CALLALOO

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

presents

LOVE

THE 2012 CALLALOO CONFERENCE

hosted by

The Center for African American Studies
Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

October 11-13, 2012

Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey
A Letter from the Editor of *Callaloo*

Dear Colleagues & Friends,

Welcome to the 2012 *CALLALOO CONFERENCE*, our fifth annual gathering, which focuses on *LOVE*—its different meanings and various manifestations.

For the 2012 *CALLALOO CONFERENCE*, we have invited distinguished academics and artists to make presentations on *LOVE* and to engage with members of the conference group and with the general audience in discussions about *LOVE*. We are inviting you to join in the discussions, which are offered for your benefit as well as for ours. As the program that follows will indicate, we are also organizing one evening of poetry and fiction readings by prize-winning North American and African writers. You are invited to attend the evening event, during which you will witness other examples of the forms of *LOVE*. The *CALLALOO CONFERENCE*, in short, offers a mixture of the creative and the critical.

By bringing together the creative and the critical, we are following a long-standing principle of the literary and cultural quarterly *Callaloo*, which, during its thirty-five years of existence, has published the work of creative writers alongside that of academics and other intellectuals. Our aim has been to encourage, however indirectly, literary critics and creative writers to stay abreast of and read—and study and critique—each other’s productions. However, in 2007, it became markedly clear at the Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration of *Callaloo* at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore that our publication strategy had only made a minimal impact, if any; the divide between the two groups of cultural workers—the creative and the critical—was continuing to widen, thus causing the one not to understand the important productions of the other. This startling discovery is the origin of what is now simply called the *CALLALOO CONFERENCE*.

To address the widening gap between creative writers and literary and cultural critics, a select group of about twenty-five poets, novelists, and professors of literature and culture met in New Orleans (March 2008) for a retreat under the general theme of “Literature, Culture & Critique.” Our first engagements were heated, closed-door discussions that focused on the specific topic “What We Do, and How and Why We Do It.” We later engaged the public in discussions on the problem, and we also offered literary readings at Tulane University and other sites, including jazz and blues clubs, in the Crescent City. In March 2009, when we met at Washington University in St. Louis, we approached the problem of the divide from the angle of “The Intellectual’s Dilemma: Production and Praxis in
the Twenty-First Century.” In July 2010, at the invitation of the Director of the Institute for Ethiopian Studies, we met at Addis Ababa University. With mutual exchange and cooperation among intellectuals and artists from Africa and North America on the theme of “(Black) Movement(s): Poetics and Praxis,” the 2010 three-day gathering in Ethiopia was both national and international in scope and purpose. We held our most recent annual gathering in October 2011, at Texas A&M University (College Station), the home site of Callaloo, where we focused on “Translations” as it relates to critical and creative writing and to visual culture. And this year here at Princeton University we offer “Love,” another encompassing subject through which artists and academics will engage each other in discussions and performances of various kinds. In other words, the 2012 Callaloo Conference is a continuum: we are mindful of our original gathering in New Orleans, where creative writers demonstrated what they do, and literary and cultural critics explained in full measure how and why they do what they do.

As you join the discussions of the 2012 Callaloo Conference here at Princeton University, we sincerely hope that the different activities of the conference will provide you a variety of glimpses into each artist’s and academic’s thoughts on LOVE. We also hope that each speaker and performer will add other dimensions to your understanding of the arts and the critical discourse attending them, and that your participation in this conference will help illuminate for you what we do as artists and intellectuals, and why we do it.

Please join the Callaloo staff and me in expressing our deep gratitude to Professor Eddie Glaude, Jr., and the faculty and staff of Princeton University’s Center for African American Studies for graciously hosting the 2012 Callaloo Conference.

