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COLLEGE  
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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove and Literary Pioneer Charles Johnson Among the Honorees at the 13th National Black Writers Conference at Medgar Evers College**

***Edwidge Danticat, Michael Eric Dyson and Woodie King Jr.  
celebrated for contributions to Black literary culture.***

New York (February 2016) The Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, announces the 13th National Black Writers Conference (NBWC) to be held from Thursday, March 31, to Sunday, April 3, 2016. The four-day 2016 National Black Writers Conference will be held on the campus of Medgar Evers College, 1650 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225.

Since the first Conference in 1986, this public gathering of literary personalities and scholars continues to recognize renowned authors and poets for their extraordinary achievements. This year's Honorary Chair is former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove, who said, "Black American literature is at its most exciting ever. I had dreamed but never imagined it possible that in my lifetime I would be witness to such a glorious panoply of Black artistic expression — from lyric to polemic, confessional to experimental, page to stage and everything in between, Black American literature today celebrates the beautiful complexities of racial identity."

The honorees of the 13th National Black Writers Conference represent the spectrum of the energy and imagination that comprise the richness of Black literature. This year's honorees are best-selling author **Edwidge Danticat**; award-winning novelist and essayist **Charles Johnson**, whose momentous novel "Middle Passage" won the National Book Award in 1990; writer and history scholar **Michael Eric Dyson**; and **Woodie King Jr.**, founder of the New Federal Theatre.

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**COURAGE. STRENGTH. FORTITUDE.**

“I remember the first National Black Writers Conference I attended as a young writer. I was so incredibly moved by the amount of talent and inspiration and fellowship there. I felt supported. I felt guided. I felt that I could possibly have a future as a writer,” said Danticat. “It’s hard to express what an incredible honor it is to be part of the conference again, this time as an honoree. The National Black Writers Conference honors the past, present and future of Black writing. I am incredibly honored to be part of that legacy.”

The theme of the 13th Thirteenth National Black Writers Conference, “Writing Race: Embracing Difference,” places the issues of race and difference at the forefront of the literature produced by Black writers. Through dynamic and spirited panel discussions, roundtables, readings, films, workshops, and performances, writers, scholars, literary professionals, students and the general public will gather over four days to examine Black literary texts, to discuss the state of Black literature, and to raise questions related to (a) how and whether Black writers “write race,” that is whether Black writers write texts with the acknowledgement that they are writing out of a space that is socially constructed by race and (b) the ways in which Black writers embrace difference in aesthetics, thoughts, beliefs, politics, religions, etc. in the texts they compose.

“This year’s Conference continues the tradition and legacy of ensuring that the texts produced by Black writers in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa are known and read by the general public and are represented in our schools and libraries,” said Dr. Brenda M. Greene, executive director at the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College. “Today, we cannot ignore the fact that ‘race’ shapes the texts we produce, the themes we focus on and the conversations we have about literature.”

A number of important issues pertinent to Black writers and their work will be addressed and discussed throughout the Conference: “Afrofuturism: Reimagining the Past, Present, and Future”; “Decoded: Hip-Hop and Youth Culture”; “Creating Dangerously: Courage and Resistance in the Literature of Black Writers”; “The Politics of Race and Gender in the Black Literature”; “Black Writers in the Digital Age”; “Shaping Memories: The Odyssey to Adulthood”; and “Creative Writing Programs and Writers of Color: Current and Future Trends.”

### **Highlights and Special Events:**

● **John Oliver Killens at 100! Thursday, March 17, 2016; 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Medgar Evers College, CUNY, 1650 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225**  
***(Free and open to the public)***

The year 2016 marks the centennial of the birth of John Oliver Killens, who co-founded the National Black Writers Conference at Medgar Evers College in 1986. The Center for Black Literature, The Harlem Writers Guild, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture will celebrate Killens’s legacy with reflections on Killens’s life, a discussion on the significance of his works, and dramatic presentations with special guests Malaika Adero,

Arthur Flowers, Woodie King Jr., Bernice McFadden, and Diane Richards among others who align themselves with Killens's politics and purpose.

• **Town Hall Forum: “Legacy and Succession: The Role and Responsibility of the Black Writer and Black Institutions”**

**Thursday, March 31, 2016; 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

***(Free and open to the public)***

Author, poet, and publisher **Haki Madhubuti**, whose latest book is titled “Taking Bullets: Terrorism and Black Life in Twenty-First Century America, a Poet’s Representation and Challenge,” will lead at town hall meeting on this subject.

• **A Conversation with Dr. Michael Eric Dyson and Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, “Writing Race, Embracing Difference”**

**April 3, 2016; 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. (Donation)**

In an essay titled “Writing Race in America,” David Wright argues that race is socially constructed, is very much present in America, and that contrary to what people may assert about living in a postracial society, we live in a fully racial one. This premise guides the conversation that will be held between Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, author of the recently published “The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America” and Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

• **Opening Night: “Poets Reflect on the State of Contemporary Poetry,” Friday, April 1, 2016, 6:30 p.m. to 8: p.m.,** featuring Rita Dove, Rowan Ricardo Phillips and Afaa Michael Weaver.

• **2016 NBWC Jazz Concert and Benefit:** Following the awards presentation on Saturday, April 2, 2016, at 6 p.m., there will be benefit reception and jazz featuring The Brooklyn Jazz Consortium, Tai Allen, and Ursula Rucker.

• **“Provocateurs: The Symbiotic Relationship Between Photographers and Writers”**

**Opening Reception: Monday, March 28, 2016**

**6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

**Medgar Evers College; Charles Evans Inness Memorial Library  
1650 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225**

A photography exhibition of 30 images featuring works by photographers Laylah Amatullah Barrayn, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Rachel Eliza Griffiths, Marcia E. Wilson, and Ruddy Roye.

This year’s Conference and special programs have received contributions and funding from the CUNY Office of Academic Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts; The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation; Con Edison; New York Council for the Humanities; New-York Historical Society; and W.W. Norton & Co.

For more information about the 13th National Black Writers Conference and a full list of events and participants, please visit our website at [www.centerforblackliterature.org](http://www.centerforblackliterature.org). For media requests, contact Gilda Squire, Squire Media and Management Inc. at [Gildasquire@verizon.net](mailto:Gildasquire@verizon.net) or 212-928-8090.

For information and tickets regarding the Benefit Reception and Jazz Concert, call the Center at 718-804-8883, the NBWC hotline at 718-270-4811, or email [writers@mec.cuny.edu](mailto:writers@mec.cuny.edu).

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