

# HoCoPoLitSo

Howard County Poetry & Literature Society

ENLARGING THE AUDIENCE FOR CONTEMPORARY POETRY & LITERATURE SINCE 1974

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2020

JULY 2019-JUNE 2020

## Literary Luminaries Lead the Way

By Tara Hart and Susan Thornton Hobby

PHOTO BY DAVID HOBBY



*Ellen Conroy Kennedy*

HoCoPoLitSo's board and staff have been thinking about legacy.

In our forty-fifth season, we lost Ellen Conroy Kennedy, who founded HoCoPoLitSo

with the idea that literature was not something extraneous. Words and stories matter, Kennedy believed, and could change the world.

In her honor, friends and family set up a memorial fund that will help bring to Howard County the caliber of writer that Kennedy recruited while she was alive--powerful authors of all kinds who moved audiences to laughter and tears.

There's a Greek proverb, "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." Ellen is no longer with us in person, but we are honored to tend the literary trees she planted in hopes of a better world, and as good stewards we actively seek extra hands in this effort to sustain her legacy.

We are thrilled to announce that a generous new donor, local philanthropist and lifelong supporter of the arts and civil liberties, Lillian Bauder, has made HoCoPoLitSo the gift of funding to support HoCoPoLitSo's school programs. Her generosity supports the writer-in-residence program, which is in its 29th year, sending poet Steven Leyva, virtually, into classrooms all over Howard County. The funding also supports the high school writing competition and senior book awards given for Promise and Achievement in the Literary Arts. Bauder also established the Bauder Author Lecture and the Don Bauder Awards for writing and creative expression at Howard Community College; these author and student-centered events are organized by the Howard County Book Connection, a committee formed in partnership with HoCoPoLitSo.

We're so grateful for the funds that help HoCoPoLitSo fulfill Ellen Kennedy's vision of a vibrant, sustaining, and enlightening literary landscape right here in our backyards.



*Lillian Bauder*

In trying times, turning to the wisdom of words and seeking to learn from diverse new perspectives are not just advisable, but vital. Please help us continue to share with you the words and stories that Kennedy believed can, and must, change the world.

### Poetry Moments

HoCoPoLitSo was founded to celebrate diverse literary heritages and to foster literary appreciation in diverse populations, including varying gender, ethnic and cultural identities, age groups, and income levels. We believe that opening a book, reading a poem, or attending a literary event can be a powerful humanistic journey of exploration, education, and enlightenment. We all benefit when we seek to deepen and extend our understanding of the experiences of others and ourselves.

We are profoundly saddened and outraged by the violence perpetrated against Black lives and by the ongoing systemic lack of accountability. We believe Black lives matter, and we stand in solidarity with all those seeking to effectuate long-lasting change in our communities.

HoCoPoLitSo's introduced its Poetry Moment series on Juneteenth as a safe way to address, extend, and deepen these crucial conversations needed, especially in pandemic times. See article on page 4 for more information.

# The Year In Review

## A HARLEM RENAISSANCE - OCTOBER 5, 2020

Stephanie Wall, speaking on behalf of County Executive Calvin Ball, offered a welcome to those who attended HoCoPoLitSo's season opener, A Harlem Renaissance Speakeasy. This partnership event, under the direction of Sue Kramer, celebrated HoCoPoLitSo's 45th season and Arts Collective's 25th. The evening explored the artistry of the 1920s and '30s with jazz, song, poetry, food, and signature cocktails in an intimate nightclub setting created at Howard Community College. Petra Martin and The Jazz Masters, Jon Ozment, Wes Biles, Jeff Neal, and Vaughn Ambrose enchanted the audience with the music of Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Cab Calloway. Harlem Renaissance poets were represented by Shaw Sebastian Naar (Langston Hughes), Chania Hudson (Gwendolyn Bennett), Alan W. King (Claude McKay), Faye McCray (Alice Dunbar Nelson), Nana Owusu (Countee Cullen) and Linda Joy Burke (Georgia Douglas Johnson) as emcee. Musical theatre performances were provided by Jamar Brown, Mayumi B. Griffie, and Valerie A. Higgs. This joint venture with the Arts Collective was an immersive excursion into Black history, with many in the audience clad in period costume.

PHOTO BY FRED TANCORDO



Musician Martin O'Malley with novelist Alice McDermott at 42nd Irish Evening.

## 42ND EVENING OF IRISH MUSIC & POETRY - FEBRUARY 21, 2021

Novelist and Pulitzer-Prize finalist Alice McDermott introduced her latest work, a play that examines intergenerational relationships in an Irish family, to a full house in Smith Theatre at Howard Community College (HCC). Her reading was followed by a rousing concert of electric Irish music performed by O'Malley's March, with musicians Martin O'Malley, Jared Denhard, Jim Eagan, Sean McComisky, Peter Miller, Ralph Reinoldi, and Jaime Wilson. Dancers from the Teelin School of Irish Dance joined them on stage for several numbers. The evening ended with a sing-a-long that brought the audience to their feet!

## Student Programming

Writer-in-residence Teri Ellen Cross Davis visited six Howard County public schools prior to Maryland's Covid-19 shutdown. Ms. Davis encouraged students to consider using poetry as a way to explore and share their past experiences and examine their feelings while creating empathy and connection to others. More than 345 students met with Davis at Centennial, Hammond, Homewood, Long Reach, Reservoir, and River Hill high schools.

On October 12, 2019, six students joined Maryland Poet Laureate Grace Cavalieri for a poetry workshop on the HCC campus and recorded a podcast.