Sincerely,

Charles Henry Rowell
Editor of Callaloo
Professor of English
Texas A&M University
Welcome
Wallace D. Best
*Acting Chair of the Center for African American Studies & Professor of Religion*
Princeton University

Comments
Eddie Glaude, Jr.
*Director of the Center for African American Studies & Professor of Religion*
Princeton University

Significance of the Occasion
Charles Henry Rowell
*Editor of Callaloo & Professor of English*
Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

Moderator
Régine Michelle Jean-Charles
*Assistant Professor*
Romance Languages & Literatures
Boston College
An Excerpt from Walter Rutledge’s

“The Block: After Bearden”
A Dance Performance

The Nanette Bearden Contemporary Dance Theatre, New York City

Respondents

Tsitsi Jaji
Assistant Professor of English & Africana Studies
University of Pennsylvania

Maaza Mengiste
Ethiopian American Novelist
New York City

Gregory Pardlo
Instructor of Creative Writing
New York University

Jay T. Jenkins
Professor of Mason Gross
School of the Arts
Rutgers University

Ifa Bayeza
Visiting Artist in Residence
Africana Studies
Brown University

The Block, 1971
Collage with various papers on Masonite; six panels, overall size 4 × 18 feet.

Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, NY.

Art © Romare Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2012
9:00 AM-10:30 AM
Sacred Love and Society
McCosh Hall, Room 10

Speakers

Corey D. B. Walker  
Chair & Associate Professor of Africana Studies  
Brown University

Marla F. Frederick  
Professor of Religion & African & African American Studies  
Harvard University

Respondents

Michelle M. Wright  
Associate Professor of Black European & African Diaspora Studies and African American Studies  
Northwestern University

James B. Peterson  
Director of Africana Studies & Associate Professor of English  
Lehigh University

Hermine Pinson  
Associate Professor of English  
The College of William & Mary

Traci C. West  
Professor of Ethics & African American Studies  
Drew University

Moderator

Judith Weisenfeld  
Professor of Religion  
Princeton University
11:00 AM-12:30 PM

Writing Love in the African Diaspora
McCosh Hall, Room 10

Speakers

Keith D. Leonard  
Associate Professor of Literature  
American University, Washington, DC

Michael Stone-Richards  
Professor of Critical Theory & Literature  
College for Creative Studies, Detroit

Respondents

Edwin C. Hill  
Assistant Professor of French & Italian and of Comparative Literature  
University of Southern California

Carter Mathes  
Assistant Professor of English  
Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Anthony Reed  
Assistant Professor of English & African American Studies  
Yale University

Lyrae Van Clief-Stefanon  
Associate Professor of English  
Cornell University

David Wright  
Associate Professor of English  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Moderator

Simon Gikandi  
Robert Schirmer Professor of English  
Princeton University
2:00 PM-3:30 PM

**Love Visual**

**A Conversation with Haile Gerima**

McCosh Hall, Room 10

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**Speakers**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haile Gerima</td>
<td>Ethiopian American Filmmaker</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Lewis</td>
<td>Critic, School of Art Faculty Doctoral Candidate</td>
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<td>History of Art Department, Yale University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dagmawi Woubshet</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English</td>
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<td>Cornell University</td>
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**Respondents**

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<tr>
<td>Chika Okeke-Agulu</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of Art History</td>
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<td>Princeton University</td>
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<td>Vievee Francis</td>
<td>Independent Writer, Detroit, MI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valerie Cassel Oliver</td>
<td>Senior Curator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maaza Mengiste</td>
<td>Ethiopian American Novelist</td>
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<td>New York City</td>
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**Moderator**

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<tr>
<td>GerShun Avilez</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English &amp; African American Studies</td>
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<td>Yale University</td>
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4:30 PM-6:00 PM
Queering Love
McCosh Hall, Room 10

Speakers
Sharon P. Holland  
Associate Professor of English &
African & African American Studies
Duke University

Marlon B. Ross  
Professor of English
University of Virginia

Respondents
Jafari Sinclaire Allen  
Assistant Professor of African American Studies & Anthropology
Yale University

Mukoma wa Ngugi  
Assistant Professor of English
Cornell University

Francesca T. Royster  
Professor of English
DePaul University

Salamishah Tillet  
Assistant Professor of English & Africana Studies
University of Pennsylvania

