

January 1, 2019

**The Ralph Hogges and Benjamin Cowins
South Florida Writers of Color
Literary Magazine**

An Online Literary Magazine

“Captivated and inspired by the enduring power, creative joy and beauty of words, they are the South Florida writers of novels, short stories, poems, plays, memoirs, essays, autobiographies, science fiction, biographies, anthologies, children books and more.”

--- Ralph Hogges

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January 1, 2019, Volume 1, Number 1

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From the Founders and Executive Editors

Ralph Hogges & Benjamin Cowins, Sr.

As retired educators and best friends for more than forty years, we asked ourselves this vital question: What are we going to do in our retirement years? Throughout our professional careers as educators, we reached out and mentored young and ambitious brothers and sisters of color, especially African Americans. Many of them went on to excel and are holding prominent positions and living successful lives.

At this crossroad of our lives, we wanted to continue doing something meaningful, empowering and lasting for our people. We loved to read books and writing was our passion. Nearing the end of our career in education, we began to transition from writing academic scholarly works to writing creative fiction and nonfiction works, including novels, memoirs, poetry, etc.

The more we wrote, the more we enjoyed it. Several of our books were published. We also experienced many of the racist hardships of being African American Writers in America. The reality was that literary agents and prominent publishers were very receptive to representing and publishing the books written by (or ghost written) famous African American entertainers and great athletes but were closed and rejected many of the other dedicated and gifted African American writers. Rejection letters were numerous and painful.

Bookstores, book fairs and book festivals eagerly sought and invited the famous African American entertainers and great athletes to read and sell their books. Their prominence and wealth were substantially increased.

Frustrated, but determined, many rejected African American writers self-published their books at tremendous costs. Bookstores refused to stock and sell their books and they were not invited to read and sell their books at book fairs and book festivals. All too often, they did not sell enough books to recover their costs.

Added to their burdens, many of them did not have the opportunities to professionally develop their literary craft and network with established writers by attending writers' conferences, conventions, workshops, seminars and college courses. The high costs, limited enrollment and selective admission excluded them.

All too often unable to live off of their writing, many of them worked one or several jobs to pay the bills and make ends meet. They struggled to write whenever and wherever they could.

We decided to do what we could to help change and improve those circumstances and situations by creating a professional organization that would provide tremendous access, participation and professional development opportunities for writers of color, especially African Americans. On July 29, 2016, we founded The Ralph Hogges and Benjamin Cowins Writers Group of South Florida.

To ensure tremendous access, no membership dues or fees were required to become a member. Membership was open to beginning, emerging and established writers. Our founding members on September 17, 2016, included 17 South Florida writers. Some lived in Miami-Dade County and the others lived in Broward County.

Fiction and Nonfiction Critique Groups were established to help our members with their writing, especially editing and refining their works. We established our monthly Author's Speak, Sign and Sell Books Circuit events scheduled at various venues in Miami-Dade County and Broward County. Only members of our writers group would be allowed to read, sign and sell their books at our events. All of our events would be free and open to the public.

Our first event was held on October 29, 2016, at the Old Dillard Museum in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was well attended and two of our published authors read from their books. Thereafter, we held numerous other monthly events for book readings.

The culmination of our 2017 year was our creating, managing and leading The Hogges and Cowins Book Festival and Writers Conference. It was held on December 9 -10, 2017, at The Arts & Recreation Center (ARC) in Opa Locka, Florida. Free and open to the public, it was well attended. Only members of our Writers Group were allowed to do the book readings, serve on panel discussions and facilitate workshops. It gave them tremendous opportunities to participate, learn, grow and develop as writers and authors.

As of this writing, we have 80 members. Furthering our literary vision to introduce our members, Writers Group and annual Book Festival and Writers Conference to the global community, we have created this online literary magazine: *The Ralph Hogges and Benjamin Cowins South Florida Writers of Color Literary Magazine*. Free, no purchase or subscription required, we hope you will enjoy it. Share it with your family and friends and encourage them to pass it on to others.

