

# Chicago Literary Hall of Fame



*Eleanor Taylor  
Bland*

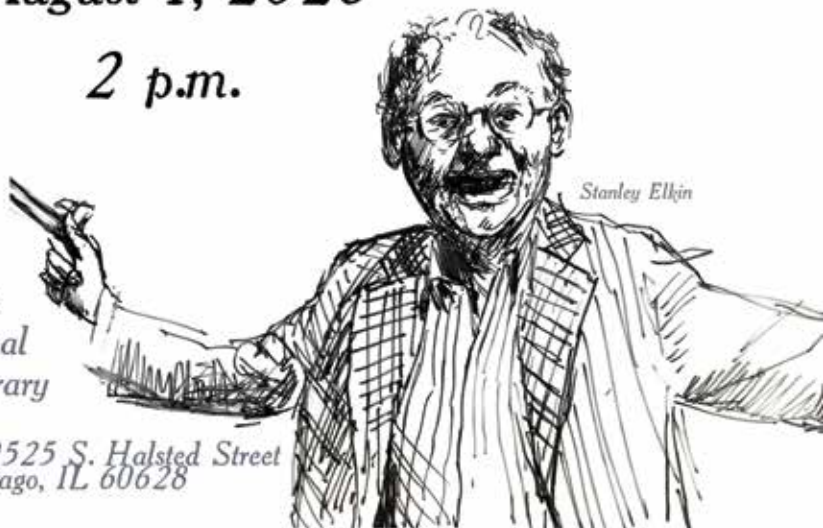


*Ronald L. Fair*

## Induction Ceremony 2026

*Saturday,  
August 1, 2026*

*2 p.m.*



*Stanley Elkin*

*Woodson  
Regional  
Library*

*9525 S. Halsted Street  
Chicago, IL 60628*

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*This is a narrative of what it was like for those of us born in the thirties. Our parents came from Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, and many other southern states where whites were perverse and in-human in their treatment of blacks...They came north, and we were the children born in the place they escaped to—Chicago*

— Ronald L. Fair, Introductory note to *We Can't Breathe*

# CHICAGO LITERARY HALL OF FAME



The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame (CLHOF) honors, celebrates, preserves, and promotes the development of Chicago's great literary heritage—past, present, and future. CLHOF seeks to realize this purpose by annual inductions of selected great writers from the past; ceremonies honoring living writers whose lifetime contributions to the literary arts warrant the highest recognition; literary awards to young people; classes, panels, and other literary endeavors designed to encourage the development of writers at all ages. CLHOF also creates written materials that record the lives and works of Chicago's most important literary figures and presents these and other materials on its website, in exhibits, author events, public art installations, literary tours, and programming relevant to the organization's goal of promoting Chicago's vibrant literary tradition and culture. CLHOF formed as a project of the Chicago Writers Association in 2010, and splintered into its own nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity in 2014.

## Board of Directors

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## Selection Committee

|                   |                      |              |
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| Tina Jenkins Bell | Eileen Favorite      | Barry Pearce |
| Carlos Cumpián    | Sandra Jackson-Opoku |              |

## Summer Interns

|                                    |                                      |                                  |
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| August Boyer,<br>Loyola University | Analise Budziak,<br>St. Olaf College | Sela Grant,<br>DePaul University |
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# OUR HOST: CARTER G. WOODSON REGIONAL LIBRARY

When the Woodson Regional Library formally opened its doors in the Washington Heights neighborhood on Dec. 19, 1975, it was the city's second regional library and the first on the South Side. This vibrant intellectual and cultural center was built to house the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature, and has ever since been home to the Midwest's largest African American archival collection. Carter Godwin Woodson was a Chicago historian, author, and journalist dedicated to honoring cultural contributions of Black Americans; he created Negro History Week, which led to Black History Month, and founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. Vivian Gordon Harsh, a Chicago librarian for 34 years, was a singular force in making Black literature and history available throughout the Chicago Public Library system. The Woodson represents the vision of those two pioneers and has established itself as a refuge to preserve, honor, and promote Black writers' voices, specifically those with Chicago origins.

For 50 years the library has preserved and celebrated local writers with archival storage, community events, literary exhibitions, and student mentorship. Timuel Black, Jr.'s papers and the digital collection of his speeches and letters are housed here. So, too, are the Robert S. Abbott-John Sengstacke Family Papers (Abbott is a 2017 CLHOF inductee). The collection includes the work of many other CLHOF inductees: a manuscript of Langston Hughes' autobiography *The Big Sea*, with handwritten edits; an autographed copy of Richard Wright's *Native Son*; a typescript Margaret Burroughs poem; extensive correspondence, drafts, interview transcripts, notebooks, and photographs of Gwendolyn Brooks.

Harsh became CPL's first African American branch manager on January 18, 1932, when George Cleveland Hall Branch opened in Bronzeville. She took it upon herself to bolster the library system's paltry Black history and literature holdings, purchasing books and rare artifacts from patrons such as Wright, Hughes, and Horace Clayton. It's appropriate, then that the Harsh Research Collection includes The George Cleveland Hall Branch Archives.

The Harsh Collection perpetually expands, with regular donations from scholars, journalists, playwrights, poets, and local historians. The library regularly hosts author panels, poetry readings, and workshops. Its YOUmedia space fosters young creatives and offers mentorship for the next generation of Chicago storytellers.

In 2018, the library reopened after an 18-month, \$9 million renovation funding new study rooms, an early learning play space, and services such as the city’s Teacher in the Library program and YOUmedia. Last year, the library celebrated its half-century anniversary. The CLHOF is delighted and grateful to partner with this esteemed institution, and honored to be in this space for our ceremony.



# TONIGHT'S PROGRAM

Welcome to the Carter G. Woodson  
Regional Library

Lawanda Miller

About the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's  
Selection Process

Donald G. Evans

Eleanor Taylor Bland Presentation

Sandra Jackson-Opoku

Accepting for her grandmother,  
Eleanor Taylor Bland

Nia Love

Stanley Elkin Presentation

Jeffrey Wolf

Ronald L. Fair Presentation

Richard Guzman

Performing "No More Auction Block for Me"

Ugochi Nwaogwugwu

Accepting for his father, Ronald L. Fair

Rodney Fair

Closing

Donald G. Evans

*I was a kid, I didn't know I was growing up in Chicago in the 1930s and 40s. I was just a kid growing up. I suppose it's very much like being a kid growing up in Seville. I didn't much like Chicago until I left Chicago. Now I would just love going back to that city. I think it's spectacular from an architectural point of view. From a theatrical point of view. It's a theatrical city. But I didn't know this when I was growing up.*

– Stanley Elkin

# PARTICIPANTS



**Donald G. Evans** is the author of a novel and story collection, as well as the editor of two anthologies of Chicago literature, most recently *Wherever I'm At: An Anthology of Chicago Poetry*. He is the Founding Executive Director of the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame.