Dagmawi Woubshet  
Assistant Professor of English
Cornell University

Moderator
Koritha Mitchell  
Associate Professor of English
The Ohio State University
8:00 PM-10:00 PM

Love’s Lyricism
Nassau Presbyterian Church
61 Nassau Street
Princeton, New Jersey

Performance

Intercession, meditation on Romans 8
Come Away, My Beloved, meditation on Song of Songs

Ekmeles Vocal Ensemble
A chorus: Rachel Calloway, Patrick Fennig, Jeffrey Gavett, Avery Griffin, Matthew B. Hensrud & Mary Elizabeth MacKenzie

Meditation on Love
Courtney Bryan Columbia University

Respondents

Daphne A. Brooks Professor of English & African American Studies Princeton University

Brent Hayes Edwards Professor of English & Comparative Literature Columbia University

George Lewis Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music Columbia University

Ifa Bayeza Visiting Artist in Residence Africana Studies Brown University

Moderator

Scott Heath Assistant Professor of English Georgia State University
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2012**  
10:00 AM-11:30 AM  
**Love Beyond Borders**  
Dodd Auditorium, Robertson Hall

#### Speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nnedi Okorafor</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English, Chicago State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greg Tate</td>
<td>Visiting Professor of Africana Studies, Brown University</td>
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#### Respondents

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gregory Jerome Hampton</td>
<td>Associate Professor of English, Howard University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott Heath</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English, Georgia State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawn Lundy Martin</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English, University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imani Perry</td>
<td>Professor, Center for African American Studies &amp; Faculty, Associate, Program in Law &amp; Public Affairs, Princeton University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nelly Rosario</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English, Texas State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corey D. B. Walker</td>
<td>Chair &amp; Associate Professor of Africana Studies, Brown University</td>
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandra Vazquez</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of African American Studies &amp; English, Princeton University</td>
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# SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2012

5:00 PM-6:00 PM  
**Readings**  
Dodd Auditorium, Robertson Hall

## Speakers

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Sayers Ellis</td>
<td>Poet</td>
<td>New York City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christopher Abani</td>
<td>Professor of Creating Writing</td>
<td>University of California, Riverside</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracy K. Smith</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of Creative Writing</td>
<td>Princeton University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tyehimba Jess</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English</td>
<td>The City University of New York</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tsitsi Jaji</td>
<td>Assistant Professor of English</td>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gregory Pardlo</td>
<td>Instructor, Creative Writing</td>
<td>New York University, NYC</td>
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7:00PM / Dinner *(Invitation Only)*  
Dinner & Comments on the Conference

**Statement** / Eddie Glaude, Jr., Director, Center for African American Studies, Princeton University

**Final Remarks** / Charles Henry Rowell, Editor of Callaloo, Texas A&M University
CHRISTOPHER ABANI, a native of Nigeria, is author of a number of books of fiction and poetry, including *Song for Night*, *Masters of the Board*, *Sanctificum*, *Hands Washing Water*, *Virgin of Flames*, and *Graceland*. For his work he has received a number of fellowships and awards—e.g., the PEN USA Freedom-to-Write Award, the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, the Hurston-Wright Legacy Award, a California Book Award, the 2001 Prince Claus Award, and a Lannan Literary Fellowship. He is a professor of English at the University of California at Riverside.

COURTNEY BRYAN is a composer, pianist, and arranger, whose work ranges broadly—European classical, jazz, film scores, and collaborations with various kinds of artists, including dancers, writers, and others. In addition to performing at Snug Harbor Jazz Bistro and Sweet Lorraine’s Jazz Club in her native New Orleans, Louisiana, she currently makes appearances in New York and nearby cities, often performing with the Courtney Bryan Trio. In 2010, she released *This Little Light of Mine*, which follows her first CD of nine original compositions, *Quest for Freedom*. She is a Faculty Fellow at Columbia University, where she is studying for the doctorate in music composition.

