers is a member of the New Renaissance Writers Guild.



Henry Louis Gates, Jr., John Spencer Bassett Professor of English and Literature at Duke University, taught at Yale and Cornell Universities before coming to Duke. His interests are in African and African-American literature and criticism. He is the general editor of the *Norton Anthology of Afro-American Literature*, and the editor of Oxford's 30-volume series, *The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers*. His publications include *Figures in Black: Words, Signs, and the Racial Self* and *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* which won the American Book Award. Gates will join the Harvard University faculty in 1991.



Keith Gilyard is Associate Professor of English at Medgar Evers College and serves on the Executive Committee of the Conference on English Education. His work has appeared in *Black American Literature Forum*, *Before Columbus Review*, *College English*, *Community Review*, *Essence*, *Johari II*, and *The Treehouse: An Introduction to Literature*. His book, *Voices of the Self*, is to be published this year.



Marita Golden is the author of three novels: *Migrations of the Heart*, *A Woman's Place*, and *Long Distance Life*. She is Executive Director of the Institute for the Preservation and Study of African-American Writing, and teaches Creative Writing at George Mason University.



Brenda M. Greene is Associate Professor of English at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, where she teaches basic writing and College English and where she also directs the College's Prefreshman Program and Intersession Immersion Program. She has received several grants to create programs for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The major focus of her research has been on these students' development as readers and writers. Her published work includes articles on the teaching of basic writing, among them "A Cross-Cultural Approach to Literacy: The Immigrant Experience." She is currently working on a text on the teaching of language arts to students from the Caribbean.



Trudier Harris is J. Carlyle Sitterson Professor of English and Chair of the Curriculum in African and Afro-American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She received her undergraduate degree, *magna cum laude*, from Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and her graduate degrees from The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Author, co-editor, and editor of several books, her most recent scholarly work is *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison*, due out from the University of Tennessee Press in the fall of 1991. In addition to contributing several chapters to books, she has published numerous articles on African-American literature, folklore, humor, and popular culture in journals such as *Black American Literature Forum*, *Callaloo*, *Studies in American Fiction*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Mississippi Folklore Register*, *The College Language Association Journal*, and *The Southern Review*. She is currently at work on a biography of Jackie "Moms" Mabley.



William J. Harris is Associate Professor of English at SUNY-Stony Brook. His *The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka: The Jazz Aesthetic* was designated an Outstanding Academic Book of 1986 by *Choice Magazine*. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and two books of poetry, *Hey Fella Would You Mind Holding This Piano a Moment* and *In My Own Dark Way*. Harris's articles and poems have been anthologized in a number of places, including, *The Poetry of Black America*, *Cavalcade*, *A Geography of Poets*, *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)*, *Black Manifesto for Education*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Afro-American Fiction Writers After 1955* and *Contemporary Authors*. In 1982-1983 he was an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in the Humanities at Harvard University. Currently he is at work on a study of the experimental novels of Ishmael Reed and is the poetry editor of *The Minnesota Review*.



Paul Carter Harrison — Playwright/Director — is a New York native whose plays have been published and produced in Europe and around the United States. His early works (1962-65) include the one-act plays *Pavane For A Dead-Pan Minstrel*, *The Experimental Leader*, and *Tophat* which was the first of his plays produced by the Negro Ensemble Company during a special series of one act plays in 1971. Subsequently, the NEC has produced *The Great MacDaddy* in 1974 for which he was awarded an Obie Award; and *Abercrombie Apocalypse* in 1982. Other significant works produced locally include his multi-media drama, *The Death Of Boogie Woogie* at the Richard Allen Center in 1980; the musico-epic, *Tabernacle*, at the Afro-American Studio Theatre in 1981, for which he won an Audelco Award; and *Ameri/Cain Gothic* at the New Federal Theatre in 1985. He is also the author of *The Drama of Nommo*, a collection of essays that examines the retention of Africanisms in the American experience that informs the aesthetics of Black Theatre; and the editor of *Kuntu Drama*, an anthology of African diaspora plays; and *Totem Voices*, an anthology of plays from the black world repertory.



