

Black Expressions

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JUL AUG SEP 2005

Breakthrough: L A Writers Workshops to Resume Sept. 3 St. Elmo Village Arts Space to Provide Venue

IBWALA and St. Elmo Village, two longstanding arts organizations, will establish a long sought partnership to bring expanded programming to both institutions. The first of the monthly workshops under the direction of IBWALA immediate past president and author Randy Ross will begin Saturday, Sept. 3, 2-4pm and continue the first Sat. of each month at 4830 St. Elmo Dr., 2.5 blocks E.

of La Brea Ave., 1 block S. of Venice Blvd. Sessions are open to members and others, but nonmembers may incur a nominal fee. Additional workshops at the Village are in the planning stage. The Pasadena workshop will continue on the third Saturdays. For more information visit the website or email info@ibwala.org. Or call (323) 964-3721.

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President's Column

Deadlines: Meltdown

Poor Dave Chappelle.

The acclaimed Comedy Central funnyman (The Dave Chappelle Show) suffered a mighty breakdown on the eve of time to begin taping the next season of his hit cable TV show and went south. Way down south. To the motherland. To the self-imposed exile of a South African sanitarium. Exhaustion was said to be the official reason. There were persistent, street rumors swirling about of a drug habit. His condition has been diagnosed in the media as a crisis of confidence. Writer's block. Now that might be closer to the truth.

I won't attempt to get into Dave Chappelle's head but I've heard someone say that writer's block is a literary form of stage fright. That dreaded feeling that the next keystroke will expose you to the world as an inarticulate, untalented fraud. Somebody that just got lucky. The overriding fear that the critics will ravage your reputation and hold you up to public ridicule grips you. The comic fears the next joke won't be as funny as the last. That the next laugh will evade him forever. With nothing but anguished groans to follow and a once adoring public will turn upon him with a snarling vengeance. It's a career-long case of "What have you done for me lately?" That call and response answered in a nauseating, repetitive negative. "He used to be all that. My God, what happened?"

Lately here I've been going through my own meltdown. My own crisis. Not that there is a \$50 million offer on the table in my case. Not that there is an eager audience awaiting the next page out of my laser printer. Mercifully so. You see, there was a time when meeting deadlines for me came easy as breathing. Oxygen. That was before the smog of maturity socked-in my brain to its current state of inaction.

The remedy? Let the child inside out to play.

—Wayne French





From the Editor's Desk

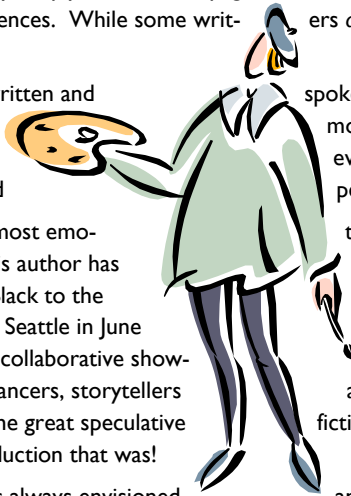
Why the "Artists" in IBWALA?

Years ago, it might have been easy to find a book with no art on the cover. Today's market, however, demands every book have an eye-catching display sufficient to rival the plethora of covers in competition for the reader's attention. Someone has to design and create those covers.

Many markets *rely* on art of some kind. Take children's books, for example. Precious few rely simply on the stark page of black letters and white space to reach juvenile audiences. While some writers are also visual artists, most are not.

Just as the written and critics, tains, and auditory, and

One of the most emotional programs this author has part of the Black to the presented in Seattle in June tation was a collaborative show- ers, poets, dancers, storytellers other than the great speculative What a production that was!



spoken word teaches, inspires, reveals, motivates, incites, cajoles, entertains, and evokes images, so do the visual, performance arts.

tional, inspiring and entertaining ever witnessed was presented as Future Science Fiction Festival 2004. The opening night presentation of playwrights, set designers and musicians, introduced by none fiction author Octavia E. Butler.