THOMAS SAYERS ELLIS, poet and photographer, is author of two books of poems, *The Maverick Room* and *Skin, Inc.*, both of which were published by Graywolf Press. He is also author of three chapbooks, *The Good Junk (Take Three #1)*, *The Genuine Negro Hero*, and *Song On*. His work has also appeared in journals and anthologies such as *Poetry*, *Grand Street*, *Tin House*, *The Nation*, *The Baffler*, *Ploughshares*, *Callaloo*, and *The Best American Poetry*. In 2005 he received a Mrs. Giles Whiting Writers’ Award, and he won the John C. Zacharis First Book Award in 2006. He teaches at the Lesley University low-residency MFA program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
**MARLA F. FREDERICK** is Professor of African and African American Studies and the Study of Religion at Harvard University. She is the author of *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith*, and co-author of *Local Democracy Under Siege: Activism, Public Interests and Private Politics*, winner of the 2008 Best Book Award from the Society for the Anthropology of North America.

**HAILE GERIMA**, born in Ethiopia, is a filmmaker, whose most popular film is *Sankofa* (1993), which he wrote, produced, and directed. His other films include *Bush Mama* (1976), *Perfect Journey* (1994), *Adwa: An African Victory* (1994), and *Teza* (2008). He has won numerous international awards for his films, more than seven for *Teza* alone, from France, Italy, Austria, Canada, the Netherlands, and Greece. For more than twenty years, he taught at Howard University, where he made an indelible impact on young filmmakers. He is the founder of the Sankofa Bookstore, located in Washington, DC.

**SHARON P. HOLLAND**, an associate professor of English at Duke University, is author of *The Erotic Life of Racism* and *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity*, which won the Lora Romero First Book Publication Prize from the American Studies Association (2002); and co-editor (with Tiya Miles) of *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. She has also published critical texts in such periodicals as *GLQ, PMLA, Signs, Callaloo*, and other journals.

**TYEHIMBA JESS** is an assistant professor of English at the College of Staten Island, NY. He is author of a book of poems, *leadbelly*, and a book of nonfiction prose, *African American Pride: Celebrating Our Achievements, Contributions, and Enduring Legacy*. His poems have also been published in such periodicals as *Indiana Review, American Poetry Review, Ploughshares*, and *Callaloo*.
KEITH D. LEONARD, Associate Professor at American University (Washington, DC), is author of *Fettered Genius: The African American Bardic Poet from Slavery to Civil Rights* and a number of articles on African American literature and culture in periodicals and anthologies—e.g., *MELUS, Writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance, Cambridge History of African American Literature, Blackwell’s Companion to African American Literature, The Oxford Companion to African American Literature, Twentieth Century Literature, African American Review, and Callaloo.*

SARAH LEWIS, curator and writer, has served as critic in painting at Yale University since 2007. She has also worked at London’s Tate Modern and at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in painting, sculpture, and photography. Her critical work has appeared in publications for the Venice Biennial (2007), Deutsche Guggenheim in Berlin, Studio Museum of Harlem, Phaidon, *Art in America*, the Smithsonian, the Museum of Modern Art (NYC), and *Callaloo*. *The Dissolve*, which she co-authored, was published in 2010, and Simon & Schuster will soon release her *Rise: The Power of Failure in Pursuit of Success*.

NNEDI OKORAFOR, a Nigerian American, is author of six books of science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction—the most recent being *Iridessa and the Secret of the Never Mine, Akata Witch, and Who Fears Death*. The Hurston-Wright literary award, the Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa, The World Fantasy Award, Macmillan Writers Prize in Africa, and the Carl Brandon Parallax Award are some of the honors she has received for her fiction. A recipient of the PhD degree from the University of Illinois in Chicago, she teaches at Chicago State University.