The Ralph Hogges and Benjamin Cowins Writers Group of South Florida

Mission: An organization for beginning, emerging and established writers who desire to engage with fellow writers, develop their craft, publish and sell their books.

Philosophy: Those who don't know, come to learn. Those who know, come to teach others.

Purpose: To host monthly gatherings for writers to engage, discuss and sell their literary works.

To provide critique groups to assist writers with editing and refining their literary works.

To assist writers with identifying publishers and getting their manuscripts published.

To assist writers with marketing their books.

To organize and host an annual book festival and writers conference.

Please Note: No membership dues or fees are required to become a member.

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The Author's Speak, Sign and Sell Books Circuit 2016 – 2018 Venues

Published authors of the Writers Group of South Florida did book readings, signings and sellings at the following venues:

Theme: A Gathering and Celebration of South Florida's Writers of Color

October 29, 2016

Old Dillard Museum
1009 N.W. 4th Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311

November 19, 2016

Florida Memorial University
15800 N.W. 42nd Avenue
Miami Gardens, Florida 33054

January 14, 2017

The Arts and Recreation Center (ARC)
675 Ali Baba Avenue
Opa Locka, Florida 33054

February 18, 2017

PenTab Academy
18415 N.W. 7th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33169

March 11, 2017

Second Baptist Church of Richmond Heights
11111 Pinkston Drive
Miami, Florida 33176

April 15, 2017

Old Dillard Museum
1009 N.W. 4th Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311

May 20, 2017

Cushman School
592 N.E. 60th Street
Miami, Florida 33137

June 24, 2017

Cooper City Church of God
9191 Sterling Road
Cooper City, Florida 33328

July 15, 2017

Betty T. Ferguson Recreation Complex
3000 N.W. 199 Street
Miami Gardens, Florida 33056

August 19, 2017

West Kendall Regional Library
10201 Hammocks Boulevard
Miami, Florida 33196

Theme: Lifting Our Literary Voices: A Cultural and Intellectual Experience

April 7, 2018

Betty T. Ferguson Recreation Complex
3000 N.W. 199 Street
Miami Gardens, Florida 33056

Theme: Old Dillard Museum Literary Gatherings

May 16, 2018; May 30, 2018; June 13, 2018 and July 11, 2018

Old Dillard Museum
1009 N.W. 4th Street
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33311

My Favorite African American Writers

By Ralph Hogges

Langston Hughes & Zora Neale Hurston

I am often asked the question: Ralph, who are your favorite African American writers? It is a question that I eagerly welcome. It provides me the opportunity to share highlights of the life and legacy of the writers that have been insightful and inspirational to me in my writing and publishing endeavors.

First and foremost, my favorite African American writers are Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. After successfully completing my freshman year at Tuskegee Institute in 1968 wherein I was pursuing a major in Social Studies and a minor in English, I went to New York for summer employment.

I lived in Brooklyn, New York and worked as a nurses' aide at the New York Cornell Hospital. During the weekends, I joined some friends and went to Harlem. As we walked about here and there, visiting and learning about its history, the legacy of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance was prominent and profound.

Among the members of this legendary literary era, two were most impressive to me. They were Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. I began to buy and read many of their published books. The more of their books I read, the more insightful and inspired I became about becoming a writer someday.

A brief profile of their literary life and legacy include the following:

Langston Hughes: An author of poetry, novels, plays, short stories, essays, autobiographies and anthologies.

Some of his books and plays included the following:

- The Big Sea: An Autobiography
- I Wonder as I Wander: An Autobiographical Journey
- The Ways of White Folks
- Not Without Laughter
- The Best of Simple
- The Panther and the Lash: Poems of Our Time
- Selected Poems of Langston Hughes
- One Way Ticket

- Fine Clothes for the Jew
- The Weary Blues
- Laughing to Keep from Crying
- Five Plays by Langston Hughes, edited by Webster Smalley:
 - *Tambourines to Glory
 - *Soul Gone Home
 - *Little Ham
 - *Mulatto
 - *Simply Heavenly

Zora Neale Hurston: An author of folklore, novels, short stories, autobiographies and plays.

