

The Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture

Founded in 1925 and named a National Historic Landmark in 2017, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem is the world's leading cultural institution devoted to the research, preservation, and exhibition of materials focused on African American, African Diaspora, and African experiences. One of four research libraries of The New York Public Library and seeded by the collection of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg over 90 years ago, the Schomburg Center collects, preserves, and provides free access to materials documenting Black life locally, nationally, and internationally.



Cover and Back Cover Photo: Bob Gore for the Schomburg Center (2016)

Bench by the Road

The last time Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison appeared at the Schomburg Center was on July 24, 2016 for The Bench by the Road Project, an initiative of the Toni Morrison Society. During the bench placement ceremony, poet and freedom fighter Sonia Sanchez joined Toni Morrison on stage and sat on the bench. She kissed Morrison's hand in sisterly love and reverence. It is a moment cherished by everyone who bore witness and we are grateful that moment was preserved by photographer Bob Gore.

The Bench by the Road Project is a memorial history and community outreach initiative of the Toni Morrison Society. The organization wanted the bench to be a place where scholars and readers could, through their engagement with Morrison's novels, remember not only slavery but also many of the forgotten moments in African American history. Launched in 2006, on the occasion of Toni Morrison's 75th Birthday, 20 benches were placed at sites around the world, including the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture. (Source: tonimorrisonociety.org)

We invite you on your next visit to sit on the bench, where it will be located in the courtyard of the Schomburg Center.

The bench for the Schomburg Center was generously donated by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

We gratefully acknowledge the following:

Ford Morrison, Toni Morrison Estate
Farah Jasmine Griffin, William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African-American Studies at Columbia University
Magnolia Pictures for use of clips from the documentary "Toni Morrison: Pieces I Am"
Dana Williams, Toni Morrison Society
Anthony W. Marx, President, New York Public Library

Discover more about Toni Morrison in the Schomburg Center's archives

The Black Book [compiled by] Middleton Harris

New York, Random House, 1974

Toni Morrison worked as an editor at Random House from 1967-1983. She was the first female African-American editor in the company's history. While there, she championed numerous black authors and was responsible for bringing this groundbreaking anthropology of African American history into production. Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, Tilden Foundation.

A Letter from Maya Angelou to Morrison about The Bluest Eye

Stockholm, June 4, 1971

"The truths of our existence do depend upon us for revelation while the facts are being documented interminably in sociologists theses. For your love of those truths and comprehension of their importance. Thank you. "Maya Angelou Papers" Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, Tilden Foundation.

An invitation to a party thrown by Maya Angelou for Toni Morrison

September 3, 1994

Maya Angelou Papers
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division.
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, Tilden Foundation.

Audiobook for The Bluest Eye

Morrison's first novel, The Bluest Eye, was published in 1970. This audiobook version is read by Morrison and the acclaimed actress, Ruby Dee. It is available to listen to in the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division. Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, Tilden Foundation

SCHOMBURG CENTER:

Kevin Young, Director
Kevin C. Matthews, Chief of Staff
Novella Ford, Associate Director, Public Programs and Exhibitions
Khalilah Bates, Associate Producer, Public Programs
Lisa Herndon, Communications & Publications Manager
Antony M. Toussaint, Photographs and Prints Division
Rio Cortez, Schomburg Shop

BUT THEN YOU READ TONI MORRISON

Schomburg Center
for Research
in Black Culture
The New York Public Library
Nov 16 2019



PART I

OPENING + POETRY

Kevin Young

INTRODUCTION

Novella Ford

PARADISE - NOVEL

A.J. Verdelle

Jessica McJunkins, Violin

PLAYING IN THE DARK:

DREAMING MORRISON

Monique Long

JAZZ - NOVEL

Christina Sharpe

THE ARTIST ROMARE BEARDEN

Diedra Harris-Kelley

MY SOUL LOOKS BACK:

MEMORIES OF TONI MORRISON

Jessica B. Harris

INTERMISSION I

PART II

BELOVED - NOVEL

Imani Perry

Terrance Hayes

Khary Lazarre-White

Kevin Young

HOME - NOVEL

Michelle Commander

TONI AT RANDOM

Dana Williams

CINDERELLA'S STEPSISTERS

Salamishah Tillet

BLACK COMPOSITIONAL THOUGHT

OF TONI MORRISON

Torkwase Dyson

PRESENTATION

Obery M. Hendricks Jr.

