



# HARLEM WRITERS GUILD

## HOW IT STARTED, HOW IT'S GOING

### 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2021 from 3 PM to 4 PM



Harlem Writers Guild Historic Members L-R, Row 1: Louise Meriwether, Dr. Maya Angelou, Paul Robeson, Valerie Wilson Wesley, Sarah E. Wright, Lorraine Hansberry; Row 2: Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Grace F. Edwards, Walter Dean Myers, Audre Lorde, Paul Robeson, John Oliver Killens.

# PROGRAM

## Master of Ceremony

John Robinson, spoken-word artist, internet radio host, and Harlem Writers Guild member

## Opening Remarks

Diane Richards, Harlem Writers Guild Executive Director

## #TeamUpfor Excellence

About the Harlem Writers Guild collaboration with Remy-Martin and Jermaine Dupri

## Spoken Word Segment

Gina Covington  
Kay Bell  
Judy C. Andrews  
John Robinson

## History—Past and Present

History read by Betty Anne Jackson  
A word from new HWG member Malik Kirkwood

## Reading of Prose

Angela Dews  
Mark W. Polite  
Minnette Coleman  
Eartha Watts Hicks  
Dr. Robert J. Woodbine

## A Tribute to Grace F. Edwards

Diane Richards

## Keynote

*Kevin Powell*

Writer, activist, and author of 14 books, including *When We Free The World*, Kevin's new short essay collection about freedom, justice, and equality in America; and his critically acclaimed autobiography, *The Education of Kevin Powell: A Boy's Journey into Manhood*, currently being adapted for film.

## Remarks from Our Esteemed Guests

*Dr. Brenda Greene*

Dr. Greene is the Executive Director of the Center for Black Literature, the National Black Writers Conference, and Chair of the English Department at Medgar Evers College, CUNY. Her scholarship is in African American literature, composition and English Education and she has written extensive essays, grants, book reviews, and presentations in these areas.

*Flo Anthony*

Florence "Flo" Anthony is a syndicated celebrity radio host, newspaper columnist, and published author. She is the first Black woman to pen for sports, entertainment, and the renowned Page Six of the *New York Post*, as well as first to pen a column in the National Examiner. Ms. Anthony has made guest appearances on *Life After*, *Inside Edition*, and **CNN**.

*Voza Rivers*

Mr. Rivers is the First Vice President of the Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce and the Co-Founder and Executive Producer of Harlem Week. He has produced hundreds of theater, film, music and live events. Grammy, Emmy, and Oscar-nominated, he is Chairman and Co-Founder of the Harlem Arts Alliance and the New Heritage Theater.

*Woodie King, Jr.*

Mr. King is an American director and producer of stage and screen, as well as the founding Director of the New Federal Theatre in New York City. Mr. King is a trailblazer in Black theatre. With a career spanning 50 years and over 450 theatrical productions, he is a 2012 American Theatre Hall of Fame inductee and a recipient of the Innovative Theatre's Sustained Excellence in Theatre Award.

## Closing Remarks

## THE HISTORY OF THE HARLEM WRITERS GUILD

The Harlem Writers Guild is a forum where writers of African descent have developed their craft projects for decades. The Harlem Writers Guild, also part of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s, consists of member writers who have dedicated themselves to presenting the experiences of people of the African diaspora through the written word. The purpose of the Harlem Writers Guild is to create and sustain a community of writers of all levels who share, encourage, and nurture the literary arts for the benefit of the community at large.

In 1950, writers based in Harlem, John Oliver Killens, Rosa Guy, Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Willard Moore, and Walter Christmas, decided to come together and create literary works reflective of their lives and level the playing field of publishing. They established the organization, and the first meeting was held in a small office one flight above a storefront on the corner of 125th St and Lexington Ave. The group decided to meet regularly, critique each member's work, and hold vigorous discussions on the state of Black affairs.

John Oliver Killens estimated over 400 published works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, plays, and screenplays were produced by Guild members. In the 1990s, the Guild sponsored a weekly television program, *In Our Own Words*, hosted by William H. Banks, Jr., featuring member writers. The Guild also organized writers workshops for libraries and New York City Public Schools. The anthology *Beloved Harlem* (Random House 2005), edited by William H. Banks, Jr., former Executive Director of HWG, featured work by Harlem Writers Guild members including Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Grace F. Edwards, Rosa Guy, John Oliver Killens, Walter Dean Myers, Louise Meriwether, Funmi Osoba, Diane Richards, and Sarah Elizabeth Wright. The Guild develops and maintains cooperative relationships with other artistic and cultural entities to support members and the community and has remained continuously operating since 1950.

