



June 4, 2004

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### **Anacostia Museum Opens Two Exhibitions June 7**

The ancient art of story-telling is explored and celebrated in an exhibition featuring filmed interviews with nine professional writers speaking on topics ranging from how they find inspiration and create characters, to how history, politics and current events affect their writing.

“All the Stories Are True: African American Writers Speak,” opens June 7 at the Smithsonian’s Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture and will be on view until Dec. 31.

On view during the same period in the John R. Kinard gallery are 12 works by William H. Smith, a Maryland native and silver medalist at the 1939 World’s Fair and one 1999 mixed media sculpture by Floyd Roberts, a widely exhibited artist who was born in Trinidad and now lives in Maryland.

The literary exhibition was developed by the Anacostia Museum with guest curator E. Ethelbert Miller, Washington-based poet, author and anthologist whose work includes Whispers, Secrets & Promises and Fathering Words: The Making of an African American Writer. In addition to the filmed interviews visitors will see footage of the featured authors reading from their works as well as items drawn from their homes and writing spaces. The nine new video productions contain never-before-seen footage; it was shot specifically for this exhibition and on location in the authors’ homes, offices and studios.

“Since the 1980s another literary renaissance has been taking place within African American culture ... More books by African American authors are being sold in the United States than ever before,” Miller writes in his introduction to the exhibition. “Where do these stories come from? Who are these writers influencing our thoughts and dreams?”

The exhibition provides some answers by showcasing some of the most engaging writers on the scene today. They are:

- Valerie Boyd - author of Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston, winner of the 2003 Southern Book Award for best nonfiction book of the year
- Octavia E. Butler - winner of a 1995 MacArthur Fellowship and a 2000 Lifetime Achievement Award from PEN, and one of the most prolific writers of science fiction novels including Parable of the Sower and its sequel, Parable of the Talents
- Kenneth Carroll - Washington-based author of So What: For the White Dude Who Said This Ain't Poetry and a frequent performer at poetry cafes and theaters
- Edwidge Danticat - Haitian-born author of the current best seller, The Dew Breaker and Breath, Eyes, Memory, which explores the struggles of four generations of Haitian women and became a 1998 Oprah Book Club selection
- Samuel R. Delany - winner of numerous Hugo and Nebula awards for his science fiction novels and shorts stories, among them, Dhalgren and Empire Star
- Eloise Greenfield - Washington resident, author of more than 40 books and winner of The National Council of Teachers of English Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children
- Charles Johnson - novelist, essayist, cartoonist and a 1998 MacArthur Fellow whose Middle Passage won a National Book Award in 1990
- Dolores Kendrick – Washington native and Poet Laureate of the District of Columbia whose book, The Women of Plums: Poems in the Voices of Slave Women, has won numerous awards and has been adapted for the stage
- Walter Dean Myers - acclaimed for his books for young readers and author of Monster, designated a Coretta Scott King Honor Book and a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor book

A portion of the exhibition is devoted to African American children's literature and book illustrations by Kadir Nelson. His work appears in eight children's books including Dancing in the Wings by dancer-choreographer Debbie Allen, and Please, Baby, Please by Spike Lee and Tonya Lewis Lee. His illustrations in Just the Two of Us, written by actor Will Smith, won Nelson an NAACP Image Award.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the museum is offering a variety of free public programs. Unless otherwise noted all programs are free and held at Anacostia Museum from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Space is limited and reservations are required; call (202) 287-3369.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Friday Night Open Mic Poetry Slams in a Café Setting**

**July 9, 16, 23, 30, 7:30 p.m.**

Poet Kenneth Carroll hosts sessions designed to showcase the work of young adult poets.

### **Children’s Literature Series**

#### **A reading of “A Story – A Story” an African Folktale by Gail E. Haley**

**Saturday, June 19th**

Anansi, the Spider Man, climbs to the sky to buy stories from the Sky God. After hearing the story read youngsters tell the story in their own words. Museum Educator Joanna Banks leads.

#### **We Are Family**

**Saturday, June 26**

Children interview their parents, grandparents and other adult relatives then write short family histories. Genealogist Maria Goodwin and museum educator Robert Hall lead the session.