**Rodney Fair** is the eldest of Ronald Fair's six children. He grew up in Princeton Park and Lake Meadows on Chicago's South Side. He enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1978 and served at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas until 1981. He began working in information technology support in Chicago in 1984 and retired in 2024. In 1997, he and his wife Verna settled in

DeKalb, Illinois. He is the proud father of four daughters and one son, grandfather of six, and great grandpa of two. He has earned the Creative Writing and Professional Writing certificates at College of DuPage and will graduate in 2027 with an associate's degree in Creative Writing



**Dr. Richard R. Guzman** is professor emeritus at North Central College where he taught writing, literature, race/ethnicity, and social change, and led in establishing programs that shaped virtually every aspect of college life. He twice won awards for outstanding teaching and leadership. He has published music, poetry and essays. His first book, *Voices and Freedoms: A History*

*of Jazz*, was made into a nationally syndicated radio series, while a more recent one, *Black Writing from Chicago*, was hailed as a "work of great importance and a sheer delight." He has volunteered in homeless shelters for decades, currently leading his church's homeless program, and led in bringing a diversity plan to one of Illinois' most prominent school districts, a project for which he was honored by the state. He is consultant on racial justice and equity initiatives for the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church and headed the committee that produced the Becoming the Beloved Community anti-racism workshop. He is active in his family's foundation Emmanuel House. Founded by his eldest son Rick and his wife Desiree in memory of Dr. Guzman's youngest son Bryan Emmanuel, it was named one of the Top 100 Most Innovative social change organizations in the world in 2016. Now The Neighbor Project, it leads families, many of which are families of color, towards financial stability and onto the path of home ownership. Lack of equitable home ownership opportunities is the single greatest factor in our country's immense racial wealth gap. He has been involved with the CLHOF nearly from its beginning, being on the first panel of nominators and now serving as a board member.



**Sandra Jackson-Opoku** is the author of three award-winning novels. *The River Where Blood is Born* won the American Library Association Black Caucus Award. *Hot Johnny and the Women Who Loved Him* was an Essence Magazine Bestseller in Hardcover Fiction. Her mystery novel, *Savvy Summers and the Sweet Potato Crimes* won the Malice Minotaur Award for First Mystery Novel, and was a finalist for the Mary Higgins Clark, Agatha, and Macavity Awards. *Savvy Summers and the Po'boy Perils*, the second instalment, released July 2026. Jackson-Opoku also coedited the anthology *Revise the Psalm: Work Celebrating the Writing of Gwendolyn Brooks*. Her fiction, travel writing, poetry and dramatic works are widely published and produced, appearing in *African Risen: A New Era of Speculative Fiction*, *Aunt Chloe Literary Magazine*, *New Daughters of Africa*, *Ms. Magazine*, and more. She has written food, drink, and travel features for *Islands Magazine*, *Arts Midwest*, *Caribbean Travel & Life*, *Being Single Magazine*, and *BlackAtlas.com*.

Professional recognition includes the National Endowment for the Arts Fiction Fellowship, the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines Fiction Award for Younger Writers, a James Baldwin Fellowship from MacDowell Arts, a city of Chicago Esteemed Literary Artist Award, an Iceland Writers Retreat Alumni Award, and others. She presents her work in arts communities throughout the U.S. and worldwide.



**Nia Love** is the granddaughter of Eleanor Taylor Bland.



**Lawanda Miller** is the Assistant Director at Woodson Regional Library. She earned a BS degree from DePaul University in Chicago and a Master of Library and Information Science from Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois. Lawanda started her library career at Woodson in 2003 as a Library Page, later advancing to Clerk II and Librarian I positions. In 2011, she spoke at the Chicago

Public Library's All Staff Day on "Books That Change People's Lives" and presented at the Black Caucus of the American Library Association in August 2017. She has been an active member of several Chicago Public Library Heritage Committees and the Black Caucus Programming Committee (2019-2020). She has organized and participated in numerous programs for the Washington Heights community. Lawanda proactively interacts with the community and strives to implement innovative programs at the library.



**Ugochi Nwaogwugwu** is a multidisciplinary creative. An internationally renowned poet, singer, writer, poetry instructor and founder of Spirit Speaks, Inc., Ugochi has executive produced, written and co-arranged three album projects; *African Butterfly*, *A.S.E. (Afro Soul Effect)* and *Love Shot*. Chicago Music Awards named Ugochi and her band African Soul Ensemble (A.S.E.) “Best African Entertainer in 2005, 2022 & 2023.” Her poems have been published in *Storm Between Two Fingers* and *Too Young, Too Loud, Too Different*, both international anthologies released in the UK; *Golden Shovel Anthology*, honoring Gwendolyn Brooks, *The Eternal Year of African People*, and *Wherever I’m At*, released nationwide. Ugochi is a beloved member of her poetry community in Chicago and a member of Malika’s Poetry Kitchen in London, England. Ugochi has created an original pan African poetry form called, “Ike,” (pronounced EE-kay) #Ikepoem, paying homage to her Igbo heritage of Nigeria and fostering Black/African appreciation worldwide. She has written newsworthy blogs and essays for publication including, *Not My President*, published by Third World Press in 2017. She released her first book of poetry & prose entitled *Seasons of Separation, (S.O.S.) An Igbo Family Tale*, in 2023. In addition, Ugochi is a playwright, activist, Treasurer of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and Recording Academy Chicago Chapter Secretary. She serves as the CLHOF’s Board Secretary.



**Jeffrey Wolf** is the author of *And Even This* (Cornerstone Press, forthcoming 2028). His fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Common*, *The Florida Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere. He has received a Special Mention from the Pushcart Prize, a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, and residencies in Iceland, Finland, and Sweden. He teaches Creative Writing at the University of Chicago.

*I doubted that I would ever make any money as a writer of this kind of fiction, but that didn't matter because I would be telling it like it is. No more polite lies. No more biting of the tongue or twisting of truths. Richard Wright's death would mean something, because I would keep him in mind and swing away.*

– Ronald L. Fair in *Negro Digest*, April 1965

# ELEANOR TAYLOR BLAND

(December 31, 1944 - June 2, 2010)

## *Slices of Life Within Black Culture*

by Sandra Jackson-Opoku

Crime writers who know their history invariably invoke the legacy of Eleanor Taylor Bland. I count myself incredibly lucky to have known her personally, and been a part of her community. Her footprints were so indelible that we never realized how deep they were until she no longer walked among us.



Eleanor Taylor Bland was kind, supportive, generous, and graceful to all who knew her as a friend, fan, colleague, and mentee. I have fond memories of her presence at literary events in and around Chicago, including the annual Gwendolyn Brooks Conference of Black Literature held at Chicago State University from the 1980s to the middle-2000-teens.

Bland's impact on the national and local Chicago literary scene, and the crime writing community in general, was nothing short of remarkable. She was especially known as a mentor of younger writers.