**ALUMNI**—Historic members of the Harlem Writers Guild, upon whose shoulders we stand.

** John Oliver Killens	Alice Childress	Robert McNatt
** Rosa Guy	Ossie Davis	Lofton Mitchell
** Dr. John Henrik Clarke	Ruby Dee	Walter Dean Myers
** Willard Moore	James DeJongh	Wilbert Oliver
** Walter Christmas	Bob Desverney	Sidney Poitier
* Bill William Ford	Dr. Beryl Dorset	Charles Russell
* William H. Banks, Jr.	Aaron Douglas	Gammy Singer
* Grace F. Edwards	Sheila Doyle	Wilbert Tatum
Doris Jean Austin	Lonnie Elder, III	Douglas Turner
Maya Angelou	Donis Ford	Sandra L. West
Amiri Baraka	Lloyd Hairston	Brenda Wilkinson
Harry Belafonte	Lorraine Hansberry	Valerie Wilson Wesley
Wesley Brown	Robert Hooks	Louise Meriwether
Rosemary Bray	Rose James	Funmi Osoba
Irving Burgie	Audre Lorde	Dr. Olubansile Abbas Mimiko
Godfrey Cambridge	Julian Mayfield	Sarah Elizabeth Wright
	Terry McMillan	

\*\*Denotes founding member. \* Denotes President Emeritus.

## FEATURED WRITERS

**Diane Richards**, Executive Director, novelist, playwright, and producer, serves as Executive Director of the Harlem Writers Guild. Her play, *Sowa's Red Gravy*, was produced in 2012 by Woodie King Jr. of the New Federal Theater; *The New York Times* called it “an irresistible, lusty celebration of passions.” Her fiction and poetry have appeared in *Beloved Harlem: A Literary Tribute to Black America's Most Famous Neighborhood*, *Essence Magazine*, and the Harlem Writers Guild Press. More recently, in 2015, she co-produced Amiri Baraka's final play—*Most Dangerous Man in America*—based on the life of W. E. B. DuBois.

**Sylvia L. White** is a freelance writer, novelist, and poet. Ms. White has published articles in the New York University College of Dentistry's *Global Health Nexus* and *Positive Community Magazine*. A specialist in corporate communications, external and public affairs, she has received numerous awards from community based organizations including, the *Black Wall Street Award* for Community Service, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Democratic Club Freedom Award, and the Women Builders of the New Harlem Award. Ms. White earned her undergraduate degree from Rutgers University and her Masters Degree in Public Administration from Baruch College. Sylvia White is the Executive Vice President of the Harlem Writers Guild and the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Bridge Philanthropic Consulting.

**Judy C. Andrews** received a Master of Arts degree in English/Creative Writing from The City College of New York. She has worked as a teacher, freelance writer, an editor, and a presidentially appointed children's advocate. She is the author and independent publisher of *An Ocean of Jewels* (Harlem Writers Guild Press, 2006), *A Gift to Treasure*, and a collection of poetry entitled, *The Gathering of Gemstones*. For more information, visit [www.blessedbrown.com](http://www.blessedbrown.com) or CONNECT @JudyC.Andrews or buy on Amazon [www.tinyurl.com/AGiftToTreasure](http://www.tinyurl.com/AGiftToTreasure).

**Eartha Watts Hicks** is the founder of Earthatone Books. She is a NYFA (New York Foundation for the Arts) artist/entrepreneur, as well as a fiction fellow of the Hurston/Wright Foundation and NCI Retreat for Writers of Color. A PR writer and affiliate of BlackPR.com, she also leads writing, self-publishing, and publicity workshops for the New York Public Library, The National Writers Union, and The New York City Parks Department. Eartha is the author/publisher of *Love Changes*, *Graffiti Mural*, the *A Planner Is A Girl's Best Friend* series of planners, calendars, and journals. For more information, visit <https://Author.to/Earthatone> or CONNECT @Earthatone #Earthatone.

Born and raised in Harlem, New York, **Marc W. Polite** is a poet and essayist. He writes about social justice, labor issues, film, technology, and literature. His striking commentary appears in *Poets & Writers*, *Black Star News*, *Madame Noire*, *The Amsterdam News*, *The Grio*, *TIME Magazine*, *The Atlanta Post*, *New England Informer*, and Harlem's own *Harlem News Group* and *Harlem World Magazine*. Mr. Polite is also the founder of the social and political commentary blog site, *Polite On Society*, recognized by the New York Association of Black Journalists [NYABJ] for “Best Blog Commentary” of 2014. His published titles include *Poetic Ruminations of Mr. Born Nice*, *Everything to Learn, Nothing to Teach*, and *Poetic Ruminations*:

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**Volume 2**, all of which are available on Amazon, BN(dot)com, and several other online retailers. For more information, visit [www.PoliteOnSociety.com](http://www.PoliteOnSociety.com) or CONNECT @MarcPolite #MarcWPolite #PoliteOnSociety.

