

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
OF INTERNATIONAL  
BLACK WRITERS &  
ARTISTS LOS ANGELES

# Black Expressions

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# The President's Column *Maybe The Last Time*

*It may be the last time  
We shake hands  
May be the last time  
We make plans  
Oh I, oh I ...  
I don't know*

From  
"Maybe the Last Time"  
James Brown (1964)

to pass as I saw him strolling along at the head of an entourage of Crips in Venice Beach, I would've cussed them flat out. When I saw Tookie on the beach then I didn't know it would be for the last time. Several years later I heard the law busted the Boss Crip for murders in a couple of garden-variety strong-arm robberies I assumed he was guilty of. Nowadays, gee, I'm not so sure. It seems that he went to his death an inspiration to the most hardened street youth that a positive change was possible. If not mandatory. Stanley Tookie Williams, AKA "Big Took" 1954-2005 (C)RIP.

I keep a macabre photo gallery of memories in my head. The aforementioned snapshot of Tookie at the beach is only one of a cosmic retrospective of strangers, acquaintances and loved ones that have passed away. Each entry is a memory of the last time I saw them alive. Some walking away. Others partying, drinking and loud talking. Many bidding me farewell. Forever. "Maybe the last time," James Brown sang in his hit song back in the early '60s. The song was about treasuring moments with those

Early this month they took down Big Took, and the thought washed over me like tidal wave that on this December night a reformed thug lives with head held high among the ancestors. Tookie. A bona fide ghetto superstar. The co-founder of South-Central L.A.'s most notorious street organization, the Crips. A fellow writer. An original gangster. And Nobel Prize nominee. For *literature and peace!* If someone had told me 30 years ago that this would someday come



close to us because we are all here today, and this time tomorrow folks might be mentioning our names in the past tense. "Shake hands with your very best friend," the future Godfather of Soul reasoned, "you never know if you'll ever see them again." I think about that old song every time someone close to me makes his or her transition to ancestor-hood. I reflect on the last contact I had with them. What would I have done or said differently had I known? Was I an intolerable knucklehead then? Would they forgive me if I were? Or do I have to go to my grave with an eternal grudge waiting for me in the hereafter?

But when it comes to the members of IBWALA in my gallery I can rest easy knowing I made no enemies. Over the last few years we've had our ranks thinned, as it seems the good ones go first. Past president, poet Mark D. Tanks. Queen Mother Edwina Gaines. Board member and past president Larry Newson. But I remember most our Nancy Hayes. Board member, gentle sage, editor, poet and physicist. Nancy was the founder of the current form of the IBWALA Writers Workshop. Our association dates back to the early days of the Organization of Black Screenwriters, in 1989, when we served on the board as secretary and vice president. I was a hotheaded "militant." And she often provided a calmer, wiser counterweight to my vitriolic off-the-cuff pronouncements. A sturdy block of ice to my smoldering fire. Nancy passed away about this time two years ago. My memory of her is as she sat at a table in a back room at a Pasadena Library, beaming her famous Buddha-like smile as she told us our next workshop would be held at a North Hollywood radio station. I left there that day in December 2003 fully expecting to see Nancy again in 2004 in a boardroom at KPFFK. Instead I had seen her for the last time.

And this brings me up to the last one we lost. In November. Luther Cornelius Wallace, III. Community activist, lifelong student, husband, father, board member and general *bon vivant*. Who could ever forget Luther. I met him through the workshop. As it turned out his life was representative of a perfect cross-section of black history as it relates to the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and California. As his wife Tina related, Luther was a Vietnam War vet who returned home and participated in the anti-war movement. He was investigated by the feds in the 1960s as a black power revolutionary. He was also a celebrated human rights activist that was appointed to statewide government boards and commissions. Oh, and Luther could sing, too. Just like another Luther that passed away this year. Yet at the workshop table, he was unassuming as they come. His critiques were penetrating and always encouraging. Luther, the ancestors must've been smiling when they saw you coming.

*In Memoriam*  
Luther C. Wallace, III (1941-2005)

- LA Hughes

--Wayne French

## From the Editor's Desk

### "Revival II—Who Are We?"

A chance to reinvent ourselves--who wouldn't welcome the opportunity? Reassessing and reestablishing a solid, more desirable, more functional, more satisfying foundation is never easy. But the results are worth the struggle.

Whether it's a personal pursuit, a family goal or an organizational redesign, a support system can make all the difference.

IBWALA members, our support system, belong because they are either developing writers and artists or because they desire to support the community of writers and artists in their quests to reach their personal goals, which in turn enable our collective vision of community to material-

ize. So with a fresh new year and a first quarter well in progress, let us continue reshaping and refining the vision--and the reality.

Organizationally we come with a solid 31-year history. In this our thirty-second year, however, we enthusiastically seek to reinvent ourselves by bringing aboard new, youthful leaders like Francesca Zeal Harris. A mover and a shaker, Zeal comes with a literary/visual arts bag and a young following/posse who bring the promise of reaching out to the visual arts and artists in a meaningful way.

Terrence Lockhart, another promising young writer, also joins the board, bringing fresh eyes to old issues,

helping us answer the question, "Who are we, now--really?"

Yet we come full circle and are honored by reuniting with former, old school associates like Donald Bakeer; in 1989, he led the production of IBWALA's second anthology *76th & San Pedro*.

And we continue to write about and portray in our art--the ancestors, Zulu, Wheatley, Langston, Malcolm, and Sis. Rosa even as we envision and pen stories light years into the future. We're changing, evolving, redesigning--ourselves--for the better.