TRACY K. SMITH is an assistant professor of creative writing at Princeton University. She is the author of three books of poems: The Body’s Question, Duende, and Life on Mars. She has received a number of accolades for her books of poems, including Literature Protégée, Rolex Mentor & Protégé Arts Initiative (2009-2011), James Laughlin Award of the Academy of American Poets (2006), Mrs. Giles Whiting Foundation Writers’ Award (2005), and Rona Jaffe Foundation Writers’ Award (2004). Most recently, she received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 2012.


MICHAEL STONE-RICHARDS is the Interim Chair of the Department of Liberal Arts at the College of Creative Studies in Detroit, MI. He is author of Logics of Separation: Exile and Transcendence in Aesthetic Modernity and Beyond the Subject: Approaching the Vision of Ben Frank Moss. His work has also appeared in a number of periodicals and anthologies, including Journal of Visual Culture, Equinoxe: Revue internationale d’études françaises, Modernism/Modernity, Art Criticism since 1900, Art History, Giacometti: Critical Essays, Cambridge Companion to Du Bois, Surrealism and Architecture, and Black, Brown and Beige: Surrealist Writings from Africa and the Diaspora. He has also taught at Northwestern University (Evanston, IL) and the University of York (England).
THE NANETTE BEARDEN CONTEMPORARY DANCE THEATRE was founded in 1976 by dancer and choreographer Nanette Rohan Bearden (1927-1996), who in 1954 married the internationally acclaimed artist Romare Bearden (1911-1988), who would later collaborate with her in the design and production of dance performances. When she passed in 1996, the dance company disbanded, but in 2004, Shelia Rohan (dancer, choreographer, instructor), one of Nanette’s seven sisters, revived the Dance Theatre. In Shelia’s hands as Director, the Dance Theatre has become a new artistic force, touring throughout the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, and Europe, with Walter Rutledge as Associate Artistic Director.

COREY D. B. WALKER is author of A Noble Fight: African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America and a number of articles in such periodicals as Journal of the American Academy of Religion, Political Theology, and boundary 2. He is also editor of a special issue of Political Theology, devoted to “Theology and Democratic Futures,” associate editor of SAGE Encyclopedia of Identity, and associate editor of The Journal of the American Academy of Religion. He is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Africana Studies at Brown University.

Members on the CALLALOO CONFERENCE—and the Journal

“The Callaloo retreat [first meeting of the conference] in New Orleans forced me to examine my own history as a scholar, to address what one younger scholar persistently noted as a weakness in my presentations and responses at the intellectually enjoyable death chamber.”

*****

“The CALLALOO CONFERENCE group is a motley crew, more diverse than Chaucer’s Canterbury pilgrims. The retreat continually searches for universities that will host our activities. The two previous sites—Tulane University and Washington University [at St. Louis]—feted participants, inspired us, and provided faculty to participate on panels. One of the more important aspects of the retreat is that we scholars and writers enjoy visiting universities and spending quality time with faculty we may not meet otherwise. Rather than seeing the CALLALOO CONFERENCES as disruptions to my overwhelming number of commitments, they are a vortex that extends what I see as my creative possibilities. At the center of this vortex are colleagues from Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, and, of course, the United States, who riff and wail as we attempt to re-create ourselves at the same time that the Western academy questions the very notion of what it means to be human.”

Joyce Ann Joyce

“One issue that, for me, the Callaloo retreat helped clarify was the idea of a necessarily vexed relation between black Canadian and African-American scholarship. Some black critics based in Canada have gone so far as to liken African America to an imperial power able to suffocate debates emerging from other parts of the diaspora. There is a small measure of truth to this . . . . When my novel Soucouyant first came out, and well before it began receiving some encouraging attention at home and abroad, it had already been selected to be prominently featured in Callaloo, an elite American-based journal that was willing to profile extensively the work of a new black writer when no Canadian-based literary or scholarly journal at the time would ever have dared of doing likewise. . . . In the midst of a nation that has a reputation for reacting to crises by closing ranks and proclaiming its exceptionalism, Callaloo has opted to move in a different direction and actively sought connections with other lands and spaces—an act of reaching out that was matched by each of the delegates whom I encountered at the retreat [in New Orleans].”