**Minnette Coleman** is the author and independent publisher of *The Blacksmith's Daughter* and *No Death by Unknown Hands*. An off-off-Broadway actress and singer, she has written and performed *Hand-Me-Downs*, a one-woman show that has toured the Southern states. A graduate of Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina she was inspired by a three hundred year-old tree that served as a critical part of the Underground Railroad history. Minnette became the historian for the Black Alumni Advisory Board of Guilford College, and the tree became the focal point for her latest novel, *The Tree: A Journey to Freedom*. A selection from this novel was featured in the *Killens Review of Arts & Letters* for Fall/Winter 2018.

**Angela Dews**. Career journalist and editor, Angela Dews is a Community Dharma Leader, certified by the Spirit Rock and New York Insight Meditation Centers. Meditation is her passion. She has organized an anthology of writings from two dozen Buddhist teachers, sharing their joy of practicing the story-telling teaching tradition of the Buddha. Despite the political climate and chaos of times, each contributor practices meditation and finds tranquility in their respective busy cities around the country. This anthology, *STILL, IN THE CITY*, edited by Ms. Dews, offers insight into how to meditate and find tranquility. Purchase on Amazon at [www.tinyurl.com/StillInTheCity](http://www.tinyurl.com/StillInTheCity). Follow #StillInTheCity or Connect via Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/StillintheCity/>.

**Kay Bell** received her MFA from The City College of New York. She was the 2015 recipient of the Esther Unger Poetry Prize and the 2018 co-recipient of the David Dortort Prize in Creative Writing for Non-Fiction. Kay's poetry has appeared in numerous publications: The Ekphrastic Review, The Write Launch, Pithead Chapel, and Brown Molasses Sunday: An Anthology of Black Women Writers. Kay Bell has released two collections of poetry, *CRY, SWEAT, BLEED, WRITE* in 2020 and *Diary of an Intercessor* in 2021. Kay lives in the South Bronx with her family and advocates to correct issues that affect marginalized communities. To purchase her latest collection of poetry, visit [www.tinyurl.com/DiaryOfAnIntercessor](http://www.tinyurl.com/DiaryOfAnIntercessor).

**Dr. Robert J. Woodbine** attended college in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the early 1970s. Woodbine served as Co-Director of the Harvard-Radcliffe Afro-American Cultural Center, instrumental in bringing performing artists to the university, Gylan Kain and the Last Poets. Mentored by Roxbury's renowned jazz musician and poet, Robert Ruff, he performed with Ruff on local Boston TV and radio. A member of Sonia Sanchez's year-long Black Writers Workshop at the Countee Cullen Library in the early 1970s, he published (under the pseudonym of Ntigurd-Nensad N'Sabe) in her anthology, *360 Degrees of Blackness Coming At You*. He recently coauthored *Sun Chasers—A Novel* with Dr. Yang, Jwing-Ming, and wrote the Foreword to the Dao De Jing-A Qigong Interpretation. Dr. Woodbine is looking forward to releasing his next book, *Canela con Miel y Clavos*, in 2022.

**John Robinson** is a spoken word artist. He has performed freestyle poetry and spoken word at popular New York City venues, including Bowery Poetry Café, Brooklyn Moon, South of France Spoken Word Events, Nuyorican Poets Café. John is the author of *A Spoken Word Soliloquy* and coauthor of *The 2003 Book*

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**Sygnifyn Harlem** with Jade Banks. John Robinson has also booked spoken word performances at conferences and gala events for national and international organizations. In 2019, he was selected Most Valuable Poet during Epiphany Radio Battle and now co-hosts **THE GET DOWN**, a weekly internet talk radio show. Connect with him on Instagram @JRob\_the\_Wiseson.

**Malik Kirkwood**, born in Los Angeles, CA, is a graduate of Howard University c/o 2018. He studied both Finance and Business Administration at Howard and the University of Amsterdam, respectively. After graduating, Malik relocated to Harlem, NY to pursue a career opportunity in Corporate Finance. Inspired to pursue creative arts, Malik focused both his artistic talents and financial education to launch an international publishing entity dubbed 'The Black Market.' He has published two books of his own, continues practicing his art, and growing his catalog.

**Gina Covington** graduated from Howard University with a degree in Communications. She writes spiritually inspirational and political poetry and is currently publishing her first poetry book entitled, *Traveling Time*. Gina is the Director of Neighborhood Services for the White Plains Youth Bureau. She has worked in both the education and health fields as a Senior Producer of interactive educational games at Sesame Workshop and a Research Coordinator of NIH clinical trials for adolescents at Columbia University. Gina joined the Harlem Writers Guild in 2018.