Some of her books and plays included the following:

- Spunk
- Jonah’s Gourd Vine
- Mules and Men
- Their Eyes were Watching God
- Dust Tracks on a Road: An Autobiography
- Tell My Horse
- Seraph on the Suwannee
- Moses, Man on the Mountain
- Zora Neale Hurston’s Collected Plays, edited by Jean Lee Cole and Charles Mitchell:
 - *Meet the Mamma
 - *Color Struck
 - *Spears
 - *The First One
 - *Cold Keener
 - *De Turkey and De Law (with Langston Hughes)
 - *The Sermon in the Valley (with Rowena Woodham Jelffe)
 - *The Fiery Chariot
 - *Polk County (with Dorothy Waring)

Their literary works and involvement in the Harlem Renaissance movement impressed me so much that I titled my first book of poetry, *Inspired by the Harlem Renaissance*. Published by the MQOTA Publishers, Inc. of New York in 2008, the first poem of my book was the following:

Inspired by the Harlem Renaissance

It was a time of renewed consciousness and
commitment to creative and artistic Black voices,
emotions and visions.

It was a time of Blacks' literary and
cultural awakening.
It was a time of renewed awakening
in Black literature, featuring poetry, prose and drama.
It was a time of literary endeavors, achievements
and contributions by:
Countee Cullen
Langston Hughes
Jean Toomer
Claude McKay
Arna Bontemps
Alain Locke
Zora Neale Hurston
And others.

James Baldwin & Maya Angelou

Following Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, my next two favorite African American Writers are James Baldwin and Maya Angelou. James Baldwin got tired and frustrated with the racial discrimination and segregation in America and moved from New York to Paris, France and wrote many of his books. After many years as a singer and dancer, Maya Angelou moved to New York, joined the Harlem Writers' Guild and began writing books.

I have vacationed in Paris, France numerous times and appreciated and enjoyed the racial freedom and literary community and support that probably welcomed and inspired Baldwin. He wrote numerous books that I have collected and enjoyed reading.

During my sophomore year at Tuskegee Institute in 1969, I met Maya Angelou. Her first book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, had been published and she was on a book reading tour. Gathered in the campus auditorium and sitting with fellow students, we enjoyed her eloquent, entertaining and powerful performance. I knew that many more books would come from this grand lady of literature.

A brief profile of their literary life and legacy include the following:

James Baldwin: An author of novels, short stories, essays and plays.

Some of his books included the following:

- Notes of a Native Son
- Go Tell It On the Mountain
- Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone

- Going to Meet the Man
- Giovanni's Room
- Another Country
- Nobody Knows My Name
- No Name in the Street
- If Beale Street Could Talk
- The Fire Next Time
- The Amen Corner

Maya Angelou: An author of memoirs, autobiographies, poetry and essays.

Some of her books included the following:

- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings
- Gather Together in My Name
- All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes
- Even the Stars Look Lonesome
- Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now
- A Song Flung Up to Heaven
- The Collected Poems of Maya Angelou

African American Writers Who Preceded Us: Learning About and From Them

By Ralph Hogges & Benjamin Cowins, Sr.

Throughout our lives, we have been good students of history. We have carefully and seriously studied the history and culture of our people, especially those who achieved and made outstanding contributions in literature. It has been of tremendous help to us in our creative writing endeavors.

Over the years, we have compiled the following publications and hope this listing will be of significant literary benefit to you:

Bontemps, Arna, ed. *American Negro Poetry: An Anthology with an Introduction*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.

Brawley, Benjamin, ed. *Early Negro American Writers: Selections with Biographical and Critical Introductions*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1970.

Brown, Sterling A. *The Negro in American Fiction*. Washington, D.C.: The Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1937.

Carby, Hazel V. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Chapman, Abraham, ed. *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Literature*. New York: A Mentor Book, 1968.

Gates, Henry Louis, ed. *The Classic Slave Narratives*. New York: A Mentor Book, 1987.

