



# Library podcast

## Exploring Black Brilliance and Black Joy through Storytelling and Writing: New Experiences/Memories

### 00:00:02 Amy Twito

Hi everyone, and thank you so much for joining us tonight. I am Amy Twito, the informal learning program manager at the Seattle Public Library, and I want to welcome you all to our event tonight. I want to recognize the incredible work that AAWA has done in building this program for the library's summer of learning. If you would like to learn more about the summer of learning program, please visit our website at [www.spl.org/summeroflearning](http://www.spl.org/summeroflearning). Also, as Noni mentioned earlier, this event will be released on the Seattle Public Library's YouTube page. In a couple of weeks. It takes us a bit of time to get everything captioned and ready, and also as a podcast. So you can go to our website at [www.spl.org](http://www.spl.org) and find our YouTube link and our podcast link there. And also, I want to take a moment to recognize that we are living on indigenous land, the traditional and unceded Territories of the Coast Salish peoples, specifically the Duwamish. And before we get started, there is a super quick survey link that I will put in the chat below Later on. We would really like your feedback about programs like this and other sorts of programs you would like to experience through the Seattle Public Library. I also want to thank the Seattle Public Library Foundation and their donors for their generous support of the summer of learning and programs Like these. Thanks again for joining us. And with that, I will now hand it over to know Noni Ervin with the African American Writers Alliance. Thank you.

### 00:01:50 Noni Ervin

Thank you, Amy. And thank you. Seattle, Public Library. Thank you to all our guests and members and friends and Community. My name is Noni Ervin. I'm going to be your emcee for the evening. I am a member of the African American Writers Alliance, and we're really excited. Tonight is about new experiences, memories, new and old. We have a room of AAWA members and Community elders and friends who were going to be sharing their stories with you. And then we'll have some question and answer, and some open mic, if you have a story that you want to share as well. So we look forward to the evening. Thank you so much for joining us. We want to begin by inviting one of our charter members, Dr. Georgia Stewart McDade, to introduce how AAWA became. But first, I'd like to actually introduce her soon. She's going to go right into her first. She's going to be our first story teller for the evening. So Georgia Stewart McDade loves reading and writing. She grew up writing and producing plays for the youngsters in her neighborhood and collaborated with church youth to write plays for special occasions. As a charter member of the African-American Writers' Alliance, she began reading her stories in public in 1991. She credits the group with making her write poetry. For a number of years, she has written poems inspired by artists at such sites as Gallery 110, Seattle Art

Museum, Columbia City Gallery, and Onyx Fine Arts Collective. For several years Georgia wrote for Pacific Newspapers, especially the South District Journal. Today she reports for South Seattle Emerald and Leschinews and does interviews for community radio stations KBCS (91.3 FM) and KVRU (105.7) as she continues working on two biographies and poetry. She hopes soon to publish the journals she kept on her six-month, solo trip around the world. Copies of her four volumes of poetry called "Outside the Cave" and her first collection of prose, "Observation and Revelations: Stories, Sketches, and Essays", can be found on her website, Dr. McDade.

**00:03:45 Dr. Georgia McDade**

Thank you, Noni. Thank you. Everyone who's here: the readers, and especially, I guess I see a number of friends out there. So thank you. The African American Writers Alliance was founded in 1991 by what I describe as the feisty, always in control Randee Eddins. Eddins grew up in California, where there were a number of writers groups with African Americans in them. She came here, young adult could not find one and leave it to Randee to say, Okay, I'll make one. So she put an ad in the Seattle Times, a number of us showed up back in February 1991, and we've been doing this ever since. So we invite everybody whether you have never written anything, just thought about it. Or maybe you haven't thought about it. Or you have written; you have published, you have self-published. It doesn't matter, I think it's very important that we tell our stories. And the African American Writers Alliance allows you to tell your story your way. Thank you very much. Check out our website. Okay, I know it's in the chat, or it soon will be. Now, okay, this is very interesting. I didn't get stuck on Whidbey Island, but I got back too late to get to my house. So I am telling this story from the Salmon House. Okay, but it's good. Don't have any notes or whatever. Just tell you the story. When I went to college. I grew up in Monroe, Louisiana. And when I went to college, that first day was the farthest I'd travel from home. That was about 200 miles. I didn't think a whole lot about traveling. I didn't know anybody who had traveled a few relatives who came from California on occasion. And then I learned so much in college. So many ways. And I'm not talking about academics. I took a lot of humanities classes. And all of these places I've seen in books on TV I never been. And quite truthfully it didn't occur to me that ha ha, I could go! These other people can go, so I could go. Then I got this job that I thought was the best thing in the world, teaching at Tacoma Community College. And more and more I thought, maybe. It so happened there was a young woman working in the office who had been on a trip, and she had to make copies for me. So she'd make a copy, and she'd come back. And she said, oh, I saw this on our trip. And a few days later, she'd come running to my office, she said, I saw this too, and she just kept doing it. She said you ought to go on a trip. And I thought about it. I can't go on a trip, you know. And anyway, she just she would bring me these things. She'd seen a picture of the Taj Mahal or a napkin from Shakespeare's birthplace, something from a palace, you know, just okay. So I decided, why not? When I found out that you could go on a forty-seven day trip for \$2300. Yes, This was a long time ago. I decided that I would go. And one of the things I did on this trip was get more confidence about going on other trips. So not only did I stay 47 days with the group, I spent two weeks by myself, I went to Spain and Greece. I said, I don't want to miss Spain and Greece. So I just went by myself. And I really, really felt good. One of the men who had been on this trip with me with Skagit Valley Community College went on a trip around the world. Probably three, six months later. And he said, you know, you ought to do this, you know, so much. And he just wanted to see the pyramids sent me this postcard. So between his telling me, I should go. And this

young woman showing me all of these things, I decided in 1985 that I would go on the six-month trip around the world. I made my itinerary. I saved my money and whatever. I joined a group called Servas. It's located at the home base is in New York. As far as I know it still operates. Anybody can join. And you pay a fee to send them a one-page bio with your picture on it. And then they're all of these people all over the world who are members. And so you get to spend them a letter, and they will let you live at their house three nights, and you don't have to pay. So I wrote everywhere I was going, I had about old 25-26 countries I was going through. So I wrote these letters to these people in whatever. And one of the places I ended up going with Singapore, and you may laugh. It's okay. I wanted to go to Singapore, because there's this hotel there called Raffles and Hemingway, and other writers hung out there. Even then I considered myself a writer. I've been writing since I was about third grade. So I wanted to go. So one of the places I chose to stay was called Sam's guest house. So I went to the landlord, and I told him I wanted to go to Raffles, and he said, And, oh, that's not too far. You can walk over there. So he gave me the directions, and I was going out the door. And this man came running behind me really tall, slender man. And he said, excuse me. He said, I understand you're going to Raffles. Would you like some company? Well, I had seen him in the guest house on occasion and I thought, what the heck, you know? So he stopped abruptly. He said, I can't afford anything but dessert. I said, well, okay, you know, So we went, he introduced them, except he was, he was a writer too. So he knew some of the same stories I knew we just had a really, really good time. And I looked at the menu. And I said, you know what? I can't afford anything but desert either. So we had a really great laugh. We must have been there about two hours and then went back to the hotel. And I didn't talk to him anymore. He was in the morning for breakfast. I might wave; he waved at me or whatever, and we exchanged addresses. And I didn't really think about him anymore. And I must have had at least two more months of my trip to go. And I got home. I had all of this mail 6 months of mail. Lo and behold, there was a letter from this man. And my name is Georgia. My middle name is Lee, and he was convinced I'm related to Robert E Lee. So he always put Georgia Lee Stewart (my maiden name) McDade on these letters. And the first letter must have been about 10 pages single-spaced typed on onion skin paper. The longest letter he wrote me was 17 Pages, typed onion skin paper. He would tell me about American history. I'm sure he knew more than I did. I remember the Monitor and the Merrimack, but I didn't know which side I was on. He loved In the Heat of the Night. He loved what is the law and what I had never seen Law and Order. I didn't want to see any TV show called Law and Order, but he wrote about it. And he'd write these letters. But he'd upset me because he would call the Japanese Japs. So I would write back and say, please, don't call them Japs. Japanese is the word you're supposed to use. He went right back. I know what you mean, but you don't know them. I know them, and he would continue to call them Japs. So I wouldn't answer. Then he would write about politics or whatever, you know. And This was in '85 I got the first letter from him, and this letter writing went on. I would have written him more often, but it really annoyed me with the slurs he would use, and he could always explain why he was doing it. '85 now. Then in 2005 I received a letter from Australia. I didn't tell you he's from Australia, and he wrote for a magazine comparable to what we would call Car and Driver. So I would send him calendars with cars or whatever. But I saw this. Didn't even think about this man. Although this letter said Australia, I opened the letter, and it said that he had died, and he had left me a legacy \$10000. The executor of the will was out of the country. This was in May, And the executor would not be back until September. So I remember I didn't tell anybody I do. You know, okay. All right, I recognize this name of whatever. Lo

and behold in September, I got this check. So I ran and got the last letter I'd received from him. And at the bottom of the letter, the last paragraph in the last letter said it warms my heart that I know somebody in the world who does as much good as you do. Enjoy your life. Something to that effect. And of course, I had known he was ill. I knew he didn't get along with his sister. It's been, you know, just little things like that. But I couldn't understand why he would be giving me this \$10000, but I deposited the check. It was good. So that's it. That's it. That is one of my favorite, favorite memories. I still have the letters. I have a friend who says, I should publish the letters. And you never know what what can happen if you just say hi to somebody. Thank you.