THE INDIVIDUAL ARTIST

Kenyon Victor Adams

Hope Boykin, Dancer

MORAL INHABITANTS

Dario Calmese

INTERMISSION II

PART III

LOVE

Farah Jasmine Griffin

PRESENTATION

Jonathan McCrory

PERFORMANCE

Felice Rosser, Bass

SONG OF SOLOMON - NOVEL

Imani Perry

Margaret Porter Troupe

Khary Lazarre-White

Kenyon Victor Adams

RECEPTION



Video excerpts from
"Toni Morrison: Pieces I Am"
courtesy of Magnolia Pictures

JESSICA B. HARRIS is a culinary historian of the African diaspora, author of several cookbooks, and award-winning journalist.

IMANI PERRY is the Hughes-Rogers Professor of African American Studies at Princeton University. She is the author of 6 books, including the award winning, *Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry*. Her most recent work is: *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons*.

TERRANCE HAYES an award-winning poet, author, and Professor of English at New York University.

KHARY LAZARRE-WHITE is a novelist, organizer, social entrepreneur and attorney. He is the author of *Passage*, a novel, published in September 2017. Khary co-founded The Brotherhood/Sister Sol a nationally renowned, comprehensive youth development and social justice organization that is based in Harlem.

MICHELLE COMMANDER is the Associate Director and Curator of the Lapidus Center at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Commander is the author of *Afro-Atlantic Flight: Speculative Returns and the Black Fantastic* (Duke University Press, 2017) and served as a tenured associate professor of English and Africana Studies at the University of Tennessee.

DANA WILLIAMS is Professor of African American Literature and Interim Dean of the Graduate School at Howard University. She is the author of *In the Light of Likeness--Transformed: The Literary Art of Leon Forrest* and the editor of *Contemporary African American Fiction: New Critical Essays* and more. She is completing a book on Toni Morrison's editorship.

SALAMISHAH TILLET is a scholar, activist, and Associate Professor of English and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the co-founder of A Long Walk Home, Inc., a non-profit organization that uses art to end violence against girls and women.

TORKWASE DYSON is an artist and painter whose work address the continuity of movement, climate change, infrastructure, and architecture

OBERY M. HENDRICKS JR. is a social activist, biblical scholar, and author. He is an Emeritus Professor of Biblical Interpretation at New York Theological Seminary.

KENYON VICTOR ADAMS is a multidisciplinary artist and curator. His work has explored the notion of fractured epistemologies, and seeks to reclaim or expand various ways of knowing through integrative artistic practices. Kenyon has performed nationally as a vocalist, songwriter, and blues harmonica player.

HOPE BOYKIN is an original member of Complexions and danced with Philadanco. She joined Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as a dancer, educator, mentor, speaker, and choreographer.

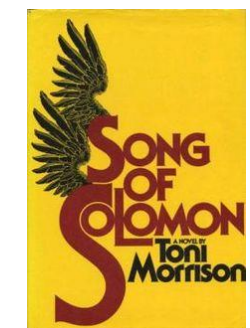
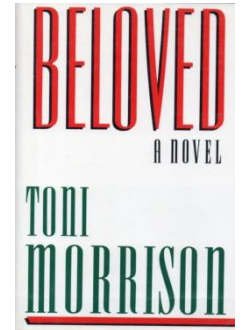
DARIO CALMESE is an artist, writer, director, and curator based in New York City. His writing will be featured in an upcoming book for the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, published by Rizzoli in 2020.

JONATHAN MCCRORY is an award-winning Harlem-based artist and Artistic Director at Dr. Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre.

FELICE ROSSER is a New York based singer and bassist. She is the leader of the band Faith.

FARAH JASMINE GRIFFIN is William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African-American Studies at Columbia University. She is a scholar of African American literature, music, history and politics.

MARGARET PORTER TROUPE is director and founder of the Margaret Porter Troupe Arts Project and Executive Director of the Gloster Project.



In order of appearance:

KEVIN YOUNG is the Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, poetry editor of the *New Yorker*, and award-winning author of thirteen books of poetry and prose.

A.J. VERDELLE is a writer and working mother, whose first novel, *The Good Negress* (1995), won five national prizes and has never been out of print. Verdelle teaches at Morgan State University, in the MFA program at Lesley University, and taught on the faculty with Toni Morrison at Princeton University.

JESSICA MCJUNKINS née Lady Jess, performs in NYC and LA. LJ leads strings under the baton of Darin Atwater's Soulful Symphony in Baltimore, is Co-Artistic Director and concertmistress of the Urban Playground Chamber Orchestra (UPCO) in New York City, is a regular Los Angeles session musician, and a soloing member of Beyoncé K Carter's band.

MONIQUE LONG is an Independent Curator and Writer based in New York City.

CHRISTINA SHARPE is a scholar and author. Her research interests are in black visual culture, black diaspora studies, black queer studies, and feminist epistemologies, with a particular emphasis on black female subjectivity and black women artists.

DIEDRA HARRIS-KELLEY is Co-Director of the Romare Bearden Foundation and Instructor at Barnard College.