Tracy Clark, though she is far too modest to admit this, is Eleanor Taylor Bland's heir apparent in many respects. Like her mentor, Clark has inscribed the figure of the Black Chicago female detective into the crime writing genre with two detective series featuring a private investigator, CPD homicide detective.

Tracy remembers Bland as something of an elder stateswoman within a community of writers roaming the crime writing circuit in "a little gang" of mutual support. This was back in the days when the presence of Black crime writers was far less visible. Bland, along with pioneers like Walter Moseley, Valerie Wilson Wesley, and Barbara Neeley, helped force open the doors of opportunity that many of us have walked through behind them.

The legendary Sara Paretsky, godmother of Chicago crime writing, says of Bland, "She was the among the first...to create a hero who challenged the

‘mammy-whore’ stereotypes of African-American women. She believed the crime novel was a perfect vehicle for pushing the boundaries of America’s class/race/sex consciousness... With Marti Macallister, she said, she could ‘comment on slices of life within black culture.’”

Bland eventually went on to serve as chair in Sisters in Crime, the enduring organization Paretsky founded to advocate for the advancement, recognition, and professional development of women crime writers. Sin-C now honors this legacy with the Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award, an annual \$2,000 grant designed to support emerging BIPOC writers with their career development, research, and writing expenses.

Bland is legendary for introducing the first African American female police detective in crime fiction--Marti MacAlister, a police detective in a small town in northern Illinois.

Like Bland herself, MacAlister is a dedicated mother, family woman, and career professional in the police department of Lincoln Prairie, a fictionalized version of Waukegan, Illinois. She investigates the usual range of crimes, while also navigating gender and racial discrimination in policing, young people’s social challenges, homelessness, poverty, spousal and child abuse, and single parenthood in the aftermath of her husband’s tragic death.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts as the product of an interracial relationship, Eleanor Taylor Bland encountered her own share of challenges in personal and family life. She was a very young wife and mother, having married at the tender age of fourteen. She moved with her sailor husband around the country, finally settling in Waukegan where he was stationed at the Great Lakes Naval base. Their thirty-one-year marriage eventually ended in separation.

Despite an education interrupted early, Bland went on to earn a degree in accounting and education, then worked as a cost accountant while mothering two sons, and helping raise some of her grandchildren. In the 1970s she was

*I like accuracy when I’m working. I guess it’s the cost accountant in me.  
So, I don’t care if the reader understands the mechanics. But I want it  
mechanically to be possible.  
– Eleanor Taylor Bland*



diagnosed with Gardner's Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder for which she was given two years to live. Defying those odds, Eleanor Taylor Bland would live another forty years, adopting the philosophy of "living in the present." In the late 1990s, she retired from corporate life to begin writing full-time.

Bland was author of the 16-book Marti MacAlister series, and editor of the 2004 anthology *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*. Unlike the

iconic "loner" figure in many detective stories, Black women tend to create protagonists with families, children, and stable relationships. Bland not only wrote in this tradition, she lived it in her own life. Her granddaughter, Nia Love, honors this legacy by dedicating herself to preserving Bland's memory as a writer, literary pioneer, and mentor.

In the words of Tracy Clark, "I wouldn't be a published writer today without Eleanor. She believed in my writing well before I was confident enough to believe in it myself. Her encouragement, her friendship, her mentorship, her kindness, guide my pen today, and I can still hear her voice in my head when I write. Keep writing, she'd always tell me. Keep writing. Because of Eleanor, I do. Because of Eleanor, I can."

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*Sandra Jackson-Opoku is an award-winning writer of literary and historical novels, is the author of Savvy Summers and the Sweet Potato Crimes, and Savvy Summers and the Po'boy Perils. Her award-winning culinary mystery series, won The Malice Minotaur Award for First Mystery novel, and was a finalist for the Agatha, Mary Higgins Clark, and Macavity Awards in crime writing.*

*You know, I didn't want any magic there. I wanted [Marti MacAlister] to be very ordinary. Because I know some very extraordinary, heroic, brave, ordinary women who just in the process of getting up every day and doing what they do, are heroes.*

– Eleanor Taylor Bland

# ELEANOR TAYLOR BLAND BIBLIOGRAPHY

## ***The Marti MacAlister Series***

*All of Bland's published novels feature homicide detective Marti MacAlister.*

*Dead Time*, St. Martin's Press, 1992: In Bland's debut novel, we're introduced to homicide detective Marti MacAlister, who has moved to Lincoln Prairie (modeled after Waukegan) following the mysterious suicide of her undercover narcotics detective husband. She investigates the strangling death of a schizophrenic woman at a low-rent residential hotel and the subsequent killings of The Cramer Hotel denizens.



*Slow Burn*, St. Martin's Press, 1993: MacAlister and her partner Vik Jessenovik try to solve a fatal arson at a clinic and in the process uncover a child pornography ring.

*Gone Quiet*, St. Martin's Press, 1994: When Mount Gethsemane Baptist Church Deacon Henry Hamilton is found smothered to death in his bed, MacAlister works to solve the crime and shield a close friend from suspicion.

*Done Wrong*, St. Martin's Press, 1995: The death of another undercover narcotics agent leads MacAlister back to Chicago to revisit the alleged suicide of her own husband, who was a colleague of the recent victim.

*Keep Still*, St. Martin's Press, 1996: The deaths of an elderly woman pushed down some stairs and a former schoolteacher drowned in a hotel pool at first seem unrelated, until MacAlister discovers their connection to a cold case involving the abuse and disappearance of a young girl.

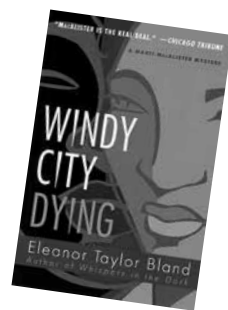
*See No Evil*, St. Martin's Press, 1998: A homeless man appears in danger after he witnesses the fatal fall of woman on the shores of Lake Michigan. MacAlister must keep him safe as she puzzles together the truth of the death, and also protect herself and her family from a stalker.

*Tell No Tales*, St. Martin's Press, 1999: The murder of a wealthy theater owner's reclusive son and the discovery of a pregnant woman's remains in an abandoned theater cause MacAlister to cut short her honeymoon.

*Scream in Silence*, St. Martin's Press, 2000: Lincoln Prairie is under grave threat from an arsonist whose crimes escalate from victimless fires to deadly explosives.

*Whispers in the Dark*, St. Martin's Press, 2001: Working with the solitary clue of a severed arm, MacAlister puts together the profile of a serial killer.

*Windy City Dying*, St. Martin's Press, 2002: An armed robber's release from prison leads to a vengeful killing spree in which MacAlister's firefighter husband, Ben Walker, becomes a target.



*Fatal Remains*, St. Martin's Press, 2003: An old skeleton unearthed at an historic mansion on the edge of Lincoln Prairie raises questions about the past, and the investigation becomes more urgent with the subsequent murders of an archeology student and a workman at the same site.