**00:14:24 Noni Ervin**

Wow, Thank you, Dr. McDade. That was amazing. People, Huh? Isn't that amazing? All right, Well, I thank you so much. If we have time for one more from you, We certainly will ask. But we wanted to get you while we could while you're at the Salmon House. So thank you. Our next Storyteller is Helen J. Collier. Helen Collier, prolific writer of many different genres says writing has been in her spirit since her mother placed a pen in her left hand and told her, "God made you a left-handed writer for a reason; it's up to you to share with the world what that reason is." A native of Illinois, she now resides in Auburn, Washington. Ms. Helen has publications entitled: The Last Judgement Looking for Trouble My Oprah and Recreating the Legacy Ms. Anna and the Tears from The Healing Tree The Two Worlds of Ms. Anna Ms. Anna the Promise Keeper The Unexpected The Unexpected II 2020 The Year When The Face of America Changed

**00:15:31 Noni Ervin**

Ms. Helen

**00:15:33 Helen Collier**

Good evening, I'm honored to be here this evening, sharing a bit a little bit about my life before coming to Seattle to live. I was born and raised in the Midwest in East St. Louis, Illinois. Was once a thriving city with two hospitals. After the city became 90% black, the two hospitals were abandoned. In 1917 It was estimated in the city that during a race riot 320 African-Americans was shot, many killed while trying to escape the fires of their burning home that occurred over a labor dispute. We live with the scars of that horror even today, Growing up, I lived a while in Haynesville, Louisiana, during the Jim Crow era, when black Americans were imprisoned or lynched if we did not comply with the cruel Jim Crow laws enforced against us in the South. As a storyteller, I use magical realism and science fiction within the boundaries of my imagination. But my stories are about real people. This evening I am sharing with you the history of my female ancestors' lives as a storyteller through magical realism from a short excerpt of my novel, The Unexpected. My protagonist is a 21 year old white female college student in conflict with her three African-American history classmates, who have challenged her to research and give an oral report on the life of the African female slave in America ,whose life she believed was not as bad as they claimed it to have been. The challenge caused not much concern until she had an unexpected encounter with a 7-foot catfish trapped inside a gate along the Connecticut River. The fish needed help to free itself. In return it offered to take her back in time so she could research and get the information for her report, a report that was needless to say, unexpected. As bad as history might seem to them, Dawn knew Tony, Shirley and Tina had no

understanding of the depth of horror slaves lived. And she now stood in her own Century. Dawn was aware that a new and different era was already evolving. She wondered what that evolutionary change would look like for those yet to be born. There is no such history as Black History in our country. Dawn's voice rang out loudly and clearly, as she stared at her classmates and the instructor who sat in the audience with the students, everything that has occurred in this country's every American's history, bad and good, Her fingers trembled, but she knew her report had to be given. It is about us as a people in the choices and decisions made by my ancestors hundreds of years ago. Those choices and decisions have brought us to the present day. My report speaks of one aspect of that history, the life of the American female slave. Dawn took a deep breath and continued. My research led me to a time in history I had no understanding of. It wasn't that I didn't know this period in history happened. But now I realize why it is history we as white Americans no longer want to discuss. My findings mandated that I asked one of the most disturbing questions of history. Looking at her classmates, Dawn took another deep breath, and asked how much mind-altering did it take to convince an entire nation of people that building our country through the suffering, mutilation, rape and enslavement of other humans was their Christian duty. I say nation because the North is just as much a part of this history as the South, a tragic history, that as a white American I must revisit centuries later. Had it not been for my thorough research, no one ever could have made me believe slavery for the slave woman could have possibly been that horrific. Her life was the worst in the history of our nation for any woman to endure. She endured it for nearly 300 years. In cotton fields she toiled carrying babies soon to be born. You can't tell them that the babies were trampled to death. They won't believe is true. Is this voice of the catfish. Dawn shivered, envisioned the hoof of the overseers horse, trampling the baby to death. Treated worse than if she were an animal, work for this female started before daybreak. In fields and in plantation houses, she slaved only to return to her shack, unable to sufficiently feed herself or her children. Dawn realized she couldn't tell them about the food the mistress had had her starving slave woman throw to the dogs. They wouldn't want to believe that either. How could she have known? She wouldn't have believed that it was possible had she not seen it with her own eyes? While it is true some female slaves lived inside the masters house, even those slaves could be summoned at any time for any reason. Their duties had to be fulfilled. day or night, just as if they were working in the fields. Their lives, just as those in the field, belonged to their masters. Though their work different, the treatment they received paid out the same. No woman in this room can imagine giving birth to babies owned by someone else. Babies that could be sold at any time for any reason. The slave woman's most important job was having children owned by only her master. Her womb was [inaudible] with the sperm of any slave or white male her body was mated with. She was sexually exploited by many races of men for nearly three centuries, Its American history, a way of life, [inaudible] up for the slave woman through no fault of her own. Dawn stopped and took another deep breath. Her eyes became teary as she remembered the trauma of the mating party and its cruel purpose. Had it not been for me, Dawn was destined to live oblivious to that part of American History. The telling of it brought the horrors back fresh in her mind. Tears filled her eyes. She needed to hurry and finish. The female slave became the means by which the slave masters replenished their labor force. Her body was used to give birth for anyone who owned her some time being sold seven or eight times before her death. If her master or mistress were lucky, many of their slave women produced 20 or more babies in their lifetime. Most stole away from them. Dawn paused as gasps could be heard throughout the classroom. She knew those students could

never have endured any of what she witnessed. The slave family concept was not real, because a slave could be sold at any time. Slave fathers' ability to protect their family was, for the most part, unheard of. Like with any of the slave masters' animals, the male had no say in the births he was responsible for. That's the truth, Tina said, then covered her mouth as if surprised she could be heard. Slave owners had no need for real families or slave fathers because all slaves belong to them. Most mating of the female took place with multiple mates so that no father could be known even when the pregnancy resulted from the masters mating with the females, those babies were sold the same as the rest. No difference was made between the slave masters' children and the children by the slave male. If the slave master or his wife chose to sell a slave, black or white, they were sold. Dawn watched Tony [inaudible] leg as he rubbed the back of his fair-skin, reminding Dawn that he also carried the genes of an unknown white male, the same as made these babies, and many of other slaves she has seen on the judge's plantation. The white color was all the people of that day thought was passed to the offspring. No one realized that the genes of the master also made up those babies. He unknowingly was reproducing himself. The slave woman gave birth, not knowing how long her children would be with her before they were sold. Children she begged to be allowed to keep. Dawn thought of the mistress benediction for maybes baby, her head bent towards the ground. She moved through life having no idea when her circumstances would suddenly change, and she might find herself sold to a new master. Her body used by different mates in her new slave environment. Dawn understood why maybe never talked to her babies. Why would she? The horrors of her life begin as soon as she was thought to be old enough to work and ended when death took her out of her miserable existence. That would not be something a mother would want to tell her daughters. Oooh, your research is thorough, sister girl, Shirley said, raising her hand to cover her mouth. She was born in this country with no understanding of what race meant, or why it sealed her fate to live the life of a slave until her death. Dawn stared at the students hearing Mindy's voice, My Toby, is no different than me. It was the same way she learned to see Maybe, a woman living a different life, but with the same pain, happiness, sadness, and most of all, love, no different than her own emotions. No female on this Earth should have had to endure those conditions, yet it is our nation's history, a history that should never be forgotten or repeated on this planet. Startled faces gazed at her. Dawn, looked beyond her classmates as Maybe's life flooded her thoughts. She remember she and Maybe pushing rags in between the cracks in the wall to keep the rain from pouring in on them. They ended up squeezed together in a corner of Maybe's shack where the roof was solid, hoping the two babies will stay dry. Waking up half-asleep the two had taken the babies to the old women's shack and headed out to the fields where cotton waited to be picked. There's always a power beyond human depravity, Dawn says as she stared at her audience. God and His Mercy graced the slave woman would love for the children who came and went from her body, her arms and soon her life. For her children, she lived colorblind, loving them no matter what color or condition they came to her. She held that little bit of love under her breasts, a love that burned in her heart long after they were sold. It was a love that could not be destroyed. Even though many times It came to her white wash. Dawn took a deep breath, as she remembered Maybe's last words the night before sleep overtook them both. "Tell them, Dawn. How it was for the slave woman in her life. Tell them, so they won't forget about us." Both their tears had fallen as Dawn wrapped her arms around Maybe. It is our country's history. She said, a history where American women existed in skeletal bodies producing babies to ensure the survival of free labor In this nation. Her mind inside Maybe's world, Dawn said to her classmates,