David Chariandy

“For me, the 2010 CALLALOO CONFERENCE [meeting at Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia] offered up yet another definition of Black Movement: it is the ability to move between poetics and praxis, between generations, between traditions tenaciously and with seamless virtuosity and without being bound by preconceived conventional boundaries. Black movement is about constant motion—creative and intellectual dynamism that embodies the flow of ideas and knows no bounds.”

Régine Michelle Jean-Charles
“One of the principle aims of the CALLALOO CONFERENCE is to provide opportunities for exchange between scholars and creative writers, and this intention was decidedly met at the 2011 CALLALOO CONFERENCE. I was invited as a creative writer, with an interest in criticism and commentary concerning poetics at large. . . . The things I discovered at the 2011 CALLALOO CONFERENCE have changed the way I look at scholars, creative writers, and the possibilities between us.”

Vievee Francis

“. . . The 2011 Translations Conference [at Texas A&M University, College Station] was a brilliant collaboration between writers, poets, and scholars. What further emerged was a kaleidoscope of interpretations, response papers, poetry, and Energy. More importantly, what we learned was, indeed, that we were One and had begun a dialogue that was passionately spun from our singular contributions, but manifested themselves, as a whole, into an incredibly sharp, brilliantly diverse setting that opened doors upon doors of fascinating, enthralling conversation.”

Olympia Vernon

I for one left the retreat [conference] in New Orleans knowing that each of the colleagues in attendance had given me a tremendous gift by encouraging me to push myself toward greater clarity. As I interact with them in the coming years—whether in person, by phone, or by simply reading their work—I know that my thinking will evolve and sharpen as a result. These critics and creators have positioned themselves in perfect cooperation with me by offering productive opposition. Put another way, our conversations stayed with me precisely because Callaloo once again did what it does best. It put the complexity and diversity of the African Diaspora center stage so that its thinkers could challenge each other to discover and extend our potential. Such rigorous intellectual engagement is possible precisely because we offer each other no easy conflation, no hallucination of unanimity.”

Koritha Mitchell

“If I learned anything at this conference it is that we, as women, should trespass on each other’s lives with more frequency. Trespass into each others homes and lives when we know the other is in need of help, and trespass when we ourselves need more help. This is how a true community can be built.”

Angie Cruz

“It was at the CALLALOO CONFERENCE that I began to understand more clearly the power of stories and ideas to provide us small moments of clarity in a spinning, changing world.”

Maaza Mengiste

“I emerge from New Orleans [site of the first CALLALOO CONFERENCE] happy and quite calm, having reached a brand new conclusion: literary analyst and writer? We’re both bastards, really, both ridiculously human and both sites for inspiration and comic relief. I know we’ve only scratched the surface; Charles [Rowell] won’t be happy until there is a little bit of blood on the dance floor, but for this first engagement we leave still talking, and that is all that is required.”

Michelle Wright
“... the St. Louis retreat [conference] was my first time being invited and it was actually an absolutely unique experience for me. But I would argue this in two ways: one, both in interacting with and connecting with junior and with senior scholars, as well as interacting with and connecting directly with artists. And I would say that as someone who attends and presents at a fair amount of conferences year in and year out, no other experience has been as successful or as productive along those lines, and I mean that sincerely, and also in these two ways, both socially and academically. So the ability to see senior scholars’ work and junior scholars’ work, to hear poets and to hear artists, but also the ability to break bread with them and connect with them was a fairly unique experience for me personally, and it is part of the reason why I’m even more committed to work on the process of making sure that we can continue to do it.”

James Peterson

“Since Callaloo is a major institution in our field, I am wondering how conferences like these enable us to make broader interventions in literary studies. . . . I know personally this community of scholars and artists has become indispensable to me. These conferences have enabled me to develop relationships and intellectual networks outside of my home institution, so that I am not solely dependent on my university for intellectual sustenance. To put it more plainly, as a junior scholar, I feel more empowered that I have the backing of Callaloo and access to senior scholars and artists in the field on whom I can draw for advice about a range of issues—how, particularly as a black scholar, one navigates white institutions; how one remains politically committed; how one advocates for the work that we do . . . “

Dagmawi Woubshet

Four Years of CALLALOO CONFERENCES


“Notes from the 2010 CALLALOO CONFERENCE,” Callaloo, 34.3 (Summer 2011): 811-876.