**Betty Anne Jackson** is a retired educator, writer, poet, and editor. She has been an active member of the Harlem Writers Guild for 35+ years and independently published her first full-length memoir, having experienced life for more than three-quarters of a century. Betty Anne contributes her wisdom, keen writing insights, and impeccable comedic charm. Her full-length published memoir, *Girl Don't You Jump Rope*, is a wonderous historical account of Ms. Jackson's life as a young woman navigating life in Chicago during the Civil Rights era. Betty Anne is beloved and a dedicated, active member. She is currently in the editing stage, looking to release another manuscript in 2022. To purchase her memoir, visit [www.tinyurl.com/GirlDontYouJumpRope](http://www.tinyurl.com/GirlDontYouJumpRope).

## THE MEMBERS

Diane Richards  
Sylvia White  
Malik Kirkwood  
Angela Dews  
Marc W. Polite  
Minnette Coleman  
Eartha Watts Hicks  
Dr. Robert J. Woodbine

Gina Covington  
Kay Bell  
Judy C. Andrews  
John Robinson  
Betty Anne Jackson  
Aquilah Jourdain  
Dr. Hasna Mohammad  
Mohamed Camara

Marie Daughtery  
Michael Weeden  
Ron Scott  
Nyasia Elie  
Alfonso Nicks  
Cordenia Paige  
Andrea Broadwater  
Jade Soares

For membership information, contact [membership@theharlemwritersguild.org](mailto:membership@theharlemwritersguild.org). The Harlem Writers Guild is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible. To donate, visit <https://www.theharlemwritersguild.org/70th-anniversary.html>.

### Connect on Social Media:

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[www.twitter.com/harlemwritersguild](http://www.twitter.com/harlemwritersguild)

## THE TRIBUTE



**Grace F. Edwards**, longtime director of the Harlem Writers Guild, was a beacon of hope, brilliance, and dedication within the New York literary scene. Raised in Harlem, Ms. Edwards became the first African American author signed to Doubleday [1992]. She is the author of seven books, *In the Shadow of the Peacock*, *If I Should Die*, *A Toast Before Dying*, *No Time to Die, Do or Die*, *The Viaduct*, and *The Blind Alley*. She is the 1999 winner of the Fiction Honor Book award from the Black Caucus of the American Literary Association. She earned her master's degree in Creative Writing from the City University of New York. She's a YADDO fellow. She reviewed books for the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times. Ms. Edwards has served as a professor of Creative Writing at Hofstra University, Marymount Manhattan College, the College of New Rochelle, and Hunter College.

Grace F. Edwards set her novels amid Harlem's familiar locales; characters, always vividly brought to life and woven into Harlem's culture and landscape. Her last novel, *The Blind Alley*, is available in paperback and on Kindle through Harlem Writers Guild Press in association with iUniverse. *The Blind Alley* is stunning in its depiction of landmarks and its character portrayals. Ms. Edwards captures the beauty of Harlem and the cross-section of people that comprise the community impeccably.

Grace, who was the secretary of The Harlem Writers Guild, stepped up to the role of director upon the death of Bill Banks, longtime leader of The Guild. She served in the dual roles of director and secretary of The Guild for over a decade. Ms. Edwards has dedicated much of her life to ensuring that the guild thrives, serving as writing instructor, advisor, motivator, and mentor to our collective of passionate writers, while keeping up with the student curriculum as a college professor and meeting her own publishing deadlines. Ms. Edwards had also remained involved in several writers' organizations, including the National Writers Union, Mystery Writers of America, and Sisters in Crime. Members of the Harlem Writers Guild will continue to remember Ms. Grace F. Edwards, her sacrifices and contributions, uphold her standard of excellence, as we continue to pass on the powerful legacy of the Harlem Writers Guild.

## OUR THANKS

We would like to extend our gratitude to our keynote speaker, Kevin Powell, our esteemed guests Voza Rivers, Dr. Brenda Greene, Woodie King, Jr., and Ms. Flo Anthony, the Author's Guild, PEN America, and NYC Literary Coalition Partnership, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, NYPL Countee Cullen Branch, the Langston Hughes of the Queen Public Library, the National Writers Union, New York Chapter, Harlem World Magazine, Sisters Uptown Bookstore and Cultural Center, Remy Martin, Jermaine Dupri and especially, our Readers, new friends, and all of our longtime supporters.



# HARLEM WRITERS GUILD at 70 HOW IT STARTED, HOW IT'S GOING



Harlem Writers Guild Current Members L-R, Row 1: Diane Richards, Dr. Robert J. Woodbine, Kay Bell, Marc W. Polite, John Robinson, Judy C. Andrews; Row 2: Sylvia White, Minnette Coleman, Jade Soares, Mohamed Camara, Angela Dews, Eartha Watts Hicks; Row 3: Aquilah Jourdain, Malik Kirkwood, Rev. Venida Rodman, Gina Covington, Betty Anne Jackson, Cordenia Paige.