*A Cold and Silent Dying*, St. Martin's Press, 2004: MacAlister must overcome the objections of her callous new boss, Lieutenant Gail Nicholson, to prove a homeless woman's death is murder rather than a result of winter conditions.

*A Dark and Deadly Deception*, St. Martin's Press, 2005: During a Hollywood film production's Lincoln Prairie shoot, a movie star's body is found along the Des Plaines River, and soon MacAlister connects the death to the recent discovery of a skeleton in an historical building.

*Suddenly a Stranger*, St. Martin's Press, 2007: MacAlister's nemesis, the corrupt Lieutenant Gail Nicholson, is murdered, and quickly MacAlister becomes the chief suspect. Barred from officially working the case, MacAlister must privately clear her name.

## **Edited Anthologies**

*Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*, Berkley Hardcover, 2004.

## **Stories**

"Nightfire," featured in the anthology *Women on the Case*, 1996.

"Go Quietly Into the Day," featured in the anthology *The Night Awakens*, 1998.

## **Awards & Recognitions**

The Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award: Established in 2014 through a bequest from Bland's estate and administered annually by Sisters in Crime. It provides a \$2,000 grant to help an emerging author of color complete their debut crime fiction work.

# STANLEY ELKIN

(May 11, 1930 - May 31, 1995)

by Barry Pearce

Stanley Elkin was a stylist of the highest rank, dazzling readers with highwire prose that kept them on the edge of their seats, white-knuckling books whose turns of phrase inspired thrills, chills, and deep unease. “Darkly comic” might be the most common label applied to his work and though he was the enemy of cliché, that description also goes to the core of his stories and novels.



The author of nine novels and three story collections, as well as numerous novellas, essays, and plays, Elkin was a maximalist in the vein of Faulkner, an early hero and the subject of his PhD dissertation at the University of Illinois. Like Faulkner, he pushed the boundaries of what language could do and focused on the “the egocentric will pitted against something stronger than itself,” as Elkin wrote of his Southern forbear, later admitting the description applied as much or more to his own writing.

Elkin grew up in Chicago’s South Shore neighborhood, attended the University of Illinois, and remained a Midwesterner all his life, teaching nearby, at Washington University, in St. Louis. Chicago clearly affected his work, from his first published story, “A Sound of Distant Thunder” (based on a visit to the Maxwell Street Market) to the edgy urban scenes that arise in later work, though his grim city landscapes are often anonymous.

He was diagnosed in 1972 with multiple sclerosis. The slow progression of the disease eventually put him in a wheelchair and forced him to trade his pen for a computer. He wrote and spoke eloquently about disability, which heightened his reflection on suffering – a strain already present throughout his work. His novel *The Magic Kingdom*, rereleased by Dalkey Archive Press in 1985, imagines a group of terminally ill children taken to Disneyland, replacing the sentimentality such stories are usually wrapped in with humor and vivid, honest description.

As Elkin's style developed, a comic strain uniquely his delivered unflinching explorations of corners of humanity dark enough that even Faulkner might have cringed. His characters include bill collectors, conmen, shopkeepers, orphans, professional wrestlers, and pandering DJs. Through their lives, marked by loneliness and alienation, he returned again and again to critiques of American pop culture and our capitalist system.

In Elkin's first novel, *Boswell: A Modern Comedy* (1964), Samuel Johnson's famous biographer is transposed to a shabby American landscape, reimagined as a pro wrestler and con who cheats death by hunting celebrities in an edgy picaresque romp. *The Living End*, Elkin's seventh novel, traces the lives and afterlives of victims in a liquor store holdup and includes Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and ultimately, God, as characters ("an expose of heaven, hell, and Minneapolis-St. Paul," as John Irving wrote).

Elkin's 1971 novel *The Dick Gibson Show*, also rereleased by Dalkey Archive, in 1998, is screamingly funny as well as deeply disturbing, often within the same paragraph. Critic Dwight Garner nicely summed up this dichotomy in a 2017 *New York Times* column, part of a series praising under-sung books of the previous 75 years.

"Stanley Elkin's third novel, *The Dick Gibson Show* (1971), is not improving to read. Its heart is not in the right place. It squeezes the blackheads behind the ears of your imagination; it's a Diane Arbus walk on the unreconciled side. It's among the most powerful and funny American novels I know."



Elkin earned critical praise – he won two National Book Critics Circle Awards and was a finalist for PEN Faulkner and the National Book Award – but as Garner points out, even among the literati, the disquieting nature of his work kept him from the level of recognition he deserved. Novelist and critic William Gass, Elkin’s colleague at Washington University, where Elkin taught for 35 years, said of his fellow writer in a 1994 interview, “He’s a very disturbing writer, but people by and large don’t want to be disturbed.”

Elkin was the bard of America’s rootless, disconnected, and disillusioned, but not everyone wants to read about the country’s crawlspaces and the mean dust bunnies gathering there. “Thus, Mr. Elkin has Boswell tell us far more than we really want to know about life in the world’s third-rate hotels...” reviewer Charles Poore wrote of *Boswell: A Modern Comedy*, perhaps revealing more about his own appetites than about the book.

Poore and other critics also assailed Elkin’s novels for their lack of plot. There is a sense in his work that Elkin finds this element of fiction so thoroughly mined and so often contrived, he either wants it effaced or ramped-up to highlight the ridiculous. He’s much more concerned with the dark recesses of our psyches and culture, conveyed through riffs that demonstrate the virtuosity of the best bebop solos. He had to fight for that aesthetic, even with admiring editors.

“My editor at Random House, Joe Fox, used to tell me, ‘Stanley, less is more,’” Elkin said in a 1976 *Paris Review* interview. “He wanted to strike—oh, he had a marvelous eye for the ‘good’ stuff—and that’s what he wanted to strike. I had to fight him tooth and nail in the better restaurants to maintain excess because I don’t believe that less is more. I believe that *more* is more. I believe that less is less, fat fat, thin thin, and enough is enough.”

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**Barry Pearce** is the author of *The Plan of Chicago: A City in Stories* (Cornerstone Press, 2025). a linked collection shortlisted for the 2026 William Saroyan International Prize for Writing and a finalist for the Foreword INDIES Book of the Year Award and a 2026 National Indies Excellence Award. Barry has won the Nelson Algren Award Grand Prize, a Chicago DCASE Independent Artists Program grant, an Illinois Arts Council Award, The Mercedes Delos Jacobs Book Prize, and the Keith Wilson / Joe Somoza Poetry Prize, and was recently awarded a Roosevelt University honorary degree for his service to literature.

# STANLEY ELKIN BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Novels

*Boswell: A Modern Comedy*. Random House, 1964: Powerful professional wrestler James Boswell recruits exceptional people into a club in this story satirizing celebrity and ambition.