A lecturer in the Humanities Division, Cheryl Williams Johnson coordinates and teaches in the English as a Second Language Program in the Humanities Division. She is a doctoral candidate in Applied Linguistics at New York University and has recently returned from a six month stay in Hiroshima, Japan, where she taught English.



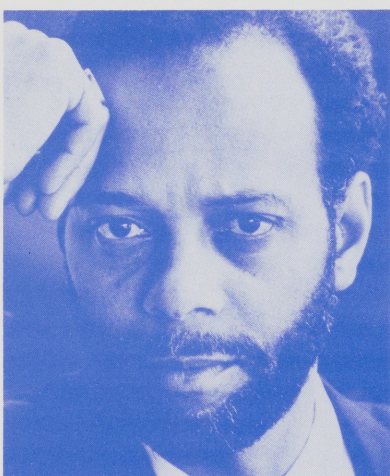
Joe Johnson is Associate Professor of Literature at Ramapo College of New Jersey. He is the author of *At the West, Hot, and Tight*. In addition, his poetry has appeared in numerous anthologies, and he has written dozens of articles, many of which have appeared in *The Crisis* since 1985.



Charles Johnson, recipient of the 1990 National Book Award in fiction, is Pollock Professor of English at the University of Washington in Seattle. He is author of the novels *Middle Passage*, *Oxherding Tale*, and *Faith and the Good Thing*; the story collection, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; the literary study, *Being and Race: Black Writing Since 1970*; and two collections of drawings, *Black Humor* and *Half-Past Nation Time*. Professor Johnson has published over 1,000 drawings, is the author of several PBS dramas, among them "Booker," which received the 1985 Writers Guild Award and International Prix Jeunesse Award, and "Charlie Smith and the Fritter Tree," recently broadcast on the Disney channel. He is a monthly book reviewer for *The Los Angeles Times*, fiction editor of the *Seattle Review*, and former director of the Creative Writing Program at Washington. His criticism, essays, short fiction, and reviews have been published in numerous periodicals. In Seattle he is co-director of Twin Tigers, a martial arts studio.



Poet, essayist, novelist, director, Norman Loftis is on the faculty of Medgar Evers College. His books include *Black Anima*, *Life Force*, and *From Barbarism to Decadence*. He more recently directed the prize-winning film, *Small Time*.



Haki R. Madhubuti (Don L. Lee) is editor of Third World Press and director of the Institute of Positive Education in Chicago. He has been poet-in-residence at Cornell University, University of Illinois—Circle Campus, Howard University, and Central State University. Mr. Madhubuti has published widely in magazines, quarterlies and newspapers. His published books are *Think Black*, *Black Pride*, *Don't Cry, Scream*, *We Walk the Way of the New World*, *Directionscore: Selected and New Poems*, *To Gwen*, *With Love* edited with Francis Ward and Patricia L. Brown; *Dynamite Voices: Black Poets of the 1960's*, *Kwanzaa: A Progressive and Uplifting African-American Holiday*, *From Plan to Planet*, *Book of Life*, *A Capsule Course in Black Poetry Writing* (co-authored with Gwendolyn Brooks, Keorapetse Kgositsile and Dudley Randall), *Enemies: The Clash of Races*, *Earthquakes and Sunrise Missions*, *Killing Memory*, *Seeking Ancestors*, *Say That The River Turns: The Impact of Gwendolyn Brooks* and *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous? Afrikan American Families in Transition*. Mr. Madhubuti is a professor of English at Chicago State University.



A native of Costa Rica and a graduate of Yale, Erroll McDonald is the executive editor of Pantheon Books, an imprint of Random House. He was formerly an executive editor of Random House's Vintage imprint.



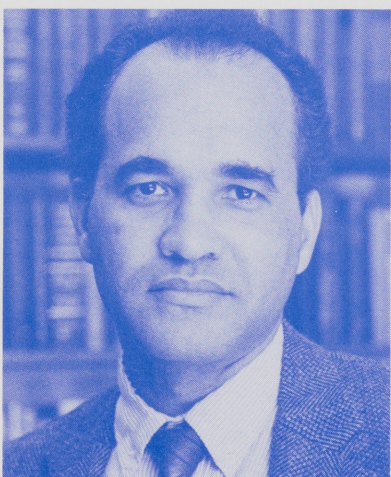
Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell, Conference Director, has published widely in such scholarly and literary journals as *Contemporary Literature*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Black Scholar*, *Obsidian*, *The Journal of Negro Education*, *Crisis*, and *Community Review*. She has published one novel, *When Rocks Dance*, and is currently at work on two more. She coordinated or directed the first two National Black Writers Conferences at Medgar Evers College (1986, 1988).



