

**HoCoPoLitSo**  
 Howard County Poetry and Literature Society  
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ANNUAL  
 REPORT  
**FY 2009**  
 JULY 2008-JUNE 2009

**HoCoPoLitSo**  
 Howard County Poetry & Literature Society  
 ENLARGING THE AUDIENCE FOR CONTEMPORARY POETRY & LITERATURE SINCE 1974

Plan to join us!  
 Friday, February 19, 2010

**32nd Annual  
 Irish Evening**

**THE WRITING LIFE**

**22 Years On The Air**

In FY 2009 six new editions of HoCoPoLitSo's *The Writing Life (TWL)*, a writer-to-writer cable television series, were produced at Howard Community College's TV Studio:

Joy Harjo hosted by Barbara Goldberg (Debut January 2009) • Frank McCourt hosted by Terence Patrick Winch (Debut May 2009) • Manil Suri hosted by Sangeeta Ray (Debut June 2009) • two editions with Thrity Umrigar, Donna Hemans and Helen Elaine Lee hosted by Dr. Tara Hart – *The Craft of Writing* (Debut October 2009) and *Exploring Themes in Literature* (Debut November 2009) • and Laura Lippman hosted by Mary Kay Zuravleff (Debut January 2010).

Encore editions airing during the year included Roland Flint hosts Lucille Clifton in July (1991) • Carrie Brown hosted by Ron Charles in August (2007) • David Mura talks to E. Ethelbert Miller in September (2007) • Michael Collier talks to Elizabeth Spires in October (2002) • Roland Flint talks to Carolyn Forché in November (1993) • Column McCann hosts Colm Tóibín in December (1999) • Michael Dirda talks to Marie Arana in February (2001) • E. Ethelbert Miller talks with Sekou Sundiata (1948-2007) in March (2000) • A Tribute to Josephine Jacobsen with Lucille Clifton, Michael Collier, Elizabeth Spires in April (2003).

TWL can be seen on HCC-TV, Comcast Channel 96 or Verizon Channel 41. For more information visit www.HoCoPoLitSo.org.

**TWL THIS WINTER**

**January 2010**

Laura Lippman hosted by Mary Kay Zuravleff (Debut 2010)  
 In this debut edition author Mary Kay Zuravleff speaks to mystery novelist Laura Lippman about her latest works, the art of the unreliable memory, the process of writing crime novels, Baltimore and her blog, *The Memory Project*. Lippman discusses her popular series character Tess Monaghan, who Lippman admits holds a lighter world view and a "rueful optimism about humans," more so than the author. She also speaks about her much darker work, *What the Dead Know*, based on the true story of the disappearance of two sisters from Wheaton Mall. Lippman likens writing a novel to giving birth: "Once it's over, you forget how difficult it is."

**February 2010**

Frank McCourt hosted by Terence Winch (Encore 2009)  
 In this edition, memoirist McCourt is interviewed by writer and musician, Terence Winch. They discuss McCourt's meteoric rise from abject poverty to worldwide success at the age of 66, with the publication of the first of his trilogy *Angela's Ashes*. This episode highlights the initial response to his manuscript submission with one publisher, and what followed after it landed on the bestseller list with a different publisher. "Angela's Ashes freed me," says McCourt. He goes on to discuss what Winch calls the "beautifully photographed" movie and the ongoing effect of success.

"OPTIMISM...is an important component of achievement, and is especially important in times of chaos, change and turbulence. Those who have an optimistic outlook will roll with the punches, will be more proactive and persistent and will not abandon hope," writes psychologist Dr. Martin Seligman.

If HoCoPoLitSo measures the passing year with any degree of optimism, astute observers would see a half-full glass of persistence, possibility, and partnerships. Mindful of record unemployment and a continuing mortgage crisis, we elected to put the state of the economy on hold – but for a moment – as we surrounded ourselves with extraordinary literary riches this 35th year.