“Notes from the 2011 CALLALOO CONFERENCE,” Callaloo, 35.4 (Fall 2012).
Recent & Forthcoming Book Publications
by CALLALOO CONFERENCE Members


Callaloo: Its History and Projects

Founded in 1976 by its editor, Charles Henry Rowell, Callaloo is a quarterly journal sponsored by Texas A&M University (College Station, TX) and published by the Johns Hopkins University Press (Baltimore, MD). It began as a small journal devoted to the literature of the Black South, but during its thirty-plus years of continuous publication, Callaloo has become the premiere journal focusing on the literature and culture of the African Diaspora. Although the journal publishes poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, visual art, interviews, and literary and cultural criticism, Callaloo is, says its editor, “more than a literary journal. It is a de facto literary and cultural center, organizing and coordinating a variety of activities that serve to exhibit, preserve, critique, and promote African Diaspora literary and visual culture.”

As a literary journal, Callaloo has received positive national attention, including a commendation from Every Writer’s Resource, which recently ranked Callaloo as one of the top fifteen literary magazines in the United States. The journal has long been—and continues to be referred to as—“the premiere literary and cultural journal of the African Diaspora.” With that commendation and others has come, says its editor, “Callaloo’s continuing responsibility of identifying, recording, and promoting the literature and visual culture of the Diaspora, as well as publishing the engaging and provocative commentaries on its myriad artistic and other cultural forms.”

Although it is a literary and cultural journal, Callaloo, for a number of years, has offered annual creative writing workshops and hosted retreats, readings, symposia, performances, conferences, and other gatherings that bring scholars and creative writers together at the institutions and in the communities where the office of the journal is housed. Callaloo has also sponsored lectures, literary readings, and conferences across the United States and in such countries as Brazil, England, Cuba, Mexico, and Ethiopia.

In 1997, the Editor of Callaloo founded the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop as an outreach program to historically black colleges and universities—for example, to Morehouse College, Morgan State University, North Carolina Central University, Spelman College, Fisk University, Xavier University of New Orleans, and others. And as the national need for creative writing workshops increased, the editor expanded and opened the Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop to a number of new and emerging writers from across the United States. Offering sessions in poetry writing and in fiction writing, the workshop now admits, on a competitive basis, participants from the United States, Canada, the United King-
dom, and the Caribbean. A number of distinguished poets and fiction writers have led sessions of the workshop on the craft of poetry and fiction—e.g., John Edgar Wideman, Matt Johnson, Thomas Glave, Tayari Jones, Lucille Clifton, Terrance Hayes, Percival Everett, Toi Derricotte, A. Van Jordan, Yusef Komunyakaa, Edwidge Danticat, Natasha Trethewey, and Tracy K. Smith.

When the Editor of Callaloo founded the Callaloo Conference in 2007, he stated its purpose as a contemporary necessity: to bring together creative writers and academics to discuss issues about the work they produce, and the environs in and concerns under which they work. Since then, the scope of the conference has expanded to consider a variety of issues from Pan-Africanism (at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, in 2010) to translation, the latter of which was the theme of the 2011 Callaloo Conference held in October at Texas A&M University (College Station) and at the Menil Collection in Houston. The 2012 Callaloo Conference, which focuses on Love (sacred, profane, etc.), is convening at Princeton University in New Jersey on October 11-13, 2012. On November 27-30, 2013, The School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London will host the 2013 Callaloo Conference, whose theme is “Africana Studies in Transatlantic Studies?”

