

THE CARIBBEAN WRITER

The Literary Gem of the Caribbean

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The Word is Out!

David Hall, UVI's 5th, and relatively new president is a poetry lover.



Madhubuti, four of Dr. Hall's favorite poets.

The Caribbean Writer knows one of Dr. Hall's goal is to increase the male student body at UVI, and to this end he has established a group "Brothers With

Not only did Dr. Hall have to memorize poems when he was in school, he has attended poetry readings. Are you curious to know some of his favorite poets? Well perhaps you are familiar with one of the most prolific poets of the 20th century, Langston Hughes. Maybe you have read a poem by Margaret Walker, or Nikki Giovanni, or Haki

a Cause" to engage young men on campus about their needs and goals. With this in mind, *The Caribbean Writer* asked Dr. Hall, "What would you envision/want a Caribbean, male poet to write to inspire young men to pursue college education?" This is Dr. Hall's response:

"He would reveal the inner strengths and vulnerabilities of males in their transition to manhood; he would write from his soul about the culture and how it contains the seeds for the transformation of our understanding of what it means to be a man; he would write about our love for Caribbean women and our respect for God; he would reveal his pain in order to help others heal theirs; he would write in a manner that a boy 9 years old, and a man 90 years old, could both understand."

A little background on Dr. Hall's favorite poets:

Born **James Mercer Langston Hughes**, (1902 -1967), Hughes dropped his first two names and became known just as Langston Hughes during the Harlem Renaissance; he was one of the earliest innovators of the new literary art form jazz poetry. His most anthologized poem is, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," and one of his poems, still appropriate today is:



I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed--

I, too, am America.

Margaret Abigail Walker Alexander (1915-1998), was born in Birmingham, Alabama, and wrote as Margaret Walker. Her best-known poem is "**For My People**," written in 1942, is a classic, narrative poem. The first 2 stanzas follows on next page:



Dr. Hall's favorite poets cont'd:

"For my people everywhere singing their slave songs repeatedly: their dirges and their ditties and their blues and jubilees, praying their prayers nightly to an unknown god, bending their knees humbly to an unseen power;

For my people lending their strength to the years, to the gone years and the now years and the maybe years, washing ironing cooking scrubbing sewing mending hoeing plowing digging planting pruning patching dragging along never gaining never reaping never knowing and never understanding;"

Born Yolande Cornelia (June 7, 1943), in Knoxville, Tennessee **Nikki Giovanni**, Grammy-nominated poet, activist and author is currently a Distinguished Professor of English at Virginia Tech. Giovanni says, "Mistakes are a fact of life. It is the response to error that counts." One of her most performed poem is:

**Ego Tripping** (there may be a reason why)

I was born in the congo
I walked to the fertile crescent and built
the sphinx
I designed a pyramid so tough that a star
that only glows every one hundred years falls
into the center giving divine perfect light
I am bad

I sat on the throne
drinking nectar with allah
I got hot and sent an ice age to europe
to cool my thirst
My oldest daughter is nefertiti
the tears from my birth pains
created the Nile
I am a beautiful woman

I gazed on the forest and burned
out the sahara desert
with a packet of goat's meat
and a change of clothes
I crossed it in two hours
I am a gazelle so swift
so swift you can't catch me

For a birthday present when he was three
I gave my son hannibal an elephant
He gave me rome for mother's day
My strength flows ever on

My son noah built new/ark and

I stood proudly at the helm
as we sailed on a soft summer day
I turned myself into myself and was
jesus
men intone my loving name
All praises All praises
I am the one who would save

I sowed diamonds in my back yard
My bowels deliver uranium
the filings from my fingernails are
semi-precious jewels
On a trip north
I caught a cold and blew
My nose giving oil to the arab world
I am so hip even my errors are correct
I sailed west to reach east and had to round off
the earth as I went
The hair from my head thinned and gold was laid
across three continents

I am so perfect so divine so ethereal so surreal
I cannot be comprehended except by my permission

I mean...I...can fly
like a bird in the sky. . .

Haki Madhubuti (alias Don L Lee), was born Feb. 23, 1942, in Little Rock, Arkansas. His poetry, often written in black dialect and slang was influenced greatly by the recordings of the group, *The Last Poets*. His poem, **My Brothers** is dedicated to all the male students at UVI.



my brothers i will not tell you
who to love or not love
i will only say to you
that
Black women have not been
loved enough.

i will say to you
that
we are at war & that
Black men in america are
being removed from the
earth
like loose sand in a wind storm
and that the women Black are
three to each of us.

no
my brothers i will not tell you
who to love or not love
but
i will make you aware of our

Dr. Hall's favorite poets cont'd:

self hating and hurting ways.
make you aware of whose bellies
you dropped from.
i will glue your ears to those images
you reflect which are not being
loved.

The Caribbean Writer applauds and thanks Garry Richardson for writing the following poem to his unborn child, and encourages him to pursue his education while he works at UVI.

To My Unborn by Garry Richardson

When I first heard the news,
I was so elated to know it was you.
Currently awaiting the day
That would always be your birthday.