We mourn the loss of Frank McCourt, who charmed the sold-out Irish Evening audience with his tales of Irish childhood and as a teacher. In the spring, HoCoPoLitSo persisted with innovative programming by featuring *A Literary Gathering of Women*, with novelists Donna Hemans, Helen Elaine Lee, Thrity Umrigar, moderator Dr. Helen Mitchell, and poet Lucille Clifton, creating a cultural bridge to the Indian, African-American and Caribbean experience. HoCoPoLitSo continued to nurture partnerships by producing an evening with novelist Laura Lippman and debuting *Bookfest* at the Columbia Festival of the Arts' Lakefest. Next year *Bookfest* matures into a *Day of Poetry*, a baby Dodge Poetry Festival right here in Howard County.

We raise our hopes for a glorious winter reading with short story author Claire Keegan (*Walk the Blue Fields* and *Antarctica*),



(From left to right) Memoirist Frank McCourt, Executive Director Carla Du Pree, Deputy Director Pamela Simonson, Board Chair David H. Barrett and Irish Evening Chair Catherine McLoughlin-Hayes come together after the February 2009 Irish Evening.

**The Gifts of Adversity**



(From left to right) Novelists Helen Elaine Lee, Donna Hemans, Thrity Umrigar and poet Lucille Clifton (below) gathered last spring.

whom author Richard Ford calls "that rarest of writers." Our 32nd Irish Evening will be held Friday, February 19, 2010. ([www.brownpapertickets.com/event/89385](http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/89385))

While pessimism has its place – it informs us to be cautious and to seek truth – HoCoPoLitSo adopts strategies that allow us to expect another grand year. But the only way this tiny literary gem can shine and continue to bring authors of such caliber to Howard County is with the help of its Friends.

Is HoCoPoLitSo's glass half full or half empty? HoCoPoLitSo will look for the gift in adversity, and pour on the upcoming season with heft and spirit.

HoCoPoLitSo is grateful to have been awarded a \$5,000 NEA grant that will continue to fund programs featuring a diverse slate of poets and writers. In one breath, we thank you, our donors, for supporting us through these lean times and ask that you donate to help us match this funding that will allow us to keep the glass filled and flowing.

## Season's Highlights

**OCTOBER 5, 2008** Opening the 35th season, musician/poet **Joy Harjo**, a member of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation, lured in the audience with poetry and music at "Poetry by Nature, A Family Affair," at the Howard County Conservancy. Children of audience members took a nature hike and tinkered with haiku taught by poet **Timothy Singleton**.

**FEBRUARY 20, 2009** HoCoPoLitSo celebrated its 31st Evening of Irish Music and Poetry with Pulitzer Prize-winning memoirist **Frank McCourt** at the Jim Rouse Theatre. Bagpiper **Jared Denhard** delivered the prelude, while His Excellency **Michael Collins**, Ambassador of Ireland, introduced the evening. The reading ended with a concert of traditional Irish music with Celtic Thunder and Narrowbacks musicians **Linda Hickman**, **Brendan Mulvihill**, **Terence Winch**, **Jesse Winch**, with **Eileen Korn**, along with stepdancers provided by the **Caulkin School of Dance**.

**MARCH 26, 2009** In partnership with Howard Community College, HoCoPoLitSo presented "A Literary Gathering of Women" featuring novelists **Donna Hemans**, **Helen Elaine Lee** and **Thirty Umrigar**, with a special appearance by poet **Lucille Clifton**, and moderated by **Dr. Helen Mitchell**, in the Montebaro Recital Hall at HCC.

**MARCH 26, 2009** **Donna Hemans** and **Helen Elaine Lee** engaged HCC students in a discussion on the craft of writing. That afternoon, **Thirty Umrigar** joined the novelists who spoke with local book club members about their works and the writing process.