Gates, Henry Louis and Nellie Y. McKay, ed. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Locke, Alain, ed. *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: A Touchstone Book, 1997.

Peterson, Carla L. *Doers of the Word: African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830 - 1880)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Randall, Dudley, ed. *The Black Poets*. New York: Bantam Books.

Rediger, Pat. *Great African Americans in Literature*. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company, 1996.

Sherman, Joan R., ed. *African American Poetry: An Anthology, 1773-1927*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997.

Establishing Your Brand: Marketing and Promoting You and Your Books

By Ralph Hogges & Benjamin Cowins, Sr.

Actors have fans. Musicians have fans. Athletes have fans. As a writer, do you have fans? Most likely, your answer is no. This is typically the case for many writers, especially those of color.

Fans or fan clubs are firm and definitive bases or groups of supporters. They are often the life blood of success.

It is important for writers, especially those of color, to know and understand that writing is a business. If it is a business, it should be financially profitable.

You don't have to believe us; let us prove it to you with the following successful authors:

J. K. Rowling

If you have young children, we are sure you have purchased many of the books in the Harry Potter Fantasy Series. You have probably taken them to the theater to see many of the Harry Potter movies.

J. k. Rowling is the author of those novels that were adapted into films. Her writings have made her famous and very wealthy. Celebrated as one of the best-selling authors in history, her books have sold more than 500 million copies.

Danielle Steel

Danielle Steel is a romance novelist. She has written 165 books. More than 800 million copies of her books have been sold. She is rich and famous.

Walter Mosley

Did you see the movie, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, starring Denzel Washington? Perhaps you saw the movie, *Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned*, starring Laurence Fishburne. They were part of Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins series of mysteries that were made into films.

A writer of numerous bestselling fiction and nonfiction works, Mosley is the author of 43 books. His books have been translated into 23 languages.

Terry McMillan

Ladies, did you see the movie, *Waiting to Exhale*? It was a film adaptation of Terry McMillan's book by the same title that sold more than three million copies.

I know you saw the movie, *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*. It was a film adaptation of another of McMillan's books by the same title.

The above authors established their writing as a business and promoted themselves and their books in a strategic and methodical manner that yielded substantial success and financial profits. Fans and fan clubs were vital to their methods and approaches. A vital component of this profitable effort was the employment of a publicist, a media guru with substantial media connections, proven and successful strategies and approaches, used to sell the author and his or her books.

To some extent, the words fans and fan clubs are seen as "old school," and are being replaced by "brand and branding." Are you and your books unique and special in a manner that sets you apart from your best competitors and gives you a successful competitive and financial edge? That identity, positioning and promoting, constitutes the modern day brand and branding.

The important questions are: What is your strategy? How will you establish, promote and manage your brand and branding? Will you hire a publicist and /or use other ways and means?

There are a variety of ways and means to accomplish this. You can hire a publicist. This is often very expensive. Better and less expensive options include marketing to the global community on the internet. Among those are the (1) use of amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com, (2) setting up a website, and (3) using the public social media platforms, including:

Facebook

LinkedIn

Twitter

Instagram

Google

Others

Contributing Authors

Several members of our Writers Group of South Florida were invited to be Contributing Authors for the inaugural edition of our magazine. We believed their success as published authors, book readings, and a host of literary involvements prepared them well to provide insight and inspiration on writing and writers.

The Ease of Writing Or Is It?

By Rose Stiffin

I am in the midst of writing my sixth novel. By now, maybe one would say, this is as easy as baking a pie. Perhaps, except, I don't bake anymore and I think I made one pie in my entire life. My boyfriend at the time did not like that apple pie.

So, writing, my friends, is not easy, it never is. True, there are authors who seem to churn out novels on a monthly basis. But, on closer examination, the reader might conclude that these novels are rehashing the same characters in different settings, same plots with different endings. Or, if truly different from each other, then, these authors are geniuses and we should praise them!

Can we as developing authors (self-published, in my humble case) make our work easier? I was taught that if it comes too easily, it is either not worth it or unappreciated by the recipient. Writing should take time; it should take thought; it should take an investment of the author's mind, soul, and spirit.