IBWALA has always envisioned and used all of the arts—on the stage, in spoken word performances, in publishing, and in exhibits of various kinds. Music, dance, sculpture, drawing, painting, and even architecture have all played a role to enhance our writing. (What would a slam be without the persistent back- drop rhythms of the drum, or a poetry reading without the plaintive strains of a flute?)

In 1974-76, when the IBWALA (*aka* Writers Improvement Charity and Social Club) first got started, classes in art and foreign language (French) for youth stimulated our programs. A visual artist rendered a striking post modern portrait for the cover of *A Black View of the Bicentennial*, our first anthology, and each subsequent book we published benefited greatly by our associations with visual and graphic artists.

To imagine a world without words would be to go back to prehistoric times, when theoretically, words *were* art—drawings in the sand or on cave walls. To imagine a world without art would be to imagine a world without imagination.

—L A Hughes

IBWALA Welcomes These New Members

William Bulkley
(our apologies for incorrect spelling last issue)
Donna Williams
Jervey Tervalon
Louis A. Villa
Tarrance E. Lockhart
Fran Gilmore

And the following returning members

Sharon Washington
William (Bill) Allen, Jr.
Gene (Sunji Ali) Williams

Supporter/Contributor

Mary E. Huddleston

Black Expressions, the official newsletter International Black Writers & Artists Los Angeles.

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Send submissions to newsletter@ibwala.org. Submission guidelines and ad rates are posted on the website.

Contact us at:

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(323)964-3721

Board of Directors

Wayne French, *President*
Randy L. Ross, *Immediate Past President, Treasurer*
Rev. Jaquetta Parhams, *Vice President*
Zerline Hughes Jennings, *Secretary*
Luther Wallace, *Budget & Finance*
Tonya Richardson, *Activities & Fundraising*
Tricia Cochee, *Community Relations*
Linda Hughes, *Editor Black Expressions*
Excell Hunter, *Youth & Student Programs*
Frederick Smith, *Outreach & Recruitment*
Hazel Clayton Harrison
Jerome Woods
Marcus Love

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Become a member or associate of IBWALA at the half-year or full year rate.
Ortake advantage of 20% off the annual membership at any in-person IBWALA event.



Half-year Progress Report

IBWALA' board of directors started the year with several organizational objectives:

- Increase membership with special emphasis on students and youth
- Serve the membership and community by improving visibility, networking and member benefits
- Provide dedicated leadership transitioning to a membership-wide election in October 2005

To date the roster has increased by half a dozen new and returning members and supporters.

We've answered correspondence from youthful and aspiring writers, and we have had the opportunity to speak as part of one elementary school's Career Day. In addition, board member Excell Hunter is developing a series of articles and teaching workshops designed for youth, to begin appearing in the next issue of *BE*.

Board member Erin Aubry Kaplan has initiated a bi-monthly series of Sunday Salons, small group discussions and readings among members and others of the LA literary community.

With increasing visibility IBWALA recruited new members during Black Writers on Tour in April, Arts Day LA and the Malcolm X Festival in May,

and the Los Angeles Black Book Expo in June. The names and addresses or email addresses of more than 100 contacts / potential members and supporters were collected during these events.

Currently held in Pasadena, the critique workshops are proving to be one of the most valuable services offered to writers as evidenced by its continued growth. Efforts to resurrect a Los Angeles workshop contingent on the acquisition of appropriate space has been successful. Roderick Sykes of St. Elmo Village has agreed to provide the venue for workshops to begin Sept. 3.

Black Expressions, the primary member-supporter communication medium has published four issues since October 2004, including articles and poetry written by member authors, promoting member and associate events, projects, book signings and businesses. Copies have also been distributed at festivals and expos.

Webmaster and board secretary Zerline Hughes Jennings has continued to develop and maintain the website, having received thousands of hits since its inception more than a year ago. Additionally she has followed up with post cards within a week to every potential member who signed IBWALA mailing lists at each festival or expo.