**JUNE 12-14, 2009** In conjunction with the Columbia Festival of the Arts and the Columbia Archives, HoCoPoLitSo debuted *BookFest at LakeFest*. A weekend of readings included children's author **Bobbie Hinman** (*The Knot Fairy*); local historians **Janet Kusterer**, **Victoria**

**Goeller** (*Remembering Ellicott City*), **David Stebenne**, and **Joseph Mitchell** (*New City Upon a Hill*); **Missy Burke**, **Robin Emrich**, and **Barbara Kellner** (*Oh, you must live in Columbia!*); **Ned Tillman** (*The Chesapeake Watershed*); **Juan Spearman** (*Jam City* comics); poet **Truth Thomas** (*Party of Black*); short-story author **Susan McCallum-Smith** (*Slipping the Moorings*); young adult author **Mary Downing Hahn** (*Closed for the Season*); and Pulitzer Prize nominee poet **Sue Ellen Thompson** (*The Leaving*).



Sue Ellen Thompson

**JUNE 15, 2009** **Sue Ellen Thompson** taught "Poetry as Autobiography," a master class that focused on autobiographical poetry and writing to include the reader, at the Montebaro Recital Hall.

**JUNE 23, 2009** For the Festival's literary finale, HoCoPoLitSo co-sponsored a wine and cheese reception and "An Evening with **Laura Lippman**" at the Rouse Company Foundation Student Services Hall at HCC.

## Student Audiences

**DECEMBER 12, 2008** HoCoPoLitSo and Howard County Public Schools featured **Bill's Buddies**, a troupe of Shakespearean actors from the Folger Shakespeare Library, to middle school students from Bonnie Branch, Dunloggin, and Elkridge Landing. Marriotts Ridge High School hosted the program; a small group of high school students participated in a workshop.

**DECEMBER 2008 THROUGH MARCH 2009** Poet-in-residence **Elizabeth "Liz" Rees** made presentations to 500 students from 12 county high schools and the Homewood Center.

In the spring, HoCoPoLitSo held its 28th All County Writing Competition

for county high school students. Judges included Virginia Pausch, former Howard High School English department leader; Timothy Singleton, haiku poet and entrepreneur; Nora Scanlan, former Howard County high school guidance counselor and Julia Heiner. The nine creative writing winners were: **Sarah Hayashi** (Centennial), **Caitlin Promerantz** (Centennial), and **Bill Ge** (Centennial) in the personal essay category; **Jessica Stein** (Centennial), **Eve Mobley** (Glenelg) and **Megan Lieberman** (Centennial) in the poetry category; and in the short story category, **Mark Lehtonen** (Hammond), **Aaron Mick** (Centennial), and **Chelsea Anderson** (River Hill). In addition, twenty-two students were chosen by their English Departments to receive HoCoPoLitSo's Promise and Achievement Award in Language Arts. The honorees were: **Jumkoe Bello**, **Jonathan Engleberg** (Atholton), **Jang Liu**, **Stephen Rane** (Centennial), **Elisabeth Asher**, **Eve Mobley** (Glenelg), **Mark Lehtonen**, **Hannah Grabenstein** (Hammond), **Julia Chadwick**, **John Winder** (Howard), **Andrew Cahoon**, **Ian Cahoon** (Long Reach), **Erica Fedor**, **Nicole Simon** (Marriotts Ridge), **Andrew Magargle**, **Rebecca Wilson** (Mt. Hebron), **Rajani Ghosh** (Oakland Mills), **Michael Wilkinson**, **Julia Zeroth** (Reservoir), **Allison Kotewicz** (River Hill), **Karina French**, **Marie Greaney** (Wilde Lake).

HoCoPoLitSo Board Members and staff made book award presentations at 10 public high schools to 29 students.



Truth Thomas

**APRIL 23, 2009** During Professional Development Day, poet-in-residence **Truth Thomas** encouraged 40 Howard County public school English teachers to place poetry in the hands of their pupils and insisted that they read poems aloud.

## ENDOWMENT GIFTS

Ensure HoCoPoLitSo's FUTURE. Gifts and pledges to the HoCoPoLitSo Fund at the Columbia Foundation from February 1996 to November 15, 2009. In FY 2009, more than \$7,000 in operational funds were provided.

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