When I wrote my debut novel, *Walk in Bethel*, I was not on a path to write this novel. Does this seem strange? The novel has been critically acclaimed (I finally realized what this phrase means: It means that some people really loved it - it has won three prizes in about four years - but only a few people know about it!), so I think I did a good job on it.

My intention was to write a short story about a man who was going through a troubled phase in his marriage. As I started to write, I could get only a few pages out. Why could I not write what I 'saw' happening in this man's life? After all, he was *my* creation, *my* character. Should I not know him? It turns out I did not.

So, I wrote his physical characteristics down, listed them out as if a grocery list of attributes: tall, honey-brown skin, wavy hair, and green eyes. Oh, all that was easy, since I was using a childhood crush (shout out to David Spann!) as my basis for my character. But as I wrote

these characteristics out, I thought, “Wait, where did he/David get those green eyes? Where did he/David get that truly gorgeous shade of brown skin from?”

This is where miracles happen, readers: *Walk in Bethel* literally unfolded before my eyes as if I could see the book writing itself. When I knew how he got those eyes (please buy the book!), I started writing. Not his life – ironically, he would not “surface” as the adult male going through that troubled marriage until the third part of the book – but the life of his grandmother, his great-grandmother. In short, I was writing a family saga, historical fiction, that I was not even aware was inside me. The characters spoke to me on a daily basis. I was taking down their words, their actions, as if they were dictating their lives to me. While I added a few chapters and a few characters, “on my own,” it seems to me, the unfolding of the book did not change from that fateful night (yes, I remember, it was night!). So, writing is never easy; I do not believe it is meant to be, if you have any desire to produce a great work, but it should be fun, lifting and even, at times, cathartic. Best of luck!

The Distinctive World of Writers

By Delores M. Smiley

Writers come in a wide variety of characters and personalities. They are distinctive in their own right. There are those who may have a manuscript in the making and others that may have completed and published from 1 to 100 or more books. Some may have decided that they just want to preserve their thoughts as written word with no thoughts of publication or any phase of notoriety. And, others will settle in just knowing that they are leaving a legacy to the generations that follow.

Research reveals that there are ways to identify or describe writers. I will paraphrase some of the descriptions that I found. There are those who call themselves writers but they are really procrastinators. That is, they want to do it, even refer to themselves as writers but just can never carve out the amount of time to get blocks of a project completed. They get distracted by talking with friends, chatting on Facebook, watching TV, or a number of other attractions that serve to distract. Basically, they don’t get much done.

Then, there are the writers who accept the challenge of writing. They are the ones who dive right in regardless of what is going on around them. They aim for as many words or pages as they can possibly write in one setting. They enthusiastically enjoy opening the door to their

study and staying there until they literally exhaust their mental capabilities for that particular time.

There are those who have been described as having fanfiction addictions. They write about the characters they love without any expectation. They give their creativity without the expectation of getting published. The Coffee Shop Writers are the ones who need to be seen in public. They frequent coffee shops, libraries and similar public places. They want to be seen in public places without being disturbed.

The serial character murders writers love to write to see the tears fall or the frightened withdrawal of the reader. The more tears, the higher the success for this particular writer. The bucket listers are the ones who just want to check this item off their bucket list. They have no interest in long term commitment to developing content.

The plot bunny breeders are those who make a habit of collecting ideas wherever they find themselves. The self-proclaimed geniuses are the writers who see their content as perfect the first time they write it. In other words, they could easily show others how it is done. There are the writers whose characters are real. Their characters are their muse and they hold on to them at any cost.

The hush-hush writers keep everything they write a secret – possibly password protecting everything. No one can know, or have access, to what they are writing. Lastly, there are the my-way-or-the-highway writers who do not want to be critiqued, criticized, or to receive constructive feedback.

These writers may use various frameworks wherein their content comfortably fits. The frameworks may be for the publication of poetry, plays, novels, short stories, autobiographies, memoirs, biographies, history, science fiction, or inspirations. Wherever and however you decide to lift your literary voices – write on, my fellow writers, write on.