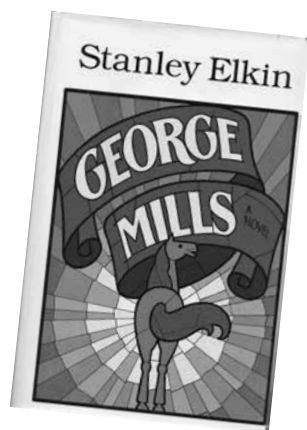
*A Bad Man*, Random House, 1967: Department store owner Leo Feldman goes to prison for pedaling whatever his customers need, including lots of illegal goods, and finds his incarceration even more surreal than his business.

*The Dick Gibson Show*, Random House, 1971: In a series of episodic broadcasts, the title character travels across small-town America to pursue his dream of being a radio disc jockey.

*The Franchiser*, Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1976: Ben Flesh uses his unique entrepreneurial gift to collect a variety of franchises, including Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants, with a desire to homogenize the American landscape.

*George Mills*, E. P. Dutton, 1982: Forty generations of men named George Mills live, due to a thousand-year-old curse, as servile underlings to important people.

*The Magic Kingdom*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985, originally published as *Stanley Elkin's The Magic Kingdom*, Dutton Obelisk, 1983: Grieving British father Eddy Bale orchestrates a trip to Disney World for seven terminally ill children, but the last hurrah dream trip meets with a series of bizarre disasters.



*The Rabbi of Lud*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987: Rabbi Jerry Goldkorn officiates funerals for strangers in a New Jersey town made up almost entirely of cemeteries.

*The MacGuffin*, Simon and Schuster, 1991: Conspiracy theorist Bobbo Druff goes to elaborate means to validate his ideas and his life.

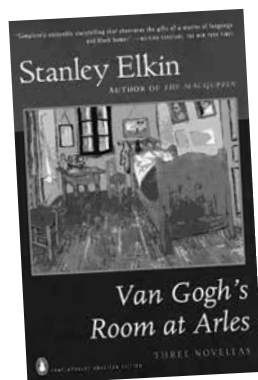
*Mrs. Ted Bliss*, Hyperion, 1995: Miami Beach retiree Dorothy Bliss's sedate life unwittingly becomes entangled with a series of criminal underworld-type figures.

## Novellas

*Searches and Seizures*, Random House, 1973: Includes *The Bailbondsmen*, centered around a Cincinnati bail bondsman; *The Making of Ashenden*, a satire about a rich, refined man and his encounter with a brown bear; and *The Condominium*, in which a grieving man goes mad navigating the tenant community in his inherited luxury condominium.

*The Living End*, E. P. Dutton, 1979: This series of comic novellas satirizes conventional Judeo-Christian notions of heaven, hell, and the afterlife.

*Van Gogh's Chamber in Arles*: Three Novellas, Hyperion, 1993: A mediocre associate professor at an obscure college struggles with imposter syndrome while staying at a replica of the Yellow House bedroom during a scholarly retreat in Arles.



## Stories

*Criers and Kibitzers, Kibitzers and Criers*, Random House, 1966.

*Stanley Elkin's Greatest Hits*. Introduction by Robert Coover, E. P. Dutton, 1980.

*Early Elkin*, Bamberger Books, 1985.

## Essays

*Pieces of Soap: Essays by Stanley Elkin*, Simon and Schuster, 1992.

## Plays & Screenplays

*The Six-Year-Old Man: A Screenplay*, *Esquire* 70, December 1968, and Bamberger Books, 1987.

*The Coffee Room*. Contre Coup Press, 1987.

*The Saturday Visit*, *Colorado Review* 20 (Fall 1993).

## Books About Elkin

*Reading Stanley Elkin*, Peter J. Bailey, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985.

*The Fiction of Stanley Elkin*, Doris Barga, Lang, 1980.

*Stanley Elkin*, David C. Dougherty, G. K. Hall, 1991.

## Awards & Recognition

Paris Review Humor Prize (1964): Awarded for “The Great Sandusky,” published in Issue 38 of the magazine.

Guggenheim Fellowship (1966): Awarded to support his ongoing Creative Arts (Fiction) work.

Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship (1968-69): Received in support of his ongoing literary projects.

National Book Award Finalist (1972): Nominated in Fiction for *The Dick Gibson Show*.

National Endowment for the Arts Grant (1972): Awarded a \$5,000 discovery/creation grant.

National Book Award Finalist (1974): Nominated in Fiction for *Searches and Seizures*.

National Book Critics Circle Award (Fiction, 1982): Won for *George Mills*.

American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award (1982): Inducted as a formal member.

National Book Award Finalist (1991): Nominated in Fiction for his novel *The MacGuffin*.

PEN/Faulkner Award Finalist (1994): Nominated for *Van Gogh's Room at Arles*.

National Book Critics Circle Award (Fiction, 1995): Won posthumously for his final novel, *Mrs. Ted Bliss*.

Longview Foundation Award (1962): Granted for “In the Alley,” which was originally published in *Accent*.

St. Louis Walk of Fame (1998): Honored with a permanent star on Delmar Boulevard to celebrate his legacy as a long-time Washington University professor and resident.

*This is going to sound dopey, but I sometimes get emotional at how good I occasionally am. And I'm not just talking about the fireworks—I'm talking about getting Sam from one part of the room to the other part of the room.*

*For me, language is still where it's at.*

– Stanley Elkin

# RONALD L. FAIR

## (OCTOBER 27, 1932 - FEBRUARY 2018)

by Robert Loerzel

"I can't breathe" became a slogan for the Black Lives Matter movement, as protesters repeated the final words of Eric Garner, an African American killed in 2014 after being put in a chokehold by a New York City police officer. Half a century earlier, Chicago author Ronald L. Fair toiled over the manuscript of an anguished, autobiographical novel about the plight of Black Americans. He called it *We Can't Breathe*.

Fair, an African American writer born and raised in Chicago, is best known for his 1966 novel *Hog Butcher*, which sadly remains relevant in the 21st century. It tells the story of a Black youth killed by Chicago police when he's mistaken for a burglary suspect. *Booklist* called it "a moving indictment of the hypocrisy and tragedy of segregation in a land professing a religious and democratic way of life ... an effectively compact, vivid, troubling book."

"Mr. Fair presented a new style of writing in *Hog Butcher*," novelist and lecturer Cecil Brown wrote in an introduction to Northwestern University Press's 2014 edition of *Hog Butcher*. "The story is told not in a traditional narrative mode, but in an impressionistic style that relies heavily on interior monologue. ... Along with Richard Wright's first novel, *Land Today!* (published posthumously in 1963), *Hog Butcher* can be seen as a milestone in the use of interior monologue to portray the consciousness of African American characters. ... Offering readers access to the minds of African American characters was an act of liberation."

Fair was born on October 27, 1932, in Chicago. His parents, Herbert Fair and Beulah Hunt, had been farmworkers in Mississippi. He grew up near 65th



Street and Langley Avenue in the Woodlawn neighborhood, at a time when the Black Belt was confined to the area west of Cottage Grove Avenue. "We never thought Negroes would live east of Cottage," Fair recalled in a 1966 interview with the *Chicago Daily News's* *Panorama* magazine. "It was a tough neighborhood. When we weren't fighting each other, we'd cross Cottage and fight the white boys."