There has never been, to my knowledge, any psychological studies on the generational traumas of the female slave. Who knows or understands the damage done to her and her offspring because of those atrocities endured during that time in American history. The students and the instructor sat with open mouths, What we do know is that to this day, her descendants still carry those scars. That is why it is impossible to equate the condition of immigrant people from other countries with a descendant of the African slaves brought to this country. The Africans who sold other Africans from the continent of Africa have no idea how they destroyed those lives. She saw the African exchange students, look at each other and shake their heads. After being taken as a slave, I believe all that was needed was a little kindness to get what their owners desired from them. Instead, my free service led me to a history of brutal force and racial breeding used to gain our nation's wealth. The slave masters destroyed what the slave could have become for them and corrupted the very principles our nation put in place after the Revolutionary War. Dawn gazed into faces that held looks of shock. There was nothing humane as I once believed about the treatment of the slave woman during that time in our history. As a result, the legacy of democracy we offer the rest of the world has always been compromised. Even the Civil War, which was said to have freed the slaves, was never fought for that purpose. In truth it was fought to determine whether the North or the South would control this nation. To her surprise neither Tony, Shirley or Tina said a word to discredit her report. Yet their mouths stood ajar as Dawn continued uninterrupted. After the Civil War. We failed to keep our promises to those still under our power, not caring that they gave their lives to help us win that war As a newly freed person. I too would have struggled to understand what Freedom meant for me. The nation's failure to keep promises made to those freed people created a history as bizarre as that troubled system many fought to end. For another hundred years. we used the tyranny of Jim Crow Law to continue the destruction of the former slave woman's life, allowing white men to enter her home and sexually violate her, even with a husband, a father or other male relatives living in the home. No different than her slave life. Few, if any, Americans want to remember that time in history. But it is American history. Our ancestors' decision and action caused that history. I don't believe even today we have figured out where they went wrong, or how to right those wrongs. For that reason, it is a part of our American history, we're now living to regret. Dawn stared beyond the students

**00:30:51 Helen Collier**

who looked at her dumbfounded as she moved to leave the podium.

**00:31:02 Noni Ervin**

I have to take a breath, Ms. Helen.

**00:31:04 [Unknown]**

Oh, Miss Helen, you know you bad.

**00:31:07 Helen Collier**

I've worked hard. I'm telling you, I worked hard on it.

**00:31:12 Noni Ervin**

These are our stories, told our way, and that's why we are here. So we might have to take a breath Before we move on to the next one. Thank you, Ms. Helen. So much. All right. And I'm gonna hold it together. You know, I have a hard time. Our next Storyteller is Paul Jackson, Dr. Paul Jackson or our brother. Paul Jackson is a retired mixed-reality research engineer that considers himself tri-coastal. Born and raised in the Mid-Atlantic East Coast. He went to college in the Gulf Coast, and now resides in the Pacific Northwest, the West Coast. His favorite activities now are watching "In Class with Carr," enjoying Virtual Worlds, being a virtual mentor and observing digital content with thanks to broadband. Paul's handle is [inaudible] on the older various social media sites like Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn. Paul, please share with us.

**00:32:21 Paul Jackson**

So I thank you, Noni. And before I start, I want to ask, if anyone has anybody heard of the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program that the African-American Reach and Teach Health Ministries has. I don't see any hands. And so I just finished a six-week class on becoming a late leader. And so I'll be teaching with my co-leader, this class of Chronic Disease Self-Management. And so again, if you go to aarth.org is the website that has some information. They're doing classes on blood pressure and diabetes and just how to live. There's another one that has With music in African history and dance. And so is definitely something I would recommend investigating. So anyway, this is kind of strange, because I'm not really a writer. I talk about this all the time with Noni. I don't write. I'd like to be behind the camera, not in front of the camera. And so one of the things other things I was going to say is, because I've lived in Seattle for like over 20 years. And with all the other interviews I've done, I've realized that every aspect of American culture has been affected by somebody who was either born, lived or died in Seattle. And the people here in AAWA are part of the group, because you guys, Dr. McDade, Dr. Hartman, Noni, You guys are doing it. You guys are shaping Not only Seattle, but you're reaching out to Pacific Northwest and other states, west coast and the whole country to motivate us African Americans to tell our stories and to write. So one last person I want to mention is ... I'm pulling a blank. Oh, she lived up in Mountlake Terrace. She's a female African American science fiction writer. Help me out. You have some writers - you're science fiction writers. What's her name?

**00:34:27 [Unknown]**

Octavia Butler.

**00:34:29 Paul Jackson**

Thank you. Octavia Butler. So yeah, I mean, people like that, you know, we don't think of Seattle, and Octavia Butler. But yeah, you know, we don't think, like even the brother who did, who wrote Roots, Alex Haley. He had a heart attack in Seattle. I mean, it's sad to say, but yeah, people who really shaped the country, A lot of them graduated from Garfield, High School. And so, But anyway, I rock my Black Panther t-shirt, but I'll stop rambling and read what I wrote. So I'm currently a retired 52 year-old mixed reality research engineer that obtained my PhD in computer engineering 1988 from Texas A&M. I did this after completing my BS in electrical engineering, and a master's in engineering from Prairie View A&M, a historically Black College University HBCU. Born in Philly. I describe myself as a military brat light. My parents got divorced while I was in diapers, a by product of the Vietnam



War. My father didn't physically die there, but something inside must have. My mother born in the same county as First Lady Obama's grandparents, was the oldest twin of 10 and the first to graduate from South Carolina State. She also spent 35 years as a civilian in the Army, working with countries that wanted to buy goods from the US. With her being from South Carolina, she is what we consider Gullah Geechee, which is where I get the green eyes from and the light skin. My parents bought a home in South Jersey version of Levittown, Willingboro, New Jersey about 25 miles Northeast of Philadelphia. And she was able to always keep a house there. We moved almost every three years from the time I was born until I graduated high school. Hence the military brat light. Even though I went to public school the whole entire time, we even moved once when I was in high school. Mom got re-married to a guy that turned out to be a real jerk. She had twins when i was a junior in high school. That's a seventeen-year-old difference. And as a matter of fact, my younger brother is getting married in September. And so my wife and I are flying to New Jersey. And I got my booster shot so I'll get masked up and ready to go. But yeah, we moved almost every three years. My mom had me in preschool at st. Luke's Lutheran Church in Willingboro. Although we were Southern Baptist, They taught me to start reading at age four or five. And I wound up skipping kindergarten. Went to first and second grade in Fairfax, Virginia, third and fourth in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 5th and 6th back in Jersey, seventh in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when she was attending MIT, we will go back to in a second. The rest back in Willingboro. Even though I had to move even in high school, I was mentioning I was an only child and looking back, Never really got in too much trouble. There was a time when classmates sat down on the sharpened pencil I'd set up. And other time I tried to dry some wet jeans in the oven that caused smoke alarm to go off. But I was a fairly good kid, Really good student. I played classical violin from the fourth Grade through High School, taught myself how to play guitar by the sixth grade. And and I was generally a good kid, didn't get into fights, Never got suspended, detentions, nah that's a good kid. I think it was the year that I spent with my mom, and she attended MIT, which got me bit by the computer bug. That was 1980. And the HP model 85 computer was in the bookstore. The original price was two thousand, seven hundred fifty dollars, and had a built-in printer with it. I would spend hours of the store playing with it, looking movies that they showed. It was also the year that I started playing arcade games. And the quarters I got from my paper route was a perfect source of that addiction. I also faintly remember a story of a race killing in Boston, which might explain why my mom's in tears after reuniting with her hours after playing video games at the arcade. So moving back to New Jersey to attend junior high school. High school was nice, except that my stepdad Rob would get into fights with my mom. He was previously married and had three daughters from that first marriage. But one day I tried to intervene in an argument which led us to have to move. Nobody went to jail, And all I got was a rather sorry apology and examples of what not to be as a husband or father. I heard her playing guitar in junior high so well, I played Stairway to Heaven in this talent show. I was asked to perform at a spot in the Town of Burlington. Burlington had a population of about 30000. It was an integrated community. This is back in the 70s late 60s and a number of parks that had street names with the first letter of a part of the name. So the first house we have was in Pennypacker Park. So street names will be like Poplar Lane, Pickwick, Pastoral excetera. The second was in Garfield. The third was in Hawthorne. And, and the follow-up was in Twin Hills, which is really close to the high school that I graduated from, Although at the time We were looking at Garfield, which meant I had to walk a mile past any other high school to get to the one I attended. This was because at the time, the high school had a different College Prep path and