The Right to Write

By Susan Lycett Davis

To write or not to write?
Which comes first, the writer or the writing?

These are the questions, and given that, what then are the answers? For some people, the impetus to inscribe is irresistible, is passion, and is intuitive. They write thoughts, pen experiences, jot down desires and make notes of emotions. Creatively, these flowing scrawls can be transcribed into poems, stories, songs and narratives. For others, it is not as intrinsic, but rather learned skill-sets which have them creating texts, journaling situations and documenting important and historical archives.

Whatever the occasion, some people just need to write.... and though just about anybody can write, not everyone is a writer. Ironically, the word 'writer' tends to be a label bestowed on one who has some form of documented and published transcription, be it creative, educational or general. It is argued, however, that a good writer ensures that his or her inscription has good content, is focused, has good grammar, unless written in a vernacular, and communicates well with the readers. The spoken word can easily be forgotten, but the written word is permanent, and so, in essence, is a sacred and personal aptitude.

Renowned Jamaican author and thespian Owen Ellis once said:

"I write because I have to, and a part of me inhabits everything I write. I believe the affirming authority of authorship over my own story is more than an indulgent impetus to inscribe self. It is about exercising the right to write myself. It is about enacting a healing, transformative 'w-rite.'"

Even with the inception of audio and visual medium, the extended platforms for the spoken word, people continue to write more than ever. From the carvings on cave walls to the sonnets of Shakespeare and the poems of the likes of Langston Hughes, there remains a timelessness and inevitable permanence when it comes to the written word, to writing! Whether it is accessed via new technologies like kindle, by way of various social media platforms, or by the old school method of print, the written word is here to stay.

Writing is therapeutic; it is the framework for communicating at all levels and over time. Writing informs, heals, entertains, educates, elevates and eradicates. Writing creates writers, writers create writing and the art of writing is a rite, which makes it always right to write.

That said, whether you are an official writer or simply someone who writes, it can be concluded that the right to write is a rite – just continue right on, and write on!

My Writing Journey

By Rosemarie Cole

My son, Dwayne, was almost three years old. He was an energetic toddler at the pre-school of Broward Children Center where I worked. Each evening when I picked him up after work, I would spend a little time observing him on the playground to see his reaction to other children. I taught my son to be obedient to his teachers, to be kind, and to wait his turn for a swing or a toy.

On this particular Friday after picking him up, I stopped at a Chinese restaurant for dinner. As I waited for the food, a God-ordained idea came to me to write a children's book about kids Dwayne's age on the playground. I took a white napkin from the table and began to write all the things coming to me. Hence, "The Playground Bully" was born.

During the days that followed, the whole story came together. Entitled "The Playground Bully," I typed it up and saved it on my computer where it remained for thirteen years.

On Thanksgiving morning of 2005, during my prayer time, the Holy Spirit spoke to me and instructed me to write another book. In ultimate obedience, I answered the call. The premise of the book, along with the title, was given to me that very morning. It took me one year to write and self-publish this book: "A Call to War."

In 2016, "The Playground Bully" was beautifully illustrated and printed. As of this writing, I am the author of the following books: A Call to War, A Call to Repentance, Romance 31 ... Marriage Booklets, and The Playground Bully.

All praise be to God. My advice to you: Whatever God calls you to do, just do it. He equips the called.

9 Steps to Writing Your First Book

By Shelly Cameron

It's such an exciting time to think about writing and publishing your very own book! It certainly was for me when I did my research, wrote a Peer Reviewed article titled "The Leadership Challenge" and got it published in the *Journal of American Academy of Business* Cambridge (JAABC). I then wrote books on Success Strategies, Career Development, and Leadership. Tons of excitement especially when you receive the first printed copy! Woohoo!

I have been getting requests from interested first time writers and decided to share my personal thoughts on how to get the writing done to get published. I understand the importance of this goal. So, here are my 9 steps to get you going.