Fair said he always knew, even when he was a young child, that life would be different for him because of his race. "I think it's a feeling that a Negro child is born with. You always know it," he said.

When Fair attended Calumet High School, "it wasn't the white kids who were so bad," he recalled. "You could fight them and it was over with. It was the teachers. I could always write a good sentence, and I'd get a paper back with three corrections and get an 85. The red-haired white girl next to me got 15 errors, and her score was 90. I always protested, and the teacher would tell me, 'Don't be so pushy ... you're lucky to be where you are.' That's why I quit school at 16, incidents like that."

Fair found work as a court reporter. In the 1960s, he lived with his wife, Lucy Margaret, and their sons, Rodney and Glen, in Lake Meadows, a modern middle-class apartment complex in Bronzeville. *Panorama* magazine reported that they lived in a "modest apartment ... among their books and paintings, their record collection and stereo equipment and Fair's manuscripts."

In 1963, Fair sent a letter to the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Daily News*, and the *Chicago Sun-Times*, decrying the way they were covering the Civil Rights Movement—or, as he called it, America's "racial revolution." Fair declared: "I am amazed that you would want the Negro not to demonstrate." He insisted that Black Americans needed to protest. "The Negro is fighting for his share of this great country that he helped make. The Negro is at last out of patience and has decided to foreclose on the nation." Fair's letter concluded: "It is my hope that some day you gentlemen will come out of your world of hate and fear and ignorance and step in line with the many true Americans who live in a world of brotherhood and understanding." Those newspapers did not apparently publish his letter, but the *Chicago Defender* did.

Fair's first published novel, *Many Thousand Gone: An American Fable*, was released by Harcourt, Brace & World in 1965. The 114-page story imagines an isolated corner of rural Mississippi where slavery persisted in the 20th century,

where any Black inhabitants trying to escape were hunted and killed—until one young boy is smuggled out and makes his way north, eventually becoming a writer in Chicago. “It is a story of brutality and horror and love and shrewdness, shaped in curves of mercy, pointed by a scratchy humor, rich with folk wisdom, shining with a stubborn will to live,” Lillian Smith wrote in her review for the *Chicago Tribune*.

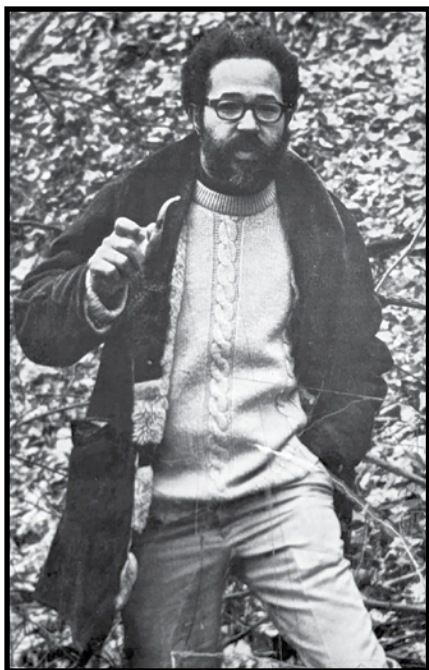
Next came *Hog Butcher*, released by Harcourt in 1966. The book was “A Triumph,” according to a *Chicago Daily News* headline. “Every character is drawn with aching fidelity,” the newspaper’s critic, Dayton Rommel, observed. “One of Mr. Fair’s greatest assets is his ability to invest his white characters with truth. . . . he has the honesty and courage to see his characters as they probably are, betrayed by their own good intentions, misunderstood.”

Fair’s real-life experience transcribing testimony at Cook County coroner’s inquests informed the climactic scene of *Hog Butcher*. In the months after the novel was published, Fair continued working as a court reporter, taking down the official transcripts of the inquest into the killing of U.S. Senator Charles Percy’s daughter, Valerie Percy. The coroner, Andrew Toman, was angered when Fair called the inquest a circus and a cruel ordeal. According to Fair, Toman called up Fair’s employer, Holleb Reporting Service, and tried to get Fair banned from the county morgue. The coroner denied doing this. “I like Ronnie Fair,” Toman told the *Daily News*.

In *Panorama*’s 1966 article, Fair said America’s racial injustices had forced him to become a writer. “I don’t want to fight this damned war every day of my life,” he said. “But I have to, we have to, or it will never end. And so, I have to keep writing, out of my guts, and it’s hell, it tears you to pieces while you’re doing it and it leaves you, afterward, with a drained, sapped, sour letdown feeling. But the Negro writer can’t just aim for what other writers try to achieve, a work of art. He must serve as the Negro’s voice.”

In the same article, Fair described Chicago as “the worst segregated city in the United States.” He continued: “It’s been perpetuated by the power structure. They give us these vertical dungeons on State Street, the public housing there, and Mayor [Richard J.] Daley may feel that he’s doing something for the Negro. All he’s done is make the ghetto perpendicular.”

Fair took direct aim at Daley in a play, *The Emperor’s Parade or Our Boy Dick (A Farce)*, which was performed by the Chicago City Players in 1968. *Daily News*



critic Richard Christiansen said Fair “laid on his satire with a trowel and pounded home his points with a sledgehammer.” But Christiansen also called it “the only strong, angry political comment now being performed in Chicago.” In comparison, he said, Second City’s political sketches were “merely playful.”

In 1970, Harper & Row published Fair’s *World of Nothing: Two Novellas*, which comprised the novellas “Jerome” and “World of Nothing.” In a *New York Times* review, Shane Stevens wrote: “Some writers can ... take the horror of the everyday and temper it with passion and pain. Ronald Fair is one of these. Where most contemporary black writing is preoccupied with

*blackness*, Fair’s work speaks to us from the depths of an involvement we all share. Yes, the scream is there—but the laughter of life is first. ... In this day of self-advertisements and racial nonbooks, truly fine writing seems almost a revolutionary act. In this sense, ‘World of Nothing’ is a revolution in itself.”

Fair’s next novel—the final one published during his lifetime—was *We Can’t Breathe*, released in 1972 by HarperCollins. But it was actually the first novel he’d ever written. He’d started working on it after he’d failed to find a job as a court reporter in New England and moved, along with his wife, into his parents’ home in Chicago. “I went down in the basement and rolled a sheet of paper in my typewriter and began my first novel, with the sentence, ‘I don’t remember a goddamned thing about my childhood,’” Fair told *Panorama*.

By 1966, Fair had rewritten the novel twice, and he didn’t want to try again. “That’s the most autobiographical of my books, and it tears me up to work on it,” he said. When *We Can’t Breathe* was finally published in 1972, it received less attention than his earlier books, receiving no review in *The New York Times*. In the *Sun-Times*, critic Shane Stevens gave it a mixed review, calling it too melodramatic.