[futureofchildren.net/emerging-writers/](http://futureofchildren.net/emerging-writers/)

On October 26 and November 2, 2019, HoCoPoLitSo participated in Columbia Art Center's Plein Air event. Students Xan Hopkins (Oakland Mills), Victoria Sanchez-Benitez (Wilde

Lake), Adrian Nwakalor (Atholton) along with Isaiah and Miles McCray inspired painters by reading nature poetry.

## ANNUAL HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS MODIFIED

For thirty-nine years the Howard County Poetry and Literature Society (HoCoPoLitSo) has awarded book prizes to honor students nominated by their teachers for **Promise and Achievement in Language Arts**. To foster lifelong reading habits and a love of literature, HoCoPoLitSo presents book awards with personalized bookplates. The tradition continued this year with modifications. Instead of HoCoPoLitSo board members making presentations at Howard County high schools' honors assemblies for graduating seniors, books were delivered to students' schools or mailed directly to students with the assistance of board members Susan Thornton Hobby and Anne Reis (Homewood media specialist), and Howard County schools' secondary language arts coordinator, Nancy Czarnecki. Due to the timing of the competition, the All-County Writing Competition was cancelled when schools closed in March 2020.

Twenty-eight students were chosen by their English Departments to receive HoCoPoLitSo's **Promise and Achievement Award in Language Arts**. The honorees were: Victoria Adler, Cameron Goodwin-Schoen (Atholton), Helen Pantoulis, Tobias Moser (Centennial), Kaitlyn Walker, Harrison Young (Glenelg), Rose Kinder, Christopher Parris, Jr. (Hammond), Dré Campbell, Gale Freeman (Homewood Center), Emily Gorny, Richard Zhou (Howard), Autumn Salcedo, Andrew Vesey (Long Reach), Audrey Casper, Jiwoo Moon (Marriotts Ridge), Ian Roe, Douglas Stewart (Mt. Hebron), Mikhi Kelly, Maheshwari Shukla, Genesis Houston, Kiana Macharia, (tie) (Oakland Mills), Esha Bhatti, Melissa Rayo (Reservoir), Tess Redman, Chutian Weng (River Hill), and Ananya Chand and Aden Noyes (Wilde Lake).

Supported by a donation from local philanthropist Lillian Bauder, the program gave students books by outstanding contemporary poets and writers including Maya Angelou, Carrie Brown, Michael Dirda, Lauren Groff, Joy Harjo, Colum McCann, Alice McDermott, Randy Pausch, Stanley Plumly, Jason Reynolds, and Ocean Vuong.

A note of appreciation to Padraic Kennedy and Andrea Martinez for their years of service as they retire from HoCoPoLitSo's board in FY 2020. Kennedy's dedication is unsurpassed and he'll remain on the program committee. Martinez was a motivating force behind this year's Harlem Renaissance event. Thank you.

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A Harlem Renaissance Speakeasy was a partnership event celebrating HoCoPoLitSo's 45th season and the Arts Collective's 25th.

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# ANNUAL CONTRIBUTORS

*HoCoPoLitSo is grateful to all who encourage our community's literary activities through financial and in-kind donations, and volunteer support. This list includes gifts made from July 1, 2019 to September 30, 2020. Serial gifts are merged. Thank you.*

## PLATINUM BENEFACTORS

**\$10,000 and above**

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*In honor of student programming*  
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through a grant from the  
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*Ensure HoCoPoLitSo's FUTURE. Gifts and pledges to the HoCoPoLitSo Fund  
at the Community Foundation of Howard County from February 1996-October 15, 2020.*

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**\$20,000 and up**

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# HoCoPoLitSo

Howard County Poetry & Literature Society

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**JOIN US ON ZOOM**  
Friday, February 19, 2021



## 43rd Annual Irish Evening



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### **The Writing Life**

Produced at Dragon Digital TV on the campus of Howard Community College, *The Writing Life*, HoCoPoLitSo's writer to-writer talk show, streams on [YouTube.com/HoCoPoLitSo](https://www.youtube.com/HoCoPoLitSo).

Four new editions were produced this year: **Jason Reynolds** hosted by **Laura Shovan** (October 2018); *Ordinary Wonder* with **Michael Collier**, **Elizabeth Spires** and **David Yezzi** (October 2018); **Vona Groarke** hosted by **Cóilín Parsons** (March 2019); **Beth Ann Fennelly** hosted by **Teri Ellen Cross Davis** (April 2019).

**Marilyn Chin**, who was interviewed for the series in April 2018, posted the edition on the Poets & Writers website, [www.pw.org/content/marilyn\\_chin\\_1](http://www.pw.org/content/marilyn_chin_1)

### **Upcoming Events**

- **Wilde Readings**  
Second Tuesdays of the month at 7 p.m. on Facebook Live
- **Friday, February 19, 2021 via Zoom**  
The 43rd Irish Evening will host novelist **Joseph O'Neill**, with dancers from the **Teelin School of Irish Dance**, and a concert of Irish music orchestrated by **Jared Denhard**. Tickets available Dec. 1
- **Thursday, April 29, 2021**  
The Blackbird Poetry Festival will feature USSR-born poet, critic, translator **Ilya Kaminsky**



*Rita Dove*



*E. Ethelbert  
Miller*



*Tara Betts*



*Terrance  
Hayes*

### **Poetry Moments**

In an effort to address, extend, and deepen the conversation around Black Lives Matter and to support the crucial need for understanding the concerns of our diverse community, HoCoPoLitSo created Poetry Moments. Poems from some of the nation's most well-known Black poets, including **Rita Dove**, **E. Ethelbert Miller**, **Tara Betts**, and **Terrance Hayes**, offer perspective, insight, and reflection.

Poetry Moments, which began on Juneteenth, are posted weekly on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook.

[hocopolitso.org/category/poetry-moment/](http://hocopolitso.org/category/poetry-moment/)

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