Les Payne, a native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, has been a reporter with *Newsday* since 1969. One of the best investigative reporters in journalism, he has covered such diverse topics as migrant workers in Long Island and the flow of heroin from Turkey to the United States. Mr. Payne covered the kidnapping of newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst and is the author of "The Life and Death of the SLA," an investigative account of the organization's activities on the West Coast. His 11-part series on events in southern Africa after the 1976 uprising in Soweto was recommended for a Pulitzer Prize by the Pulitzer Prize jury in 1978. From 1978-1980, he reported on the revolution in Zimbabwe, where he was the first reporter to visit the areas held by the guerrillas battling the Ian Smith regime. Mr. Payne won the Tobenkin Award from Columbia University in 1978, the World Hunger Media Award in 1983, and two Unity Awards from Lincoln University for investigative reporting.



Marlene Nourbese Philip is a poet, writer and lawyer who lives in Toronto. She has published three books of poetry, *Thorns*, *Salmon Courage*, and *She Tries Her Tongue*; *Her Silence Softly Breaks*, and has twice been the recipient of Canada Council awards. Her first novel, *Harriet's Daughter* was published in 1988. Her manuscript collection of poetry, *She Tries Her Tongue...* was awarded the 1988 Casa de las Americas prize for poetry. Marlene Nourbese Philip's essays, reviews and articles have appeared in magazines and journals in Canada and the USA, and her poetry and prose have been extensively anthologized.



Arnold Rampersad is Professor of English at Princeton University. He formerly taught at the University of Virginia, Stanford, Harvard, Rutgers, and Columbia. His books include *Melville's Israel Potter* and *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. DuBois*. He is best known for his two-volume biography, *The Life of Langston Hughes*. He was awarded the College Language Association Creative Scholarship Award in 1987 and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Biography, 1989.



Eugene B. Redmond was named Poet Laureate of his native East St. Louis in 1976 and Illinois Author-of-the-Year in 1989 by the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. The author or editor of 16 books of diverse writings, he has been Writer-in-Residence at the University of Wisconsin, Southern University (Baton Rouge), Oberlin College, University of Lagos-Nigeria, California State University (Sacramento) and Wayne State University (Detroit) where he recently completed a year and a half stint as Professor of English and Poet-in-Residence in Africana Studies. Redmond's collections of poetry include *Sentry of the Four Golden Pillars*, *Songs from an Afro/Phone* and *In a Time of Rain & Desire: New Love Poems*. In 1976, *Drumvoices*, his critical history of African-American poetry, was published by Doubleday. As Literary Executor of the Estate of the late Henry Dumas, Redmond has edited *Goodbye, Sweetwater* (selected stories), *Knees of a Natural Man* (selected poems) and a special Dumas Issue of *Black American Literature Forum*. He is also Associate Publisher and Poetry Editor of *Literati Chicago/Internazionale*, a new multi-cultural magazine. Currently Redmond is Professor of English at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville.



Ishmael Reed grew up in working class neighborhoods in Buffalo, New York. He attended Buffalo public schools and the University of Buffalo. As well as being a novelist, poet, and essayist, he is a songwriter, television producer, publisher, magazine editor, playwright, and founder of the Before Columbus Foundation and There City Cinema, both of which are located in northern California. Two of his books have been nominated for National Book Awards, and Reed has received numerous honors, fellowships, and prizes, including the Lewis H. Michaux Literary Prize, awarded to him in 1978 by the Studio Museum in Harlem. He has taught at Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth, and for twenty years he has been a lecturer at the University of California at Berkeley. He lives in Oakland, California. Two albums of his songs, *Conjure I: Music for the Texts of Ishmael Reed* and *Conjure II: Cab Calloway Stands in for the Moon* have been released by Pangaea Records. His works include three collections of essays, *Writin' is Fightin'*, *God Made Alaska for the Indians*, *Shrovetide in New Orleans*; such novels as *Mumbo Jumbo*, *Flight to Canada*, *The Free-Lance Pall Bearers*, *Reckless Eyeballing*, and *The Terrible Threes*; and the poetry volumes *Catechism of D Neoamerican Hoodoo Church*, *A Secretary to the Spirits*, *Chattanooga*, *Conjure*, and *New & Collected Poems*.