1. Develop that Mindset

Goal achievement begins in the mind. Think of the saying, "If you can imagine it, you can achieve it." So, get your mind focused and begin the steps to achieve!

2. Write What You Know

Write what you know but be realistic. Don't start learning a new skill to write a book. Use your own life experience. Do you have a skill? Are you an expert at something such as managing a business, a hobby, relationship, or other? Why not consider writing your autobiography? Whatever you decide, make sure it is important to you and something that you are passionate and knowledgeable about.

3. Write, Just Write

Once you have decided what you are going to write about, just write. It's that simple. Write on your laptop, iPad, desktop, phone, or even the old fashion hard copy steno-book. Your choice. Just write.

4. Forget about Editing During the First Draft

When writing, forget about being perfect. Just focus on getting the information out of your head and on paper, or whatever means you choose to write in.

5. Take Breaks

Go to places that inspire. Walk on the beach. Embrace nature. Do your favorite activity. Watch a movie. Read. Pamper yourself. Simply do something that inspires you, something that ignites your passion – your writing.

6. Capture Those Thoughts

Lest we forget, always keep handy a medium to capture those thoughts. It's not uncommon to see something that inspires you even though you are not in that 'writing space.' Just get it written down – somehow. Missing that moment often leads to

frustration when you get back to your space and can't remember what you wanted to write.

7. Set Deadlines

Defining a deadline for completion helps you achieve your goal. So, for example, if you decide to get published by the end of the year, then, set a plan to write every day, every weekend, or plan a vacation getaway or retreat just to write. Plans are like road maps or GPS. There is a starting and an ending point. If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there... and I dare say that you may not like where you end up.

8. Don't Be Hard on Yourself

Enjoy the ride. If you miss a day, two, three or more, don't get stuck. Just get back on track and write.

9. Don't Quit

Achieving a goal has never been easy. Be aware. Keep the momentum going. Cry if you must at times but keep going. If it will help, get an accountability partner or coach who will help you achieve your goal.

So, there you have it. 9 Steps to becoming that author you've always dreamed of. You have it in you – so, go for it!

Tell Your Story

By Patricia Reid-Waugh

Retired? If so, chances are you have lived a full life and have some rich life stories to tell. Many can benefit from reading about the struggles and triumphs that shaped you in childhood and beyond, the social and psychological obstacles you faced and overcame, the critical health challenges you battled with grit and determination, the personal and professional identities you painstakingly carved that created the wonderful you that others see today.

There is also a more compelling reason to tell your story. It is in telling your story that you begin to learn who you really are.

One common misconception that prevents persons from entering into literary publication is the notion that a book has to be some great, long work of literature. It doesn't. In fact, shorter is sometimes better. My dear friend, Dr. Jennifer Mamby-Alexander, tells her own story of cancer survival in a book of 78 pages, *A Practical Guide to Coping with Cancer*.

When I submitted the manuscript of my book, *Retirement: A New Adventure*, for edit, the big criticism was that it was far too long for the target audience. I put it down for a month, then, took it up with fresh eyes and a fresh state of mind. After making substantial cuts to the text, I ended up with an 85 page book which has been described by many as “an easy read.”

If you have well preserved documentation, journals, or are blessed with the memory of an elephant, you will be able to formulate your story to accurately record timelines, personalities and events of your past. However, without the benefit of precise documentation, you can simply use the approach of recalling important details of your experiences and framing them as short stories.

I have used this approach over recent years to tell my life stories as performance pieces at family, church and community functions. For example, one piece titled *The Anglican Beating versus The Baptist Beating* compares the disciplinary styles of my mother and father. These humorous recollections of shared history evoke howls of laughter at family and community events as audience members see parts of themselves in the personal experiences being shared. I am presently working on compiling these stories for my next book.

If you are interested in sharing your story with more than just family and close associates, there are many ways to reach the wider world. The most obvious is by submitting your story, essay, or book for traditional publication and even entering competitions looking for creative works. The Internet also makes it easier to self-publish a book; that is, to order a printing of paper copies, or turn your book into a digital e-book that anyone can purchase online and read on their computer, phone, or tablet.