As president, Wayne French has worked tirelessly within the community to help revitalize the organization, increase membership, member participation and member benefits. The president wishes to thank all who have helped keep stated goals on track and all who have supported the organization's mission by becoming members, associates and supporters.

The president and board of IBWALA extends an invitation to become active supporters and volunteers to ensure that our authors and artists are read, seen, heard and published.

Now Accepting Applications for UCLA Extension Writers Program 2005-06 Scholarship

Attention members! Have you always wanted to take a writing class? Can you see yourself as a student on the UCLA campus? Is poetry your passion? Do you have a secret desire to write for film or television? Maybe you have a novel bubbling in your soul? Could you benefit from the discipline and networking of workshoping your ideas or works in progress?

If you feel that now is the perfect time to move ahead with your writing career but may not be able to afford the classes, you should apply for the Writers Program scholarship.

All extension instructors are published, most acclaimed in their field. Class size is limited, allowing an intimate, safe place to share and network.

Three classes potentially valued at over \$900 can be yours over the course of the 2005-06 school year free of charge. Past scholarship recipients include bestseller Eric Dickey, author-publisher Maxine Thompson, writer Tonya Richardson, and editor L A Hughes, among others.* To apply for the scholarship, you must:

- Be a paid member of IBWALA
- Submit a brief bio and a one-page essay explaining how you would benefit from the scholarship
- Pay a \$10 application fee

The scholarship recipient should begin taking courses during the Fall or Winter quarter. So Hurry! The last day to apply is Nov. 7, 2005.

Please send your essay and check to IBWALA Scholarship, POB 43576, LA, CA 90043. This could be the first step to bigger and better things.

* Past recipients not eligible to apply per Extension rules.

Look for IBWALA board member Fredrick Smith's new novel

Down for Whatever in bookstores NOW!

Son of Imhotep A Book Review

You don't have to be black to enjoy reading black writer William Bulkley's new novel *Son of Imhotep* (Milligan Books, 2005). It's a story that has in it something for everyone—humor, pathos, the macabre, art, sheer fun and excitement. And while it helps dispel many of the myths and stereotypes about black America, it also serves to shed light on some real issues involving race. If, however, you're one of those people who are tired of the word "racism," never fear. The word appears nowhere in the book.

Before saying more about the story, it is imperative to say more about the author. A former journalist who once wrote a published rebuttal to one of renowned Carl Rowen's scathing indictments against blacks, William Bulkley is something of a phenomenon. At 69, a fact he thought should be kept under wraps for fear he'd lose publishing prospects, he's a late bloomer who has now fully blossomed. *Son* is his first novel, a lifelong dream, but there is already another on the horizon to be published this fall, quite a feat for someone whose body just last year was smashed between two cars and who spent many weeks and months, hospitalized, in a coma, and then in rehab.

The man has talent *and* the guts to use it. He's an accomplished story teller who has mastered the art of dialogue. As a result, *Son* is a real page-turner that is never preachy. Instead Bulkley exhibits a wry sense of the era, of human nature and of arts and letters. By bringing in references to great literature and music, he demonstrates that he knows his way around "high brow" jazz and the arts culture of the late fifties into the early to mid sixties. The reader can almost hear, as protagonist Ray and a young woman slow dance, Billy Eckstine's "mellow baritone" voice croon the lyrics as the words to "I Apologize" are appended to the page like poetry:

*If I told a lie,
If I made you cry,
When I said goodbye,
I'm sorry...
From the bottom of my heart,
I apologize.*

*If I caused you pain,
I know I'm to blame,
Must have been insane,
Believe me...
From the bottom of my heart,
I apologize.*

Asides like these are one of the features of this first effort that lends historical and cultural value to readers who would learn more about the era, as well as gain a more accurate picture of what it was like to be a young, educated black youth in those times—what some might call one facet of "the black experience" in America. Ironically, by story's end, Eckstine's words, especially the second verse, also sum up the main character's arrival at his senses.