Willboro High School had the computer path, where JFK, the other high school, had an alternative, didn't have the class. We didn't make enough money for me to go to the college that wanted. But an SAT score got me a scholarship to the Benjamin Banneker Honors Program at Prairie View. It was a second year and had already determined the classes one would take based on what you wanted to major in. My high school advisor, an African-American female, recommended I shouldn't go based on feedback from another high school student who went the year prior. But in the end I went. And I'm forever grateful that I did. The brother who wound up being my freshman roommate, Marcus Moses, in my band mate, because I played in a band when I was an undergrad, and my best man for my first marriage are the two reasons why I think going to Prairie View was the best thing that could have happened to me. Of course, it's some others like my high school, sweetheart, that transferred when I was a sophomore, and we decided to get a room off campus. But that's another story. And 2021 I'm remarried, and now living in Tacoma after spending 20 years in Seattle. I produced over 500 videos the various links. And in February I give a presentation to the Bellevue College [inaudible] lab about virtual reality content for African Americans, which included the conversation with the creator of the Portland Oregon George Floyd memorial wall at the Apple Store. Over 300 photos were taken and through the use of photogrammetry, a 3D model was created in AltSpace VR. So AltSpace is a place you can go on your computer and experience Virtual Worlds. And if you have a headset like I have this Oculus Go, you actually experience virtual reality and models that are created are in AltSpace. And it's an amazing amazing thing. I recorded conversation with people like Tammy Gibson, Sankofa Travelher, who's an author who wrote this book about African-American monuments around the country And she in Washinton State, she only has like four listed. Of course, it's got the Jimi Hendrix statue. It's got the Michael Anderson statue at the Museum of Flight and the baseball player. And one of the one I can't remember off the top of my head. Also interview with Dr. Julie Magruder, who created this calendar. The black lives matter caliber, where she actually lists the individuals that are unfortunately murdered in various situations. So not only date, but how they are murdered. And I also had some other interviews with people, and I'd like to have one with Dr. McDade. And so that's pretty much what I've written at this point. So if there are any questions willing to answer them, Thank you.

### **00:43:36 Noni Ervin**

Thank you. Dr. Jackson, Paul Jackson and I brother, we appreciate you. We'll do Q&A at the end of all of our storytelling. But thank you so much for sharing your story. Alright, Our next Storyteller is LueRachelle Brim-Atkins. Ms. LueRachelle has been an Innovative consultant, executive coach, facilitator, educator and trainer for over three decades. She attended an all-black school in Texas, founded by her grandparents, completed her undergraduate studies in the South, completed graduate school in the East and West. She has lived in the Northwestern 1972 and has traveled to 32 countries, and several multiple times. Best known for her critical analysis, creativity, humor and her ability to build consensus in her Consulting practice, Brim-Donahue & Associates. LueRachelle partners with Fortune 100 companies, nonprofit organizations and government agencies to help them achieve organizational breakthroughs. She weaves storytelling into her work in race and social justice, diversity, equity and inclusion. LueRachelle is a global diversity practitioner, has taught public K12 school and in universities, She is masterful at presenting interactive inspirational keynotes and workshops for adults, as well as younger audiences. Traveling with others. LueRachelle leads joint ventures, sustainable projects... I'm sorry, joint venture, sustainable projects in Africa for clean water,

libraries and feminine care products. She's a published author and was recently featured in the book "We Will Lead Africa: Everyday African Leadership Stories," Ms. LueRachelle.

### **00:45:29 LueRachelle Brim-Atkins**

Thank you noni. I am so pleased to be here with all of these amazing writers. And I tonight have decided that I wanted to share with you my where I am from poem. And I want to give you just a little background of these poems. They were first created, the format was first created by George Ella Lyon. And it was her response to a poem in a book titled "Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet," by Jo Carson. And where I'm from poems are, I think, a testimony to the power of poetry, power of roots and sharing who you are with the world. And I'm encouraging you to write some of these poems, your first, by making a where I am from list. And then you edit your list into a poem. There are some forms online that you can Google (the source of all knowledge) and get a format for how to write your own poem. And you'll have so much fun. You can use those poems as a map for other writing journeys. There are things that I wish I had asked my parents and my grandparents when they were alive. So I encourage you, if you still have family members who are older than you to talk with them about their lives, and use that as a format for writing your own where I am from poem. You can talk about the things you ate or still eat, or the books that were important to you, the important people in your life, the music you love, what you were thinking and feeling at significant points in your life. The possibilities are endless. You can ask your family members to write their where I am from poems to read a family reunions. You'll be surprised at the things you can learn about people that you think you already know. If you're a teacher, you can get young people interested in writing poetry, using this format, We have used it in our travels to Africa with some of the delegates who have written their own where I am from poems. So your poem, you know, will be brilliant, because you are the expert on you. And no one sees the world, the way that you do. No one else has your material to draw on, and you don't have to know where to begin. Just start writing your list and go from there. So I'm going to share my where I am from poem with you. I'm from a segregated, small town in Northeast Texas and the United States of America, a stop on the highway with one stoplight, where few bother to stop, a town where we knew we had to mind the Negro adults, all of whom did their best to keep us safe from the white folks. I'm from a birth in a Black hospital in Arkansas, where my cousin was a physician. And I was born in the wrong state, because the German-American doctor in my parents' Louisiana hometown, deliberately dropped the black boy babies at birth, including my older brother, who suffered all his life as a result. Suffered from grand mal epilepsy and cognitive challenges that shrouded his brilliance, all because one white doctor made a decision to be a murderer. I'm still trying to find the kinfolk of that doctor to see what they know about him. I am from fed-on-the-grain-we-grew chicks that we knew we couldn't get attached to, because even as children, we knew those chicks would soon become chickens, that we would slaughter in the backyard and eat for Sunday Dinner. I'm from corn, picked fresh from our gardens and eaten on the cob. Purple hulled peas shelled on the front porch and green beans snapped soon thereafter. I'm from Collard, Turnip and mustard greens, Beefsteak tomatoes, ripen on the vine, lima beans and okra picked in the hot Texas sun, all before we knew that everything we were eating was organic. I'm from cornbread and potlikker, fresh churned butter milk, watching it all as a butter floated to the top. I am from wild blackberry cobbler made from berries pick fresh off our vines. Peach cobbler is from peaches picked fresh off our trees. I am from German chocolate and pound cakes, yeast rolls and pecan pies at Christmas from apple pies created

in the dead of night by my maternal Grandparents, who loved each other's thoughts and loved spending that quiet, Middle of the night time, baking and eating pie together. I'm from Gardens fertilized by cow manure that we carried in wheelbarrows from the pasture across the highway up the hill. So that, as my grandmother would say, we could grow food for the neighbors, some for the birds and some for ourselves. I always thought the neighbors could plant their own gardens. God would feed the birds, And I wouldn't have to do all that harvesting and canning all summer. Of Course, those thoughts were never formed into words to be uttered by my mouth, because I knew that my grandmother laughed and joked, but she did not play. I am from the house by the side of the road where poor hungry white people stopped to ask for food on their way. any place else. Where we were required by my grandmother to feed them, even though they probably would have looked the other way had they passed us on the street, or might have even pushed us off the sidewalk. This grandmother was forcing us to learn how to share with those who did not deserve our sharing. She simply said that is not our issue. We have plenty. I am from hair grease and hot combs, from cooking on Saturday, because Sunday was the Sabbath reserved for church, reading the funny papers and visits with friends. I am from black Educators who were paid less than their white counterparts across the tracks at the white school for white children, grandparents who were always called by their first names by white children young enough to be our children's children. I'm from domino's, card games, riddles, jokes and ghost stories. Before we finally got our black and white TV with the rabbit ears wrapped in aluminum foil to get our three TV channels, channels that stopped at midnight with the playing of the national anthem. I am from a time where the white lady switchboard operator could tell you when people had left their homes, because she had listened in on their phone calls. I'm from the time of the telephone party line when you you tried to place a call, and neighbors were on the same line, and you can listen to their calls. I'm from a time when we still talked directly to and with each other with no knowledge of texting, Facebooking, instagramming, messaging, Snapchatting, Tweeting, or tick-toking, The time when we ate ice cream, cooked in a double boiler on the stove and cranked by hand in a wooden ice cream Freezer filled with chunks of ice and rock salt. Yeah, I'm from a mother whose mother died in the Influenza epidemic of 1919, a mother named [inaudible] who sold underwear for a friend who was going off to college and never breathed a word about it until that friend revealed it 40 years later, a mother who cooked and served dinner to a woman and her children, though that woman had hurt her in immeasurable ways, A mother who, when asked what she thought about gay people responded, "none of us has anything to say about how we are made. None of us," this mother, who loved her children fiercely and took some pretty remarkable stances to protect them, including answering a white school board member who asked whether she believed in integration, she responded, "we want the same things for our children that you want for your children. And if it takes integration to get it, so be it." That white man thought that was the wrong answer, and saw to it that my mother's teaching contract was not renewed the next year. I'm from a mother born during the Depression who saves scrap aluminum foil to reuse, a mother who loved to travel, went to Germany to see the Passion Play, traveled with me to Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Mexico so that she could see as much of the world as she could before glaucoma could take what remained of her vision. This mother, who at age 90 got dementia from a stroke, but always knew her children, this mother, [name inaudible], who was deserted with three children to support, but never gave up. And who always said wise things like: every tub has stand on her own bottom, If in doubt, don't, every crow thinks hers is the blackest. A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion

still, a fool and his money are soon parted and willful waste makes woeful want. I'm from absent Thomas, who paid attention to his three children only after the raising was done as my grandmother had predicted. I'm from that grandmother, Florida, who would take me to try on ready-made dresses to see what I liked. Then take me to the fabric store to make one just like it, but better, and at a fraction of the price. This grandmother named Florida, whose mother was named Pennsylvania, had students who loved her so much, one changed her name to Florida. This grandmother named Florida, who tutored me on how to stand and what to do with my eyes and my hands When making a speech, this grandmother named Florida who never seem satisfied with my childhood cooking, always needed just a little more salt, or just a little more sugar, or just a little more of something. I am from this Grandmother named Florida, who constantly told me you're as good as anybody, and better than most, who calmed me down on more than one occasion with "there's many a slip between the cup and the lip." This same grandmother who could give you the look. You know what I mean. A look that could stop a charging bull in his tracks, or at least I thought so. I am from Grandfather Phineas whose father was born two years before Mr. Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but whose family would not be told for two and a half years on Juneteenth that they were free. Free to ponder whether there was any song of their God fit to be profaned in a foreign land that hated them. I am from a grandfather Phineas who we call Big Daddy and whose Greek names remains a mystery to mw. And who our grandmother called Mr. Gray until the day she died. This grandfather who tutored me to an A and physics, though he hadn't taught physics in 40 years. I am from those great-grandparents of mine born two years before the Emancipation, who somehow knew to send their children to college, including my grandfather, who had 25 cents in his pocket when he arrived at Bishop College and did not stop until he had earned for college degrees with honors. I'm from these great-grandparents. These grandparents, who built a school for black children in our County, and whose word was good enough for 40 years to deposit their students at colleges without funds, until they could return home to raise the money to pay their college tuitions. I'm from an indigenous maternal great-grandmother bought or brought from the reservation in Oklahoma by a black businessman who married her and produced nine children who they sent off to college. I'm from the expectation of education that unless you were dead, You expected to head for college. Ha, I'm from the requirement to give back to the community. I was told, if you love God, you feed his sheep. That's where I'm from. Thank you.

**00:59:31 Noni Ervin**

Wow, Ms. LueRachelle, you broke me down, love that. I really love that poem. Absolutely Wonderful. Yeah, Whoa, that's good. Thank you so much for sharing that. Well, I feel like you gave me a big old hug. I'm if it's a good thing for technology because I was talking and and, and responding the whole time through, I would have been covering up your voice. Oh, bless you. Thank you so much for sharing. Our next Storyteller is Ms. Gail Haynes. Gail has been a member of AWAA since 2015. She creates poems that are soulful and sassy, poems that will make you laugh and also reflect on real-life experiences. Among the sites where she has read are Mount Zion Baptist Church, Elliott Bay Book Company, Columbia and Ballard Library, and Life Enrichment Bookstore. Gail shares her poems at non-profit organizations that stand against injustice. Many of her poems exalt the goodness of the Lord and His amazing power of love to transform lives. Soulful and Sassy Reflections and Poems is the author's first book.

**01:00:43 Noni Ervin**

Her advice appears in The Facts in the column "Be Well with Gail." Ms. Gail.

**01:00:50 Gail Haynes**

Hello everybody. I decided to write a story of someone that you could count on to never be prejudiced against you, someone that would give you unconditional love. Know who I wrote about? My dog. So the title of this story is Mrs. Puddles Lucille: A True Story of a Fluffy, Feisty, Fiery Dog. I just wanted to read about this because I think sometimes, you know, I write about black history and many things in it. And I just want to kind of a mixture in there. So here it goes. And thank you for being an audience. Puddle's mom had a litter of five puppies. Puddles was the runt and smallest of all of them. My Aunt Shirley Ann sold her to me for only \$50 when she was six weeks old and literally six inches long. She slept in my daughter's K Swiss shoebox. Remember those shoes? She had a face towel for her blanket. She had curly, cream colored hair, big ears that stood straight up. She was a mixture between a toy poodle and a Cairn Terrier. Puddles was my dream come true. All my life. I wanted a dog, since I was a child. But because my brother and I had asthma, my mother refused to allow it. Plus, She did like them anyway. She didn't like no dog. We had two parakeets, one named Pookie and the other one, Vicki, and loads of guppies. Puddles did some crazy things. She loved to lick walls. Some dogs will lick you in the face, but she loved to lick walls. I assume they tasted good. She would drag her little tongue clear across the wall until she literally wore herself out. After that she would drink loads of water. Every spring the neighbors tree dropped green figs in our yard. Puddles would eat one or two figs a week and always threw up all the time. I asked the neighbors to cut back the branches that hung in my yard. Maybe she was doing her own inner cleansing. I don't know. It's hard to know. In spite of her peculiar little ways, everyone in the neighborhood loved her. When we would go on walks, people would speak to her before they even acknowledged me, as if she was able to talk back. However, because of her feisty personality, she never went up to people wagging her tail or allowed them to pet, or even pick her up. People would say she was sometimey. She would literally have a hissy fit when we gave her a bath. She could not stand getting water in her eyes until I went to the dollar store and bought a pair of goggles that calmed her down. Now, I can't find that picture with her with her goggles on, but I have it somewhere. Even though she grew to 8 pounds and 12 inches full-grown, She was not a dog to be reckoned with. She was fearless and carried confidence as a little dog. One hot summer day, A huge raccoon wandered in the backyard, looking to snack on some of the Puddle's dog food and drinking water. Puddles went into high mania and began running and barking like crazy, chasing that raccoon around and around the yard until they jumped the fence escaping her mighty power. I was sweating, thinking what could have happened if that raccoon decided to turn around and fight back. She just was proudly wagging her little tail. She ran over to the cabin, where we kept the dog biscuits waiting for her. And I gave her one because she sure was courageous. I wouldn't have been able to run out there between her and a raccoon. Thank God, the raccoon decided not to fight her and use her as his snack. Another time Puddles came in from the yard with a thick black string hanging out of her mouth As my daughter, Talaya, looked closer. She noticed it was a mouse tail. She had the mouse in her mouth, and the string was hanging out. Talaya busted ran and did puddles drop the mouse and began to ran with her. And they both ran up the stairs Talaya washed her mouth out with Ivory soap that night, When we weren't looking, she was