“Fair describes his book as ‘the work of my lifetime, the book I’ve been trying to write for ten years,’” Stevens wrote. “I think not. ‘We Can’t Breathe’ is an interesting book by a writer of the highest talent. It is a book he had to write. We novelists have a compulsion to get at the mystery of own lives, to set things straight. We never do, of course. It is always simply a matter of degree of the failure for each of us. The work of one’s lifetime always lies ahead.”

But according to Cecil Brown, who talked with Fair in his later years, Fair grew discouraged that so few people were reading his books.

*Hog Butcher* was adapted into the 1975 movie *Cornbread, Earl and Me*, starring Laurence Fishburne, who was just 14 years old at the time. The movie was not a hit, and it received mixed reviews. “Part of what made [Fair] lose his faith was the movie project that came out of *Hog Butcher*,” Brown wrote. “When the producer read his screenplay, he disliked it so much that he had a heart attack. Ron regaled me with that on the Skype call. Then, he wrote another draft, and the dude had a second heart attack! Then, the producer sold the project to somebody else. After the disaster with the screenplay, Ron told me on Skype, he decided to give up on America. He turned his talent to sculpture.”

Fair moved to Finland in 1977. He died there in 2018—a fact that went unnoticed and unreported. It doesn’t appear that any American newspapers published an obituary of Fair. The news of his death finally surfaced in a 2020 blog post by Brown. When Brown had tried to email Fair, he’d received a message from Fair’s sister, informing him of the novelist’s death two years earlier.

“I cried,” Brown wrote. “I should have worked harder. I should have called Henry Louis Gates Jr. again and again. I should have demanded that the English department teach a class on his work! I should have tried harder. But then, Ron, you were right! Black people do not read. But White people do not read either.”

As Ronald L. Fair died, his literary work was attracting some new attention, starting with that 2014 edition of *Hog Butcher*, which served as a reminder that police killings of young Black men were not a new phenomenon. Another Fair book reemerged in 2023, when Library of America published a paperback of *Many Thousand Gone*. Writing for the *Tribune*, Christopher Borrelli observed that Fair “reads now like a precursor to the fables of Percival Everett.” Borrelli called the book a “forgotten classic.”

Chicago novelist Kathleen Rooney praised *Hog Butcher* in a 2022 blog post for the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame, writing: "It's a concise, complex, and multi-faceted depiction of structural inequality and white supremacy and the costs they extract from both their victims and their perpetrators. I would like to nominate Fair's novel to appear alongside *To Kill a Mockingbird* on syllabi everywhere because instead of exceptionalism and white saviors, Fair's story depicts—with a cast of lovable, hateable, believable characters from the young man who gets murdered to the cops who murder him—how power's highest aim is always to preserve itself and how collective action is the best hope anyone can have against systemic injustice. ...

"More than any other book that would be captivating to audiences of virtually any age or ability level, *Hog Butcher* plumbs the depths of America's racial wounds. With literary grace and zero sentimentality, Fair illustrates how little many of us have done to deal with these wounds honestly on a national level and with an eye toward restoration or healing."

Back in 1966, Fair had been adamant that the world needed to hear the voices and stories of Black Americans, as he told *Panorama* magazine: "One day, the whites will begin listening to us and they will recognize that we're just people, as they are. Then the trouble will end. That's what I'm working for."

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**Robert Loerzel** is a freelance journalist and photographer. He cowrote two episodes of the documentary series *Chicago Stories* for WTTW and is the author of three nonfiction books, including his latest, *The Uptown: Chicago's Endangered Movie Palace*, co-authored with James A. Pierce.

*He found himself wanting to be something other than a black man and finally succeeded in convincing himself that he had nothing in common with these people except color, which was purely an accident of birth...He would finish school and he would become a teacher, but not because he was dedicated, not any longer...He would take up teaching because he wanted to break all ties with that animalistic world, and becoming a professional man would make the break final. This would put him at the very pinnacle of his middle-class society, and he would never look back again.*

– Ronald L. Fair, from *Hog Butcher*

# RONALD L. FAIR BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Novels and Novellas



*Many Thousand Gone: An American Fable*, Harcourt, 1965: In the isolated community of Jacobs County, Mississippi, plantation slavery remained active from the Emancipation Proclamation through the 1960s. The community christens as the “Black Prince” a child born without mixed ancestry, and his great-grandmother and a family friend smuggle him out of Mississippi. He grows up in Chicago to become a renowned author and publishes a book exposing the atrocities happening in Jacobs County.

*Hog Butcher*, Harcourt, 1966: The police killing of a teenage South Side basket star results in a Chicago Police Department cover up, in which local hero Nathaniel “Cornbread” Maxwell is recast as a criminal.

*Cornbread, Earl and Me*, Bantam, 1975. The mass-market paperback edition used a new title in order to tie-in with the 1975 feature film adaptation.

*World of Nothing: Two Novellas*, Harper & Row, 1970: The title novella is told in a series of sketches from the first-person Chicago narrator. The title character of *Jerome* is a precocious bastard child of a Catholic priest who works to expose church abuses and manipulate local events.

*We Can't Breathe*, Harper & Row, 1972. This novel tracks narrator Ernie as he navigates a brutal post-WWII Chicago filled with poverty, violence, and systematic racism. Ernie struggles to make his way as a Black man in a white-dominated society.



## Poetry

*Excerpts*, Paul Breman, 1975.

*Rufus*, P. Schlack, 1977; later edition by Lotus Press, 1980.

## Play

*The Emperor's Parade or Our Boy Dick (A Farce)*, performed by the Chicago City Players, 1968.

## Major Literary Awards & Fellowships

Arts and Letters Award (1970): The National Institute of Arts and Letters (now the American Academy of Arts and Letters) recognized his early body of work following the publication of *World of Nothing*.

American Library Association (ALA) Best Book Award (1972): Awarded for *We Can't Breathe*.

National Education Association (NEA) Fellowship (1974): A major creative writing fellowship awarded to support his ongoing contributions to American literature and poetry.

Guggenheim Fellowship (1975): Awarded by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation in the field of Creative Arts (Fiction), which helped facilitate his transition to living and writing as an expatriate in Europe.