Son of Imhotep is the story of Ray, a young very light skinned black college student in pre-civil rights era Detroit who, though he has the love and devotion of a young brown skinned beauty, Leslie, snubs the tried and true in favor of a blonde to the bone exotic beauty, Inca, from one of his college classes.

Okay, so what's skin color got to do with it? *Everything!*

Hungarian born Inca might as well have been a fantasy for all the time she appears in the book. What she really represents is the taboo, the line drawn in the sand that so many of that era—and of this one—feel compelled to cross if they are truly to feel equal. It may be a kind of

vestige of the old Southern Jim Crow laws (that existed in practice in the North as well), that prohibitions and, consensual relationships and "coloreds."

more symbolism: to Ray is a kind of catharsis for his denial his own sweet, brown of giving too much of suffice it to say that

ited proper frequently, intently, between whites

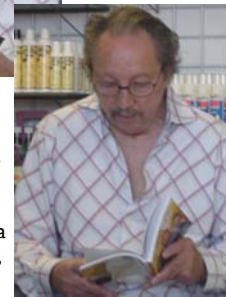
There is What happens punishment or a of his own kind, Leslie. For fear the plot away,

the storyline is *not* predictable. There is a large element of mystery and even a tolerable amount of non-gratuitous sex and violence. One of the most powerful scenes in the book is where the character Junebug engages in violent acts against a maternal, savior-like figure, or is she the devil? Again, not to spoil the surprise.

Loosely based on his own life and experiences, author William Bulkley paints a picture with words and images that only scratch the surface of the deep psychological and social issues that many blacks who don't look it still deal with on almost a daily basis. In an interview, Bulkley himself tells of one personal experience:

"I remember my cousin and I went to a soda fountain in Ecorse, Michigan [in the fifties]. We both ordered sundaes. The soda jerk put my sundae in a dish and gave me a spoon, but she put his sundae in a take-out dish. We just walked out of the drug store. My aunt reported it to the NAACP. There were several incidents like that where I was quite often mistaken as white. That used to hurt my feelings."

Even though skin color is a central theme in the story, Bulkley says he wants readers to come away with the idea that it's not color that matters but the character of the individual that has real meaning.



Bulkley fields questions during a book signing at Express Yourself Books in Los Angeles, before going on to another appearance in Detroit, the setting for his novel.

LAST NIGHT

I should have danced with you and
you with me...

I should have held your hand and
the moment...

last night.

You succumbed to yourself and
went to another
Placed, poised and imprisoned yourself
for me to see
We almost became ourselves...

last night.

Moving out of motion and into focus
you ventured into midnight and me.
You asked, I quietly and courteously refused
as I missed the chance to replenish
your deep water river.
You bent over and
I bowed out...

last night.

It allowed me to court someone else.
I grabbed him, pressing my knees into the bend of his.
Pushed my groin - nut to butt forward.
Arms proceeded past his back, around to his nipples.
I began the movement.
Swaying, entwined, touching softly.
Gently making his rhythm mine.
Cautiously allowing mine to become his...

last night.

I turned him to face me;
missing nary a note, whispering.
I like this and I like you
came from his wanting lips;
full, succulent, ...ready.
We moved closer.

Others watched without knowing what they saw.
Our lovemaking, bonding, becoming one.
We went to my cabin and continued
the dance.

No judgment, no clothes, no noise.
Except the pulse, the heart, the breath.
No innocence, no lube, no condom.
We made love without regret.

Thank you both for giving me the opportunity to
dance with and sleep with my conscience...

last night!

—C. Jerome Woods
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Summer 2005 Calendar

Meetings & Events

Go to www.ibwala.org

For other listings and updates

Call, email, or visit the website for further information.

JULY

07-09 Board of Directors Meeting—Open to members; Elmo Village, 4834 St. Elmo Dr., Los Angeles, 11am-2pm.

07-16 Manuscript Workshop—Every third Saturday of the month, IBWALA hosts a manuscript workshop at San Raphael Library, 1240 Nithsdale Road, Pasadena, CA, (626)744-7270.