busy outside digging holes in the backyard. Can you picture her big ears flapping up and down in the wind as she was wildly digging holes and tearing up the yard. However, on that day, her digging passion came to an end when she fell in one of her holes and dislocated her back leg. The vet diagnosed and x-ray the leg and quoted me \$2000 to reset her leg, I thanked him, and we left. Puddle's walking crooked on three legs and me telling myself There's no way in the world I can have that kind of money to pay for no dog that I paid \$50 for. I called other vets. And they said the same price, and even more. The next week Puddles and I caught the bus downtown to Pioneer Square because I heard that was a vet that would come down there once a month and treat dogs and cats for people who were homeless or didn't have much money. Now, I wasn't homeless, but I got in line with them anyway. And so when we got up to the front the vet said, oh, no, we can't do no surgeries for free. We will get rabies shots and vaccines, but absolutely no surgeries for free. So again we left getting on the bus puddles walking crooked on three legs, and we wondered what to do next. Just then I remembered the year before, when my right eye had become red and swollen. The doctor gave me a hard look and offered me a pamphlet on domestic violence after he had the nerve to ask me if someone punched me in the eye. I said, no sir, that did not happen. I got an attitude, and I just couldn't believe he would say that. After the exam, He discovered I had scleritis, a serious eye inflammation, that could cause blindness if left untreated. He prescribed steroids that didn't really help me that much, or even clear up my eye. And I was taking them for more than two weeks. I wore sunglasses everyday, because I figured somebody was going to assume that somebody hit me in the eye. Well, a friend of mine, she invited me to go to church for a healing service. The preacher said, if there's anyone in the congregation who needed healing quickly stand up. With faith. I stood up, he prayed, and I kid you not within 72 hours that eye cleared up. It was blood red. It was swollen. And in 72 your hours all the pain left. So I really realized God does answer prayer. So, you know what I did? I got me some prayer oil, rubbed it together in my hand, and laid it on that leg. And my daughter held puddles head, because every time someone tried to touch that leg, she would haul off and try to bite them. So Let me tell you what happened In four weeks, four weeks that leg, that back leg dropped down, and that dog was running faster than she ever did before. That lets you know, God answers prayer, even if it's a dog. And you know what she never dug one more hole after that. Not one more. Okay. So in the neighborhood lived a cat. This cat was teased puddles everyday, walking on top of the fence. And puddles was so small, you know, being a toy poodle, She could not get ahold of that of that dog. I mean, that cat. She was always barking and running back and forth, as the cat just slowly walked on the fence. But one day, everything changed. Puddles was sitting on the back of the couch, looking out the window, and she spotted the cat cross the street. At the same time. The doorbell rang, I open up the door and Puddles shot out the door, fast as Lightning speed, chasing after that cat. They was going around and around all up in the street. This was so wild. I'm screaming Puddles come back, and she's wildly barking, and the cat was running. Suddenly a small truck turned the same corner, hitting Puddles, breaking both of her legs. The driver jumped off the truck, broke down and cried. He said, the same thing happened to his dog when he was a child. Puddles layed in the street crying while the cat sat down next to her and watched. I scooped her up, Still alive, barely breathing and rushed her to the nearest vet. My thought was she could use a one of those doggy scooters, you know, for the back legs and run around like that. But after examining her, the vet said, not only were her legs crushed, but her stomach. That day my daughter and I watched Miss Puddles Lucille take her last breath. She was only three years old. Life at home was never the same after that.

The neighbors were shocked and saddened. My sister, Linda, put flowers on the sidewalk and a picture of Puddles on the corner. Even my mom cried, and she never liked dogs. But she loved Puddles, that funny little crazy dog who brought so much joy and laughter to everyone around her was gone. And you know what? We didn't see that cat no more after that, It just disappeared. That's the end,

**01:12:27 Noni Ervin**

Ms. Gail. I'm barely holding it together. Bless you. Thank you for sharing your story. All right, our next Storyteller is Ms Merri Ann Osborne. Merri Ann Osborne has been intrigued by stories and the art of storytelling since childhood. In middle school, she started writing stories, plays, songs, and jingles and hasn't stopped since! Not one to be pigeon-holed by genres or labels, Merri Ann utilizes various media to express and share her art, including acting, dance, voice-over, producing, and directing. Having lived and traveled abroad, Merri Ann is drawn to writing about the intersection of culture, history, class, and social issues. She explores how these themes impact relationships and our shared future. Her first published short story, "The Crew," can be found in AAWA's 2018 anthology 'Voices That Matter'. She is currently putting the final touches on her young adult historical fiction novel 'City Girl, Country Summer'. You also can find Merri Ann working on productions at 'The Mahogany Project' an arts organization where she serves as the Executive Director. Ms Merri Ann.

**01:13:49 Merri Ann Osborne**

Thank you, Noni. Thank you. Everyone Welcome Welcome. It's so good to see everyone joining us today. And thank you to everyone who has read before me. I'm with Noni, some of these stories... oh, and then those reading after me, I'm just happy to be here. Well, I wanted to just, you know, this tonight's is a conversation, if you will. The sharing of stories is about experiences and memory. And I started thinking about this going, you know, what is really a memory. So, you know, I like doing research. So according to articles, scientific journals and a bunch of other things I read, a memory is when we take in information, and we do a few things. Well, first, we have to acquire that information, right? So we have to live life. And I've heard all these stories people are living their life, sometimes life comes at us, and we just go through it. But you have to, you know, we live life. And once we live life, we have an experience, and we store it in our minds, or maybe in our senses, in our bodies, Our noses, you know, like the smell of coconut bread That makes you really, you know, for me, reminds me of my family like Caribbean Roots, right? It's somehow that's stored in my body, through these experiences I've had. And then we retain these experiences. You return these. We retain these memories. Sometimes we retain it very quickly. Sometimes we retain this memory may be a month, a year. And sometimes that memory is with us, the rest of our lives, like some of the stories that you've heard. Now, then we retrieve those memories. And sometimes it's by choice. Sometimes it happens. So we acquire, right. We have these experiences, We store them, retain them, and then we retrieve them. It sounds very easy. Right? Well, no human being is retrieving and storing and seeing an experience the same way. So our memories kind of, you know, might be very different. Take me and my brothers, for instance. So I have an older brother. I have two older brothers, My oldest brother. He has the most amazing memory. Okay, he can tell you, you might have people like this for your family, or know somebody. My oldest brother can go back decades. Remember the date time year when something happened, even what someone was wearing, Amazing. love him. Then you have my



second oldest brother, who has a really great memory. It looks a little different than my older brother. This brother. He can take like the full plot of an hour TV show, Right? And he'll tell me that show in an hour even tell me the commercials, right? He'll know the theme song. He'll be singing this song. If there's lyrics, he'll be humming this song. If there's no lyrics, he'll tell me the characters, the story line, all of this line by line. And then Merri Ann. Here's what happens next. It's amazing, He'll take that hour to tell me that that TV show that took an hour with or without commercials. Me, I can barely remember where my car keys are. You know, I come home. My husband's like, what's going on? I'm like looking for my keys, Right? So everybody's memory is different. We think, as humans that we got, you know, we got it. We're the only ones on the planet memories. But once again, research, right? The more research they do, The more they realize... they - scientists, that hey, other animals have memories, too, like that cat maybe Gail was talking about... or not. Animals have memories too. I mean, I don't need to know science to know animals have memories. Have any of you walked in Seward Park. Excuse me, Madison Park, right? There's all these crows that are in the trees in Madison Park. And for those of you not from Seattle area, It's right along Lake Washington, beautiful Park. And there's these crows that can hang out there. And I've talked to people about it. Don't do anything bad to these crows, because those crows have a memory, and they will come after you the next time you're in the park. So I've noticed that. And what about salmon? Come on now. Salmon could go all over like from the north of Alaska, all the way down to, you know, and they'll remember to come back and spawn. They have a sense of smell this memory that they have. So humans, animals... Not just, right? We have this memory. This memory. It can be it can be a joy, right? It could be a full of Heartache, the memories that we hold, Some of the things that Helen was reading about some beautiful memories that have been shared, And some really ones that you don't want to remember it All. Memories can shape who we become. You know what, what what has made us and take us in very different directions depending on the memory and what it feels like for us. There are memories that I want to keep. There are memories I just wish I could just throw away. But I likeunl ikelike my keys that I can't find some of these memories just stay with me... some of them bad, some of them good. And this evening, I'd like to share with you some good memories that I've had. And I'd like to share with you these memories in what is called a concrete poem or a shape poem. And I really appreciate LueRachelle, hoping I say your name right, when she was talking about the where I am from poem, right, And how you can write a where I am from poem. And, you know, at the African American Writers Alliance, we just encourage people to write. That's what Georgia is always saying. And just write, just write, just write your story, right? So where I am from, that's a great way. I wanted to try something different with these concrete poems or shape poems. Now, a concrete poem is a type of poetry that uses a virtual Excuse me, a visual layout to increase the effect on its reader. That's what it says It is. Bottom line is, if you're going to write about a tree in the beautiful leaves, you're going to write it in the shape of that tree. I've never Done this before, y'all So, but I wanted to color. Okay, I'm not an artist I wanted to color. And I thought, and I wanted to write about this memory. And so I thought, let's color. And let's write. So here we go. First time. Whoa, whoa, whoa. And we encourage people to explore their writing. And that's what is going to happen tonight. Now I got my colored pencils out. I wrote the story ahead of time, and this is about my experience being in Japan. So I hope you enjoy. And I'm so glad to hear there so many Travelers on this call. So, okay, This is in yellow. Whoa. And I'm trying to see hold on a minute. I do not have a PowerPoint. But you can see

my kindergarten-style drawing. But I have written my whole poem around the Sun, and then the Rays. Then the clouds. This is the first page, and I will start

**01:21:49 Merri Ann Osborne**

Humidity Humidity. That's one of my earliest memories of my first trip to Japan. No one had told me about the humidity. It was summer when I arrived. I was 18 years old. At university I had studied Japanese language, taken Japanese politics class, Japanese history, Japanese economics, cultural classes like Japanese dance, Tea Ceremony, one of my favorites. Yes, my University taught me well, but no one had mentioned the humidity. But I was 18 years old. The clouds were in the sky. (clouds) and whether it rained, snowed, or was a sunny day fall winter, summer or spring, even humidity. I was open to the experiences, not knowing how living in Japan would change my life forever.