#### **Three Named Harriet**

**Saturday, June 26, 1 p.m.**

Performance artist Rochleigh Z. Wholfe uses a one-woman show, readings and paintings to portray the lives of 19<sup>th</sup> century heroines Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs and Harriet Powers.

#### **Writing and Illustrating workshop**

**Thursday, July 1**

After seeing the film “Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears,” narrated by actor James Earl Jones, children are guided in a session of writing and illustrating a spin-off of the story.

#### **Drawing Cartoon Characters**

**Thursday, July 15**

Award-winning cartoonist Todd Sprow uses uplifting images and music to inspire children to create upbeat story characters.

### **Poetry Writing Workshop**

**Saturday August 7**

**10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

What makes a good poem? Dolores Kendrick, Poet Laureate of the District of Columbia, clears away some of the confusion surrounding the art. This session is for teenagers and adults. Participants should bring samples of their work to discuss and revise. Kendrick is the author of four collections of poems. Her book, “The Women of Plums: Poems in the Voices of Slave Women,” won the Annisfield-Wolfe Award; a theatrical adaptation of the same book received the New York New Playwrights Award in 1997. Kendrick is one of nine writers showcased in

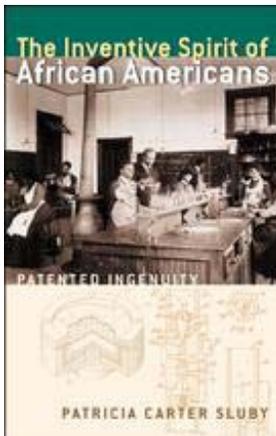
the exhibition “All the Stories Are True: African American Writers Speak.” Space is limited. To make the required reservations call (202) 287-3382.

### **Book Talk & Walk on the Dr. George Washington Carver Nature Trail**

Thursday August 19

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Learn about Dr. George Washington Carver and how you, too, can become a “steward of the earth” in your own neighborhood. The museum’s trail walks, co-sponsored by the George Washington Carver Outdoor School, Inc., are open to groups of no more than thirty. Recommended for kindergarten through eighth grade. Reservations, (202) 287-3246.



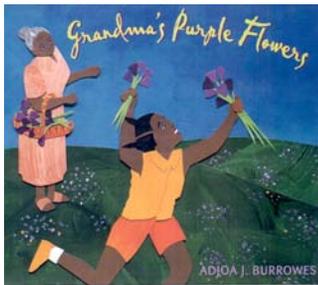
#### **Book Talk and Signing featuring:**

#### **The Inventive Spirit of African Americans: Patented Ingenuity**

Thursday August 28

11 a.m.

Former U.S. primary patent examiner Patricia Sluby discusses the inventive spirit of African Americans including George Washington Carver and Madame C. J. Walker plus a few unsung pioneers. A book signing follows. Reservations, (202) 287-3369.



#### **A Fifth Sunday Salon for Families**

Sunday August 29

3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Adjoa J. Burrowes, author and illustrator of “Grandma’s Purple Flowers,” will talk with adults and young readers about the art of marrying pictures and stories. She also will demonstrate her cut paper collage technique. Participants may try their hands at illustrating a short poem. Reservations, (202) 610-3292.

#### **Outreach: Storytelling on Wednesdays**

August 18 and 25, 10:30 a.m. - 12 noon

Call now to reserve a morning of stories read from some of the today's most popular children's books. A museum reading specialist will visit your site and engage your children, ages 5 to 12, in educational and entertaining tales. Reservations, (202) 287-3246.

Coming in September:

**An Evening with author Walter Dean Myers and his Son, illustrator Christopher Myers**  
Saturday September 2, 7 p.m.

Father and son tell the behind-the-scenes tales of collaborating on award-winning books for children and young adults. A reading and book signing follow. The Myers team is featured in the exhibition, "All the Stories Are True: African American Writers Speak." Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Carmichael Auditorium  
National Museum of American History - Behring Center  
14th St. & Constitution Ave., NW

The museum is located at 1901 Fort Place, SE and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Admission is free. New programs: [www.anacostia.si.edu](http://www.anacostia.si.edu) Tour information: (202) 610-3292.

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