AUGUST

08-20 Manuscript Workshop—Every third Saturday of the month, IBWALA hosts a manuscript workshop at San Raphael Library, 1240 Nithsdale Road, Pasadena, CA, (626)744-7270.

08-21 Sunday Literary Salon—Topical discussions and readings; Space is limited, please RSVP to get location (usually a private residence) & further information by calling (323)755-3862 or email info@ibwala.org.

SEPTEMBER

09-03 LA Writers Workshop—Every first Sat at St. Elmo Village, 4834 St. Elmo Drive, L.A., 2pm—4pm.

09-11 Writers Faire—UCLA Extension, Court of Sciences, 11am-3pm; Visit our booth and 19 other partnering arts organizations; *free workshops & lectures*; courses discounted 10%; more. 11am-3pm.

09-17 Manuscript Workshop—Every third Saturday of the month, IBWALA hosts a manuscript workshop at San Raphael Library, 1240 Nithsdale Road, Pasadena, CA, (626)744-7270.

09-24 One Day Writers Retreat: Tapping into Your Inspiration with Tonya Richardson—Balboa Park, San Fernando. Info tonyar6@yahoo.com or 818.989-1363.

OCTOBER

10-01 LA Writers Workshop—St. Elmo Village, 4834 St. Elmo Drive. Every first Saturday, 2pm—4pm.

10-08 Board of Directors Meeting (see above)

10-15 Pasadena Workshop (see above)

10-16 Sunday Salon—Topic & locale tba.

10-29 Writers Summit—*Save the date*, details tba.

IBWALA

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Los Angeles, CA 90043

info@ibwala.org

We're on the web
www.ibwala.org

Go online to print an application or call
323.964-3721 to get one by mail

Half-year Membership Drive On Now!

News, Events, Jobs & Announcements

Call for Submissions for an all poetry edition of **Black Expressions**. All poetry must be received online or by regular mail no later than Oct. 10, 2005. No more than two pieces, 300 words or less please. May be included in the October edition if received by Sept. 10. No guarantee of publication. More information info@ibwala.org.



SoulVision Productions Presents 'Send Me Your Best Poems' Contest

Win publication in a SoulVision anthology. Submit one to three copyrighted poems, no more than two pages each. Include \$10 registration fee (payable to Gene A. Williams/SoulVision) c/o S.B.P.E, 429 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood, CA 90301. For more information about this competition as well as performance opportunities, call (323) 758-6819.

Pen Pals for Incarcerated Black Writers Wanted

Mentor, motivate or teach an aspiring black writer or artist. If interested, call, write or E-mail IBWALA. We'll forward you one of the several letters received periodically from inmates of correctional institutions across the country.



A Juried Art Competition The 25th Annual b.j. spoke gallery EXPO Juried Competition will award a six to eight person exhibition to be shown Mar. 2 through Apr. 2, 2006 in New York. Deadline for receipt of slides depicting paintings (oils, acrylics, mixed media, pastel, watercolor), drawings, graphics, photography or sculpture (no crafts) is Nov. 6, 2005. Handling fee for 6 slides \$35. For further information or to receive an official entry form, call (631) 549-5106 Tues. - Sun., 11-5 pm, Fri. 11-9 pm EST.

NABJ 30th Annual Convention & Career Faire in Atlanta, GA, August 3-7, Hyatt Regency Hotel. bjasc.org

Position: Box Office Manager for the Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas (Seattle, WA) for the 2005-2006 season. Must be available for ALL dates and times indicated. Please do not apply if you have conflicts with any dates or times. No exceptions. Experience handling cash/money transactions, Reliable, Flexible attitude, and Excellent customer service skills, Previous box office experience a plus. **Application Deadline:** August 5, 2005. This is a paid contract position. To apply please submit a resume and cover letter to: Rahwa Habte, Program Coordinator, Central District Forum, PO Box 2282, Seattle, WA 98122-0824. Email: info@cdforum.org. Fax: 206-323-4036. For complete job description or for more information, call (206) 323-4032.