**01:23:06 Merri Ann Osborne**

There you go. Fall. This is a color is kind of funny. but these are Maples. Fall. Kyoto In the fall Memories of Momiji. Autumn colors. The Japanese maple Arashiyama District is alive with vibrant orange red and yellow leaves falling to the ground. They create a slippery carpet of color. With my friend at a tea house. We sip hot green tea and savor bites of ohigashi five months now in Japan, my language skills getting better day by day, but not as fast as I'd like, Even though (Excuse me), but it's good enough that she and I can laugh and share observations of the day. As leaves float down the river. The river bursting with the beauty of Momiji. Winter. Snow falls at Nikko, covering centuries-old Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Cross the red Shinkyo Bridge, now covered with the white flakes of winter. Our group makes its way to the Toshogu Shrine. Through gates, past pagodas as monkeys and Dragons watch over us Shogun Tokugawa Shrine is hidden by the snow, But ornate gold, silver and magical colors of paint peek out here And there. A mystery Lies Beneath. I will have to return. When the snow melts. A pilgrimage. The next day we enjoy an outdoor Onsen hot springs and sip hot sake While watching the snow fall A winter landscape of History, Never to be forgotten. Spring. Sakura Cherry blossoms, A symbol of spring representing innocence and Beauty, blooming quickly alive for a short time, And then quickly falling away from Okinawa to Kyushu, Hokkaido, shikoku, Honshu. Everyone waits for spring to come again, for all Hanami, cherry blossom viewing, sitting under their soft pink, or deep red flowers with family and friends, Special Bento boxes and drinks for the season, festivals and dance spring a sign of new life and a fresh start. And one of the favorite times of year in Japan. Summer. Ooh it's humid in Hiroshima. My skin feels sticky from the heat, but I'm cooled off by sprays of water, splashing My skin as we take the ferry to Miyajima Island Shrine island with its floating Torii gate rising from the water. It's Vermilion, color greeting all who enter. The deer greet us too when we arrived, nudging us for food and searching for snacks in our backpacks. Climbing to the daisho-in temple. We meet a monk who joins us later for night on the town. Fun chicken. Our band dedicates a song to this funky monk from Hiroshima in honor of this man, who embodies the spirit and soul of this sacred place. Friends, Sights, sounds, smells and tastes. They mean nothing without touch. The touch of the people I met. The touch of their heart. There are people whose names I don't know, brief encounters, the local shopkeeper, a woman on a train, high schoolers who want to practice their English with me, Interactions, encounters. Open, giving, curious, kind, abrasive, friendly. I'm grateful to everyone, Most importantly are the touch of the friends that I made, who stuck with me through thick and thin, who stood with me when some place

didn't feel safe or didn't feel right. Laughter. Conversations, patience, Teachers, confidence, Trustworthy, caring, forever in my heart, forever treasured friends for life, friends for life and memories for life. It was humid. And summer time I was 18 years old. The clouds were in the sky, and I was open to the experiences, not knowing how it would change my life forever. Thank You. [inaudible] family. [inaudible] Family, [inaudible] sensei, [inaudible] sensei, [inaudible name], [inaudible name] , the Fun Chicken band mates [names] family and all the expats Greg, Chris, James Sharon Justin, [names] , Japanese language classmates and Bruce, my friend forever. I was 18 and it was summer, And it was my first year in Japan. And this is my memory. Thank you,

**01:29:47 Noni Ervin**

Merri Ann. Arigato. That was wonderful. Thank you. All right, Well, we have the honor of having. I will say this. We had two community Elders, community members with us today. Our first was Ms LueRachelle Brim-Atkins. And closing us out for this evening is Dr. Joye Hardiman. And let's see here. And it's so wonderful to share the space with community and friends. And from the area, Dr. Joye Hardiman is a master teacher and Storyteller. She is a global researcher, cultural custodian and Community activist. She attended the Undergraduate Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. She earned a BA in Western Classical Literature from the State University of New York at Buffalo, a PhD in Ancient Kemet Egyptian Literature and Urban Education from the Union Institute certificate of completion from Harvard University's Management Development Program, a Fulbright Scholarship and membership of the executive board. Excuse me, Executive Board of the Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations. She recently retired

**01:31:06 Noni Ervin**

after 45 years of higher education teaching Administration and institution-building. Her new book, The Ra-Surrection of Truth from the Chains of Falsehood, was launched on June 20th 2021. Two weeks after her 77th birthday, Happy belated Dr. Joye Hardiman.

**01:31:28 Dr. Joye Hardiman**

And I thank you, Noni, thank you. So very much. And thank you All. This is... hasn't it been delightful? What incredible stories! Oh, taking us back, Not just stories that had words but smells, the smells of the the grandmother's cooking on Sundays. And and, and, and, and and heart felt, you know, tragedy with the little dog, and they just an amazing, amazing, Amazing, amazing richness. I'm really pleased to be able to participate in it, and I salute the organization for working so hard over these past years to make sure that the voices of Black writers are heard. And black stories are told. So my introduction to story actually happened when I was very, very young child. My mother used to read me the Negro Caravan, And she used to read me at night. The stories, poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar novels of Charles Chestnut, Langston Hughes. All of those stories used to ring in my head. And when she would leave at night, I would put the covers over my head and try to act them all out, not only this time. And so I, and particularly when I couldn't think of the story she wrote the night did Goldilocks and the Three Bears And I was all the parts of the of it. And so stories were always like, really, really important to me, and something I really, really, really love my. So when I went to college, what I did was I studied literature, but because I was first generation integration and did not have the blessings of having gone to an historical black college or historical black school where people told you about

the great writers where people told you about the great history. Instead, I was introduced to Latin and Western classical literature, and I went to college, and I majored in Chaucer, and that was a Yeah. And that was a weird thing. And the reason why I majored in Chaucer was because I was looking at the job board. I was in graduate school, and there were two Jobs for Chaucerian Scholars. And I thought, oh, a booming field, right? Needless to say that there were never any more jobs offered for Chaucer people. But there I was amidst in Chaucer amidst in studying 16th century Italian comedy, Commedia Dell'arte. My daughter likes to tell people that yes, indeed, one part of my life. In one instance, my life, I was a mime, and she always said, this is my mom's was a mime at Woodstock. My major claim to fame, despite all of the other things I did that is what is will probably be put on my Tombstone by her if she has any control over it. But anyway, so I was immersed in Western classical literature, but I was also doing theater at the same time, because I really wanted to express myself as an artist. And I got a job teaching at Evergreen as a theater major, And teaching improvisational theater teaching, in fact, 16th century Italian comedy Committee of the l'arte. And that was okay for a while. But after a while, I felt a little bit of the autobiographical Insight I felt confined. I felt that I was studying a literature that had the did not have really good images of me in that literature and classical literature. If you were a woman, and you had any sort of spirit you were like Antigone and were thrown into a cave and you know where you were like, Kate and tamed in the Taming of the Shrew. So I was studying this literature that was not reinforcing to me, but it was the white Canon. And so I was ready for war, but my soul was dying. My soul was dying. I felt like I was removed from my people, my content, Etc. So I was blessed at the time that there was a woman Dr. Maxine Mimms with just started the Evergreen State College. And she told me that I could come an te--- no, I asked, I begged, I begged, Beg beg. Please Let me come and teach at the college. And she's she said, fine, but you can't come and teach theater. You have to teach your discipline, your classical discipline. My people are classical people, and they demand a classical art. So you got to figure out some way of teaching classical literature to at this time, a room full of retired black military men, alright, um, From Georgia and Texas and Arkansas, East st. Louis as well. By the way, that's from my father's from is he st. Louis? At some point, We need to talk about that. So I was, I didn't know what to do. And I found this book, and it's called The Way of the Storyteller. And this book changed my life. And then that gave birth to the book I'm going to share with you. In this book Ruth Sawyer says, most of the western classical literature had the prototypic beginnings in ancient Egypt. Boom. That's all I needed, because I knew at that time the research was that ancient Egypt was Black. And these were Black people. And I had a chance to connect my people with their own classical art, with their own classical literature. So I went back, and I got a PhD in ancient Egyptian studies. And I was particularly interested in how we, how we could take the principles and the philosophies and the ideas of our ancestors and apply them to contemporary times. And so, and so I did that. And so my interest in the time before, Once Upon a Time, began in my studies of classical African Literary traditions, in which I found out there was a philosophical worldview, there were concepts. And I found that in terms of literature that it was true that most of Western literature, what had its origins in the ancient Egyptian literature, I found stories about Cinderella and was called The Princess and the Red Shoe. I found the Trojan War, and that was in the story of the men who hid in Earthen jars in order to do something. I found the story of Immaculate Conception. I found the story of Noah. I found the story of Cain and Abel. All of these things were deep, deep within the tradition. And one story within that tradition kept coming up to me over and over and over again. And it was a story called The Blinding of Truth by

