

## ***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 Kingdom, 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 Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities, Oxford University, UK, will host the 2013 CALLALOO CONFERENCE, whose theme is “The Trans-Atlantic, the Diaspora, and Africa.”

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, publishings, 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.