Thanking God everyday for you
because I know, You are a blessing for me

My love for you is as big as the ocean
You can see the beginning, but never the end.

I love you baby princess,
Unconditionally. . .

Love Always,
Your Daddy



The Caribbean Writer's editor, Dr. Adisa just returned from attending the Association of Caribbean Women Writers & Scholars (ACWWS) Conference:

"Caribbean Dislocations/Caribbean Diasporas," held at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA, April 20-24, 2010. The conference featured many exciting panels as well as poetry readings, including the keynote by Lorna Goodison, Jamaican poet and long-time friend of *The Caribbean Writer*, seen above with Dr. Adisa promoting the journal. Other poets at the conference included Eintou Pearl Springer (Trinidad), Angelique Nixon (Bahamas), Hanetha Vete-Congolo (Martinique) and Ismene Krishnadath (Suriname).

Lorna Goodison says, "Poetry has been given to me to help make sense of my life."

The Caribbean Writer invites you to find and read one of Goodison's poem on the internet.

The students at UVI continue to shine and write both form poetry such as Haiku and free verse.

Haiku by Andrea Bridgewater

Flower

The seed is planted
Water nourishes the earth
A flower is born

Orgasm

A gentleman's soft touch
Blood rushes to the right place
Oh, that sweet release

Rain

The sky is opening
Water comes gushing straight down
The earth is smiling

Haiku by Sigorney Creighton

Day and Night

Pinches cheeks hello
Leaves with soft kisses, invites
Welcoming moonlight great/yes

That Man

I gave him no fight
Our fingers, our tongues contest yes
It over, begun

Sun by Chantelle Robles

The Sun is so bright.
It brings light into my life.
I'm a shining star.

Untitled by Keila Medina

Smells of curry chicken
Scents of baked macaroni
Remind me of lunch time

When I Was by Natisha Alexander

When I was a little girl I thought to myself,
How will I grow to stand by myself?
Looking at my life at how it was and how it might be,
I looked at my future with fear and uncertainty

When I was a little girl, no one told me that I would be alone
That I would have to face the huge big world on my own
My momma was always there to reassure and comfort me
But this would only be a temporary event in my life I came to see

When I was a little girl the world did revolve around me
All my wants and needs were met unconditionally
I was not prepared for the cold harsh reality
The reality of me breathing and living without she

"When I Was" cont'd...

When I was a little girl, there were many more rays than clouds
There was no concern, no obstacles I could not get around
There was only she and me, only dreams no biting reality
There were many more ups than downs more smiles than frowns

When I was a little girl seems to be ages ago
When I was a little girl there was no sorrow
When I was a little girl the world was just
When I was a little girl is no longer, growing up is a must.

In this our last newsletter for National Poetry Month, *The Caribbean Writer* invites you to look around at the beauty that is St. Croix, St. Thomas & St. John, and urge you to write a poem of Gratitude to this place you call home. Write about how you will preserve it by recycling, keeping it clean, protecting the natural fauna, birds and animal life, and by continuing to respect and care for one another as a community. *The Caribbean Writer* invites you to meditate on the included image, a scene of Fort Christiansvaern, then bring to mind your own favorite places and write a gratitude poem. After you have written the poem, place it on your office Bulletin Board, your fridge or some other public place so others can enjoy it. Continue to write a gratitude poem each week for the next month and share it. Send it

to the newspaper, post on your Facebook page or some other internet site. Be proactive and keep poetry going until next April.



I am grateful for the Fort's
butter-yellow façade
contrasted against
the lizard-green grass,
framed by the Alpine-blue ocean
—history, respite
all the tomorrows
greeting today
complex as the islands' colonial past
yet satisfying at salt-fish pate

Opal Palmer Adisa

UVI faculty comprise of working poets who teach and inspire their students through their own commitment to be productive, published writers. Below is one professor's advice to students on the craft of writing.

"Try writing early in the morning when the blood flow is efficient. Choose a subject that you care about. Focus on using concrete verbs and nouns. Chisel away at your words like a sculptor. Try to make them fit together tightly. Try to make connections between situations usually assumed to be different. Try to create images that flow with deceptive simplicity."

Vincent O. Cooper, Ph.D.

The Caribbean Writer invites you to **Win a Prize.**

Tell us:

Who is the Caribbean Poet who won the International Griffin Poetry Prize? Provide Name, Year and Title of Winning collection.

The first person to email us (qmars@uvi.edu) the correct answers will receive a complimentary copy of *The Caribbean Writer—Volume 24* to be published in June 2010.

Congratulations to Ms. Shirley Lake-King, Associate Vice President for Budget & Financial Reporting Analysis (St. Thomas Campus) for winning last week's prize question.

Question: Who was the first Caribbean Woman Poet to win the Commonwealth Poetry Prize?

Answers: Grace Nichols, Guyana, *I is a Long-Memoried Woman*, (1983)

We recognize that the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences faculty know the answers to these questions, so please note that they are ineligible to enter contest.

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