Falsehood. And I looked at that story, and I said, oh, this is the Cain and Abel story, This is good and evil. These are adversarial dichotomies that are working, and And the working out of the notion of Good and Evil had been so important that in the culture that story kept being told over and over again, was told in the story of The Five-Year famine, Seven-year famine during the during the first dynasty, when the family was all over the land And and King Zoser says what to do, what to do what to do. And he goes, and he calls Imhotep, he who the person who built the huge first pyramid. He says, Imhotep find the answer. And Imhotep goes down to elephantine. And he consults with the oracles. And he comes back. And he said, what has happened is things are out of balance. You have to take on as your sacred duty to restore that which is in ruin and make it more beautiful than before. You have to go and do Sankofa. Even back then they knew about Sankofa. Sankofa just didn't come up in Ghana. In fact, Tony Browder found images of Sankofa, the symbol In the pyramids in the Sudan, you know. So we're talking about 5000 Years. Anyway. So I saw this story and this story about truth and falsehood kept gnawing at me, gnawing at me. And then I realized it was my story. And so I needed to start telling that story. So I told that story in different places, and I talked about how how we had to bring truth back into the world. And I was really excited about that. But then a young person came up to me a year and a half ago and said, okay, Auntie Joye, If you bring truth back in the world, how you going to keep it there? And at that point, it was like, okay, Someone said they'd love to research. It was back to the research. It was trying to figure out, how do we keep it there? And I was really struck about the fact that our ancestors left us so many teachings. So I'm going to share with you just a little, the first part of the book that the ancestors allow me to be the custodian in. And and I want to say that the book organized itself. So in the beginning is the story, and then, in the Second part is more of a manual. So the beginning of the story about bringing truth back into the world. And the second part talks about the things we have to do to keep them there, based on ancient Egyptian virtues based on my lived experience about how I learned how to be indigestible when I was in the belly of the higher education beast for 45 years. And so it incorporates some lived life lessons, some ancient lessons in the context of a wisdom text. Okay, This is the cover of the book. And yay, I know, I know, I feel like a proud mother, you know, just born just born. And the book is called The Ra-Surrection of Truth from the Chains of Falsehood, As Told by Dr. Joye Hardiman and illustrated by Olga Maldonado. Now, what's interesting about her is that she is the Vietnamese woman? Yeah. Yeah, Young indigenous, but I'm not. I'm sorry, Venezuelan, she's Venezuelan. And, yeah, real different, real different, different parts of the world. But she's a Venezuelan Refugee who was fleeing her country because the military had closed all the universities and had come into her campus and basically, firebombs, our campus And she had to leave. And I met her in Mexico And she and and I saw her paintings. And I said, oh, I want you to illustrate this book. Because what I wanted is I didn't want to gendered, and I didn't want it racialized and I wanted to be Cosmic, and I really wanted magical realism. All right, I really wanted it to work on, not just the normal levels We work on. So anyway, so the The Ra-Surrection of Truth from the Chains of Falsehood, and also one of the things, because I want you to notice that I have the term Ra-Surrection, because the word, the prefix re, if we do Latin, means to stand still to go back, We're going to go back to the same space, The prefix Re in kemet language in the metonetric stands for Ra, the Sun. So when we say the Ra-surrection, we're talking about the ascension of truth from falsehood, as opposed to just coming back to the norm, Because we know the norm ain't been so good. You know they said, Oh, let's get back to the norm before Covid, you know. NO, no, people

were getting killed. People were being starved. You know, we were destroying the planet. No, no, No. We have to bring truth back into the world. So just a little sneak peek. All right. Once upon a time before, Once Upon a Time, Truth ruled the world. And when truth ruled the world in the first time, the first time was called Zep Tepi and during the time of Zep Tepi, the world was harmonized by Maat, by Truth, by Justice, by divine order, by balance, and by abundance. When truth walked the world, people knew that there was no separation between the physical and material between what was above and what was below. The people saw the world as whole, and not in little reductionist Parts. People understood that life was cyclic and not linear. And that what comes around goes around. And if you didn't get it the first time and no problem, you'll get it the next Time. Life was so much easier when Truth ruled the world. When Truth ruled the world, people understood that Redemption was always possible, And that human beings were verbs and not nouns. When truth ruled the world. When truth ruled the world things were balancing and false and true composite were seen as complementary dualities, as two sides of the same coin. Everyone in their own way, was a victor, not a victim. No one was a stranger. Everybody was somebody's brother, sister, daughter, son, mother, father Or friend, journeying home when Truth ruled the world. But Truth has a sibling named falsehood. And falsehood was jealous of truth. Falsehood didn't want to share. Falsehood wanted all the attention, all the admiration, all the praise, all the power. So Falsehood thought and thought and thought. And finally, falsehood decided that there was only one way to gain World dominance. And that was to destroy truth So falsehood hid behind a tree and then patiently waited to Ambush truth. And when Truth walked by falsehood, grabbed truth. threw Truth to the ground, stepped on Truth's throat muzzled Truth's Mouth, chained Truth's hand and kicked Truth into a deep, deep, deep pit, And then Falsehood put on Truth's clothes. And boldly began to walk through the land disguised as Truth. And the Earth shuddered and hora, Maat and Truth disappeared. Everything turned upside down. It's big chaos. Falsehood began their reign, Falsehoods followers put on their battle gear and came to conquer. They turn language into a weapon. They problematize and pathologize the other. And they created adversary binaries. They divided the world into either/or and small, small, Small, lonely places in between both and became replaced by black/white, us/them, rich/poor, straight/gay, old/young, fat/thin, Christian/heathen, citizen/alien, enable/disabled, light-skinned/dark-skinned, loved/hated, worthy wanted/rejected unworthy, And people began to lock their doors so that the other could not get in. And as they locked their doors, they locked their heart. And as they locked their hearts, they locked their minds as they locked their mind. They lost their souls, Fear and anger became the dominant modalities. Pathology became the scripture. Trauma became intergenerational. Money Became God, white became right, Social media became the new gospel, and the big lie ruled the land, Sound familiar? But Always in the African story, there is a but and an and. But And there are always resistors. There are always those who know in their heart and gut that the universe is upside down and things are out of balance. There are always those who know that there is something terribly wrong, who know that is not their nature to walk around with their heads bent. It is not their nature to walk with their backs. Bent, head down, eyes to the ground. So the resistors fought cultural Amnesia and focused on liberation. They called out to the Creator And the ancestors. They prayed for intervention and direction. And the ancestors responded. Okay, so it goes on to talk about how the ancestors come back down and and remind them about their history and remind them about what they're supposed to do, and remind them that if you're going to find truth, it goes to self first, You got to go inside. And that's why the stories that people were telling today were so important because we

have to go inside to see the both/and of Our Lives, to see the Beauty and the pain to see if, you know, just did see it both see the love of our grandparents and, and the struggle of our grandparents and all of those things. And so this is a book. And if you're interested in knowing more about it, just go to [ancestralartworks dot com](http://ancestralartworks.com), an amazing web page. Gotta put up that a data put a point out from my girl for Kailyn Oliphant did an amazing job as putting the webpage together? So I gotta like him shout out because the end of the story has the people realizing the resistors, realizing that this is a generational thing and the true class them and ends with their passing on the mantle to the Next Generation. And I think that's what stories do. So thank you all for being resistors. Thank you all for passing the mantle. You know, Ashay Ashay Ashay okay,

**01:52:06 Noni Ervin**

Thank you so much, Dr. Hardiman. That was wonderful. Very beautiful.

**01:52:11 Dr. Joye Hardiman**

Thank you with such a beautiful crowd to be with. I have no choice but to step up to Excellence.

**01:52:18 Noni Ervin**

So everyone thank you so much. What an honor to have heard your stories. And this has been a four Workshop series around black Brilliance and black Joy of sharing our Our own stories our oral Traditions. Our original work With each other and with our community, and it's just been really fabulous. As we mentioned early on, the video and the podcast will be made available through Seattle Public Library. And so we'll make sure to get that information out before I go. I want to just really thank you, Say, thank you to all of the African American Writers Alliance, AAWA members and Community guests tonight, Dr. Joye Hardiman and Ms. LueRachelle Brim- Atkins for joining us, as well as Amy Twito from Seattle, Public Library and the Seattle Public Library Foundation for making this possible as part of their summer of learning program. And what Beautiful Stories. Thank you. And that's and that's the night.