The Editor of Callaloo has also initiated two other publication projects with the Johns Hopkins University Press: an annual publication, called Callaloo Art, that will be devoted to African Diaspora visual art and culture; and an academic series of books, The Callaloo African Diaspora Series, which will publish critical commentaries, by a variety of scholars, that rigorously address significant facets of the literature and culture of the Diaspora.

The “literary and cultural center” called Callaloo attempts to provide a number of services to marginalized communities—services that include not only identifying and encouraging new writers and scholars, but also nurturing and promoting them. While extending and expanding the scope of African American literary and cultural studies, Callaloo is, in other words, a recorder, arbiter, and enabler of the literary culture of the African Diaspora.
What They Say About *Callaloo*

“Over the years *Callaloo* has remained among the most interesting magazines in the country, publishing established and emerging writers—many for the first time. Founder and editor Charles Rowell has a gift for recognizing writers early in their careers and continuing to publish them as they go on to prominence. I have benefited from the support of *Callaloo* my entire career—beginning with the first poem I ever published!”

**Natasha Trethewey, Poet Laureate (appointed June 2012), Emory University**

“*Callaloo* has been an indispensable force in my life ever since its editor, Charles Rowell, published my first book of fiction in 1985. The embracing vision of *Callaloo* has encouraged me to stretch my literary muscles, so that I have continued to explore other genres besides poetry in the quest to plumb the ever unfolding complexities of the human soul.”

**Rita Dove, Poet Laureate (of the USA 1993-1995), University of Virginia**

“*Callaloo* has created and preserved the finest tradition of intellectual work over a quarter of a century. Rarely has a journal had more integrity in keeping to its profound cultural and political agenda. A generation of humanistic scholars owe *Callaloo* an unaccountable debt, and, in this time of national struggle, wherever we can find Americans, they owe *Callaloo* the debts of enlightenment, knowledge, and understanding. We know that *Callaloo*’s next quarter of a century will be even more important than its first.”

**Paul A. Bové, University of Pittsburgh, Editor of *boundary 2***

“Charles Rowell has made *Callaloo* into an intellectual and artistic achievement. Devoted primarily to post-colonial and African American literature and the arts, it has added considerably to our knowledge of these fields. Each number of *Callaloo* is in its own right designed as a work of art. *Callaloo* deserves our congratulations and our admiration.”

**Ralph Cohen, University of Virginia, Founding Editor of *New Literary History***

“[*Callaloo*] is where young writers find support and a place to begin and where older writers return for comfort and a serious audience. And *Callaloo* has actively sought work from the Caribbean, South America, and Africa, seeking voices that have no place to sound, serving writers who might otherwise have been forever silenced by circumstance.”

**Percival Everett, fiction writer, University of Southern California***

“In an age where literary journals increasingly resemble stables that the same horses never leave, *Callaloo* makes clear that contemporary African American poetry has as much range as does—and should—poetry of any kind; and that, if there is a single responsibility for a literary journal, it’s surely to showcase, as best it can, all that it can. Rather than a record of what has been done, *Callaloo* continues to be a gauge of what is being done and—just as inspiring—of what can be done.”

**Carl Phillips, poet & essayist, Washington University at St. Louis**
Callaloo isn’t just a literary magazine. International reach, scope and reputation have shaped this journal into an undeniable institution. For the past thirty-six years, founder and editor, Charles H. Rowell, has been the hard-working visionary behind Callaloo’s literary and critical content and handsome aesthetic. In the pages of this journal, high standards reign over popularity; this publication challenges and engages the reader on every page: fiction, poetry, critical and scholarly essays, interviews, plays, and visual arts. This marvelous “work of art” travels across cultural spectrums—literally—wherever the diaspora has been carried or prodded across the globe. Intellectual and educational, but never didactic, Callaloo is in the forefront of the vanguard. This magazine never caters to what we already know, think, or dream. It is always chock-full of needful surprises. It dares us as artists, writers, and thinkers in communities around the world—from the traditional to the avant-garde—to form “a more perfect union” of responsible, caring global citizens.

Yusef Komunyakaa, poet, New York University

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