One trap to be careful of when processing your story is your own preconceptions. You might have ideas about how you want to believe the story went, or what is or is not good to talk about. Ultimately, you have both the right and responsibility to choose what goes into the life story you share with the world. But, the tale which is most valuable, both to yourself and others, will be the truest one. There is real value in the messiness of life!

So, I hope you are now convinced of the value of telling your story. This therapeutic and beneficial exercise is a great way to leave your legacy for the future and may turn out to be the most satisfying activity you pursue in your lifetime.

Writers of Color in South Florida

Some were born in the United States. Others were born in the Caribbean (including Jamaica, Bahamas and Haiti) and numerous other countries. They are the writers of color in South Florida pursuing their literary craft as beginning, emerging and established writers.

Adhering to the Philosophy, *those who don't know, come to learn; and those who know, come to teach others*, as put forth by The Ralph Hogges and Benjamin Cowins Writers Group of South Florida, they are the creative and intellectual writers and leaders of the South Florida Literary Renaissance.

Because we want you to get to know about them and their books, we have provided this contact information, including their names, titles of some of their books, email addresses, and websites. We encourage you to communicate with them. Invite them to do book readings, signings, and keynote speeches at your venues and events, serve as special guests on your television and radio programs, buy their books, and share their contact information with your relatives, friends and others.

| Name & Title of Books | Email Address | Website |
|--|--|---------|
| 1. Linda Adderly Book: <ul style="list-style-type: none">From Where I Stand | addlmh@aol.com | |
| 2. Lorraine Allen Book: <ul style="list-style-type: none">57 Poems Of & For Life | lallen5915@aol.com | |
| 3. Metris Batts | m_batts@hotmail.com | |
| 4. Dr. Nivia Binett-Carroll | niviaphd@gmail.com | |
| 5. Dr. Ciara L. Bostick Book: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Welcome to Womanhood: A Pre-Teen Survival Guide | askdrCiara@gmail.com | |
| 6. Vivia Bromfield | vbrom1061@yahoo.com | |
| 7. Dr. Christine Bryant | 137jesus@att.net | |
| 8. Veronica Carey Buie | vecabu62@yahoo.com | |

9. Dr. Shelly Cameron scameron@ccaahr.com www.shellycameron.com

Books:

- Success Strategies of Caribbean American Leaders in the United States
- Motivation Quotes to Boost Your Success
- Green Light: When God Says Go

10. Jeff Carroll coachyoieff@gmail.com <https://www.amazon.com/default/e/BOONEN9GOA/>

Books:

- The Harlem Shake
- Welcome to Boss Lady's Planet
- Rasheeda the Zombie Killer

11. Aymer Caswell seafmannaministries@hotmail.com

Books:

- Jehovah Rapha
- The Lord Our Healer, Physician and Cure

12. Dawn Ellicott Clinkscale anuday4you@gmail.com

13. Rosemarie Cole ocole8760@aol.com rosemariecole.com

Books:

- The Playground Bully
- A Call to Repentance
- Romance 31.... The Marriage Booklets

14. Corey B. Collins 8277co@bellsouth.net

Book:

- The Thanks You Get

15. Dr. Benjamin Cowins, Sr. cowinsb2002us@yahoo.com

Books:

- Positive Thoughts – Valued Affirmations, Motivating and Inspirational Sharings for Youths and the Young-at-Heart
- The Cowins – History and Heritage
- The Vietnam War – Black Bullets, Flashbacks & Untold Truths

16. Darrell Davis davisdarrellw@aim.com

17. Dr. Susan Lycett Davis sdavis@nova.edu www.drsueandyou.net
Books:
• I am Jamaica
• Ode to Miss Lou... From the Soul of Dr. Sue
• Ode to Miss Lou... and many more from Dr. Sue
18. Rosangela Diniz rosangeladiniz@aol.com
19. Vernell Everett vern1936@bellsouth.net
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• The Shady Side of the Street
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• Congregational Prayer by the Word – Volume 2
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Book:
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