Important IBWALA Numbers

Office / voicemail (323) 964-3721  
 E-mail (general) info@ibwala.org  
 E-mail (newsletter) newsletter@ibwala.org  
 Web site www.ibwala.org

\*Each board member has an IBWALA mailbox:  
 Just enter the member's  
 first initial and last name@ibwala.org  
 (except for Membership Communications Chair,  
 lahughes@ibwala.org)



**Photo credits from Got Books? Calendar tribute (previous page) clockwise from top left:**  
**Calendar title banner:** Left to right, board candidate **Donald Baker**; an unidentified guest; member **Sharon Washington**; guest **Rod Collins**; board member & featured author **Hazel Clayton**; board member **Excell Hunter**; board member **Marcus Love**; and another unidentified guest.

**Top right corner:** Got Books? was dedicated to **Luther Wallace**, board member, who passed away in Nov. His photo and his book, *Our Color Our Kind: A Male Bedside Reader* pictured on the table staffed by his family and wife, Tina.

**Center right: A Poetry Slam Contestant** from 30th Anniversary Conference (2004) at EPICC Amphitheater (how'd that get in here?!)

**Lower right corner:** Bestselling author, member **Jervy Tervalon** reads from his books, *Dead Above Ground* and *The Cocaine Chronicles*.

**Bottom center:** Immediate Past President **Randy Ross** on sax (bassist John Wms-Kohlmeier in background) and the Jazz Workshop Quintet entertain with verve.

**Bottom left:** Forty to fifty members and guests enjoy bidding on rare, trade, out-of-print and coffee table books during the **Silent Auction**. Book gift baskets and a coffee date with international best selling author **Eric Jerome Dickey** were also auctioned off.

# Got Books? Gets Praise

## Shares Stage with Sunday Salon

IBWALA members and guests raved and requested more events like it as they left *Got Books?*, the group's end-of-the-year effort at bringing members and guests together in a fun, entertaining networking setting, showcasing some of its authors, and providing members a venue for casting in-person ballots in the election for members of the board of directors.

The Dec. 18 affair held at St. Elmo Village artspace in Los Angeles also embraced the association's Sunday Salon series created and hosted by IBWALA board member Erin Aubry Kaplan. Kaplan, a poet herself, was a longtime journalist at *LA Weekly* who recently received the distinction of becoming the first Black regular weekly columnist on the Op-Ed page of the *LA Times*. Well-wishers used the opportunity to share congratulations and kudos.

Kaplan's guest for this installment of the salon was poet Arhomuz Aubry; the topic under discussion for the after-

noon was Contemporary Poets.

Yet another feature of *Got Books?*, the brainchild and handiwork of board member and media relations specialist Zerline Hughes Jennings, was a memorial dedication to Luther Wallace. The dedication portion showcased his life, his recently published book, his work on the organization's BOD, and a recording of him singing an original composition.

A Silent Auction, live jazz and beautifully catered refreshments, coordinated by mem-

ber Donna Williams, made for a memorable afternoon.

Thanks to volunteers Mary Huddleston, Tricia Cochee, Jaquetta Parhams, Jerome Woods, Trent Jackson, and the Workshop Jazz Quintet, everything was free to the public, including valet parking.



Kaplan pictured at IBWALA's 2004 30th Anniversary Conference

Special thanks goes to the stewards of St. Elmo Village, **Jacqueline and Roderick Sykes**, with special mention to **Unified Parking Service** of Pasadena for their friendly, expert staff and attendants (1 800 PARK 1 4U).

# IBWALA

Post Office Box 43576

Los Angeles, CA 90043

We're on the web  
[www.ibwala.org](http://www.ibwala.org)

Milligan Books' **Black Writers on Tour** Mar. 11, 2006  
For information call (323) 750-3592 or go to  
[blackwritersontour.com](http://blackwritersontour.com)

## UCLA Extension Inaugural Screenplay Competition

If you're an aspiring screenwriter who's completed three feature film writing courses in the Writers' Program between January 2004 and March 2006, you may be eligible to enter the inaugural UCLA Extension Screenplay Competition. The top three winners will be announced in September 2006, and receive:

- Cash prizes of \$1,000 (1st place), \$500 (2nd place) or \$250 (3rd place)
- A guaranteed read by an agent, producer, and/or creative executive
- A one-on-one script consultation (\$700 value) with a professional screenwriter prior to the final judging
- A logline listing on Baseline Spec Market, a searchable archive of intellectual property used by studios, agents, and production companies, as well as announcements to the trades, studios, and production companies

The deadline to submit materials for the 2006 competition is Wed., Mar. 29, 2006, 4 pm. **Go online to download a Submission Packet or for more details**, call (310) 825-9415, or to have a Submission Packet mailed to you, email <mailto:writers@uclaextension.edu>? [subject=Screenplay%20Competition](mailto:writers@uclaextension.edu?subject=Screenplay%20Competition).

## Otis Books / Seismicity Editions is now accepting manuscripts of fiction and poetry for publication in fall 2006.

A project of the Graduate Writing Program of Otis College of Art and Design, Otis Books/Seismicity Editions is committed to publishing annually one work each of fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and translation, and is interested in work by previously unpublished writers as well as established writers. Short story collections, novellas, novels, and works of poetry are considered. Choices will be announced in early 2006.

Send all submissions (hard copy only) to the address below. Include a resume of past publications. Also include a SASE if you wish to be notified of our selections. Manuscripts will not be returned.

Otis College of Art and Design  
Graduate Writing Program  
9045 Lincoln Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA  
90045

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### Welcome New Members

**Dr. J. Vern Cromartie**  
**Karen English**  
**Dr. Toni-Mokjaetji Humber**  
**C. Debra Thomas**

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IBWALA  
POB 43576  
Los Angeles, CA 90043  
[info@ibwala.org](mailto:info@ibwala.org)  
[www.ibwala.org](http://www.ibwala.org)  
(323)964-3721

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