Poet Louis Reyes Rivera (*Who Pays The Cost; This One For You*) has conducted writing workshops and classes on contemporary literature and history in colleges, community centers, and prisons since 1975. The recipient of a Special Congressional Recognition award (1988) for his work as a poet and lecturer, Rivera is also the editor of several volumes, including Adal Maldonado's *Portraits of the Puerto Rican Experience*, and John Oliver Killens's *Great Black Russian: the life and times of Alexandre Pushkin*.

His poetry and articles have appeared in *Band*, *Black Nation*, *City Sun*, *New Rain*, *Areito*, *Unity*, *West End*, as well as in such anthologies as *Black and in Brooklyn (TUBWP)*, *Herejes y Mitificadores* (Ediciones Huracan), and *An Ear to the Ground* (University of Georgia Press).

He has recently completed his translations of Otto Rene Castillo's collected poetry, under the title *Por el bien de todos/For the good of all*, and of Clemente Soto Velez's *Caballo de palo/The broomstick stallion*.



Barbara Smith is a Black feminist writer and activist whose writings have appeared in numerous periodicals including *Ms.*, *The New York Times*, *Conditions*, *The Black Scholar*, and *The Village Voice*. She has co-edited and edited three major collections by Black women: *Conditions: Five*, *The Black Women's Issue* with Lorraine Bethel; *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* with Gloria T. Hull and Patricia Bell Scott; and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*. She is the co-author of *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism* with Elly Bulkin and Minnie Bruce Pratt. She is currently completing a collection of her own short stories.



Frances-Anne Solomon is currently a Producer with BBC Radio Drama where for the past two years, she has been responsible for pioneering the development of work by Black writers on radio, and for commissioning and directing the works of several writers including *The Adoption Papers* by Jackie Kay, *God's Second in Command* by Jacqueline Rudet, and *The Dragon Can't Dance* by Earl Lovelace. She is also co-running the 2nd BBC Young Playwrights' Festival, a nationwide initiative to promote writers under 30. Previous to this she worked as a researcher and director at *The Bandung File*, Ch. 4's international documentary series, and as a researcher at *Ebony* (BBC2). As member of a video co-op in Paris, *Dernieres*, she co-produced several community videos, and taught drama in community centres there. She attended the Lecoq School in Paris, and until 1984, she directed and acted in theatre plays in Toronto, Canada. She directed the video *Is A Long-Memoried Woman* based on the poems of Grace Nichols. It won the Gold Award at the 1991 New York Film Festival.



Quincy Troupe, born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, is Professor of American and Third World Literature at the College of Staten Island (CUNY), professor of literature at the University of California at San Diego, and teaches in Columbia University's Graduate Writing Program. He has published three volumes of poetry, *Embryo*, *Snake-Back Solos*, (winner of the 1980 American Book Award for Poetry) and *Skulls Along the River*. He has edited two anthologies, *Watts Poets And Writers*, and *Giant Talk: An Anthology of Third World Writing*. He also co-authored *The Inside Story of TV's Roots*, with David L. Wolper, the producer of that award-winning, historic, television program. He has written the definitive life story of legendary music great, Miles Davis, titled *Miles: The Autobiography, Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe* (written with the full cooperation of Mr. Davis), which also won the 1990 American Book Award. He is the editor of *James Baldwin: The Legacy*. On September 22, 1989, PBS televised Bill Moyers' portrait of Mr. Troupe as a part of the "Power of the Word" series, which won an Emmy in 1990.



Alice Walker is the author of the novel, *The Color Purple*, for which she won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1983. In the same year she published *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*. In 1984 she published her fourth volume of poetry, *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*.

She calls her latest novel, *The Temple of My Familiar*, "a romance of the last 500,000 years."

Ms. Walker has received numerous fellowships, honors and awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship and the Rosenthal Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Her short stories have won two O. Henry awards. Her works have been translated into 22 languages, including Chinese, Russian, Finnish, Spanish, French, Hebrew and Serbo-Croatian. Her novel, *The Color Purple*, was the basis of a major motionpicture in 1985. Three other works, "*The Diary of an African Nun*", "*Finding the Green Stone*", and "*How Did I Get Away With Killing the Biggest Lawyer in the State? It Was Easy*", have also been the bases of films.

Her other published works include two collections of short stories, *In Love and Trouble* and *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*; three earlier volumes of poetry, *Once*, *Revolutionary Petunias*, and *Goodnight Willie Lee, I'll See You in the Morning*; two previous novels, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* and *Meridian*; and a biography of Langston Hughes written for children. She has also edited a Zora Neale Hurston reader, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing, and Then Again When I Am Looking Mean and Impressive*.

In 1988 Ms. Walker published a second children's book, *To Hell With Dying*, and a second book of essays, *Living by the Word*.

Ms. Walker was born in Eatonton, Georgia. She attended Spelman College in Atlanta, and received a B.A. from Sarah Lawrence in 1965.

She makes her home in San Francisco and Mendocino County, California.



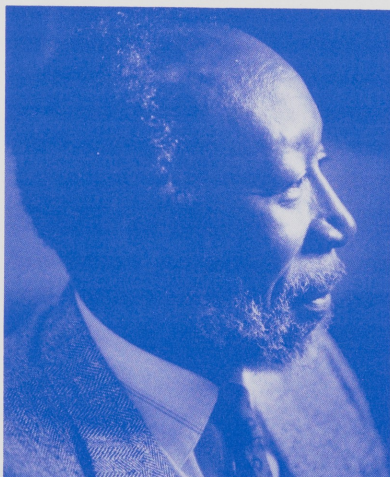
Michelle Wallace has taught creative writing and Afro-American Literature at the University of California at San Diego, the University of Oklahoma, and SUNY-Buffalo. She now lives in Brooklyn and is an Assistant Professor of English and Women's Studies at the City College of New York. Her previously published books include *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* and *Faith Ringgold: Twenty Years—Painting, Sculpture, Performance*, which she edited. Wallace has contributed essays to the anthologies *Reading Black*, *Reading Feminist*, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, *Remaking History*, *Global Television*, and *The Graywolf Annual 5: Multicultural Literacy*. Her writings have appeared regularly in such other publications as *Zeta*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, and *ArtForum*. Her most recent book is *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*.



Mary Helen Washington has studied and taught Afro-American literature since her graduate days at the University of Detroit. She was the Director of the Black Studies program from 1976-1979 and a Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe College from 1979-1980. She has also taught at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and at Harvard Divinity School. She is currently on the faculty at the University of Maryland at College Park. She is the editor of several books on Black writers with emphasis on Black women writers: *Black-eyed Susans*; *Classic Stories by and About Black Women* (1976); *Midnight Birds*; *Stories by Contemporary Black Women* (1980); *Invented Lives: Narratives of Black Women, 1860-1960* (1987); and *Memory of Kin: Stories about Family by Black Writers* (1991).



Born in Washington, DC and reared in Pittsburgh, John Edgar Wideman has written nine books of fiction, among them *A Glance Away*, *Damballah*, *Hiding Place*, and *Philadelphia Fire*. He is the winner of the 1984 PEN/Faulkner Award for his novel, *Sent For You Yesterday*, and a 1985 National Book Critics Circle Award nominee for his only nonfiction book, *Brothers and Keepers*. He is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.



The author of 12 novels, eight nonfiction books and editor or co-editor of six other books, John A. Williams is a Distinguished Professor of English and Journalism at Rutgers University's Newark Campus. Among his novels are: *!Click Song*, *The Junior Bachelor Society*, and *The Man Who Cried I Am*. Williams, who lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, is completing his 13th novel, *There Will Come Thunder*, and is mid-way through yet another, *The Book Without Title*.

Acknowledgements

Major funding for the conference contributed
by
The National Endowment for the Humanities

Matching Funds Contributed
by
Dr. Betty Shabazz and Friends

Other contributors include:
Brooklyn Union Gas
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