*They came to Chicago forty, fifty years ago like a school of black minnows frantically dashing away from danger...shouldered their way in and mingled with the foreigners and fought the aliens for jobs, and won the jobs as they won the negative respect of the established citizens. They squeezed their way as close to the existing social structure as they were allowed to go, and then they settled back and prospered and raised children and taught their children not to fight, not to resist, but to accept their limited progress as the end of the evolutionary pattern. They grew weak and mellowed from their success, and their children never developed hearts or shoulders or minds, and were gutless. Their children refused to involve themselves with trivial things like politics or social improvements and pulled in the fences that surrounded their tiny ranch houses. Their children tightened the requirements for entrance into their sick social clubs. At first they only wanted light skin and straight hair. Then they added a college degree to the light skin and straight hair. Then they added a minimum salary. Then they added the possession of a Buick. Then they added the Cadillac. They had arrived; they had reached the top of their limited world and they were scared shitless.*

– Ronald L. Fair, from *Hog Butcher*

# THE CLHOF INDUCTEES

Robert Sengstacke Abbott (2017)  
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Nelson Algren (2010)  
Margaret Anderson (2014)  
Sherwood Anderson (2012)  
Rane Arroyo (2015)  
Margaret Ayer Barnes (2016)  
L. Frank Baum (2013)  
Saul Bellow (2010)  
Timuel Black, Jr. (2025)  
Eleanor Taylor Bland (2026)  
Marita Bonner (2017)  
Ray Bradbury (2021)  
Gwendolyn Brooks (2010)  
Frank London Brown (2019)  
Oscar Brown, Jr. (2025)  
Margaret T. Burroughs (2015)  
Fanny Butcher (2016)  
Cyrus Colter (2011)  
Carlos A. Cortéz (2019)  
Frank Marshall Davis (2018)  
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Finley Peter Dunne (2022)  
Roger Ebert (2016)  
Stanley Elkin (2026)  
Ronald Fair, Jr. (2026)  
James T. Farrell (2012)  
Edna Ferber (2013)  
Eugene Field (2016)  
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David Hernandez (2014)  
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John H. Johnson (2013)  
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Upton Sinclair (2015)  
Studs Terkel (2010)  
Era Bell Thompson (2020)  
Eunice Tietjens (2023)  
E. Donald Two-Rivers (2023)  
Margaret Walker (2014)  
Theodore Ward (2015)  
Ida B. Wells (2011)  
Thornton Wilder (2013)  
Gene Wolfe (2019)  
Richard Wright (2010)

# SPECIAL THANKS

Honoring the dead intrinsically entails different challenges than our other CLHOF endeavors. Foremost is support. Our community clearly cares about our city's great literary heritage, including the exceptional work that predated and enabled our present authors. But there is less urgency to celebrate those historical triumphs.

My gratitude, then, begins with Sayed and Elise Darwish, dear friends and incredible human beings who've devoted much time and money to helping underserved communities, especially in Bay Area educational and arts communities—their support was instrumental in making tonight's program happen. Our other partners, too—they're called out on the back page, but it's worth noting their willingness to do their part in making this a true community celebration. And to everybody who made the trip to the library this afternoon—many of you in attendance today habitually show up, to CLHOF and a variety of other literary programs. I know it's no small thing to carve out the time and summon the energy and manage the logistics of participation.

Brilliant filmmaker Rana Segal, as always, videotaped the ceremony; our gifted web masters, Rich Kono and Hannah Jennings, made sure the CLHOF site beautifully reflects the new additions; world class authors Sandra Jackson-Opoku, Robert Loerzel, and Barry Pearce wrote thorough, insightful profiles of the inductees. Chicago Public Library stars Tamela Chambers, Jennifer Lizak, and Lawanda Miller worked diligently to make sure the live experience went smoothly. Breaker Press did their usual great work printing the program. Catering Out the Box provided the delicious food for our reception.

Those people named throughout this commemorative program—our fine speakers, Board and Associate Board members, our interns, our partners, the selection committee, and so forth and so on—were critical in getting us here today. I love the process of selecting a new class—there are so many deserving authors, and this provides opportunity to reengage or discover their best work. It's exciting. The selection committee I think shares this enthusiasm, but their participation as voters requires them to do a lot of studying and thinking, to supplement their considerable knowledge. This is just one example of the hidden depths our CLHOF community's involvement in a celebration like this.

Thanks, then, to everybody.

Founding Executive Director, Chicago Literary HOF

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald G. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "D" and "E".

Donald G. Evans

# KEEP US GROWING STRONG

...north along the lakefront, past Grant Park, the wind buffeted his face and the snow that covered the sand crunched beneath his feet. Despite the two sweaters he wore under a winter jacket, he was cold. The gray reflected his mood—gray sky, gray water, frothing and foaming as waves crashed against the boulder-strewn breakwater. from Eleanor Taylor Bland's *Windy City Dying*



## Learning

Please share with us your honest feedback about tonight's event so we can learn and grow.

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## Engaging

The following pages showcase upcoming events associated with the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame. We would LOVE to see you at any or all of these events. Details and registrations links can be found on the CLHOF events page.

Scan for the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's Events page



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*I have a couple of notions in my head. One is that you give back to family, community, to whoever. But you give back. When you receive, you give back. But the other notion, too, is that I can't write about these things and not be involved in them. There's something, to me, that's dishonest about that.*

– Eleanor Taylor Bland



## Printer's Row Lit Fest

**Saturday, September 12 and Sunday, September 13, All Day  
South Dearborn, from Ida B. Wells to Polk**

The 41st Annual Printer's Row Lit Fest is a carnival-like weekend of authors, books, and book lovers. The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame's tent will once again include partners After Hours, Chicago Poetry Center, Chicago Quarterly Review, Contratiempo, Guild Literary Complex, Rhino, and Stories Matter Foundation.

Come find our booth!!



Illustrations: Steve Musgrave

# SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN LIT FEST

# SAALF

*Inaugural keynote speaker*  
**Fatimah Asghar**



**SAVE THE DATE**

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Chicago's first annual South Asian American Lit Fest (SAALF) 2026 is a free, one-day immersive diaspora event celebrating literary traditions and cultural expression. The festival showcases the depth and diversity of South Asian writing and highlights its intersection with Chicago's vibrant literary landscape.

Award-winning poet, screenwriter, educator, and performer Fatimah Asghar will deliver the festival's inaugural keynote. Their work explores identity, memory, migration, family, and belonging, and has become a defining voice in contemporary South Asian American literature. Asghar is the author of the acclaimed poetry collection *If They Come for Us* and the novel *When We Were Sisters*, and the co-creator of the Emmy-nominated web series *Brown Girls*.

Additional speakers and the full festival schedule will be announced soon.

The Chicago Literary Hall of Fame will be one of South Asia Institute's partners for the literary festival.



**Scan to reserve  
your FREE ticket**

GREAT CHICAGO BOOKS CLUB

# Elizabeth Marino's ASYLUM

**Thursday, August 27**

**6:30 p.m.**

**18th Street Casa de Cultura**

2057 W. 18th Street  
Chicago, IL 60608

Elizabeth Marino is a Chicago poet, performer, and educator. Her book *Asylum* (Vagabond, 2020) is a hybrid poetry/memoir collection. The Pushcart Prize nominee's previous work includes chapbooks *Debris* (Puddin'head Press) and *Ceremonies* (dancing girl press), as well as more than 20 print anthology contributions. Chuck Karger wrote of *Asylum*, "...great images and lines throughout...poems blend personal experience, history, art and politics... 'Sonic Projections' is a wonderful, lyric ode to joy." The discussion will focus on *Asylum* but range into related territory.



**EVENT IS FREE**

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Author and theatre artist Caro Macon Fleischer's genre-bending novel, *A Play About a Curse*, is, at heart, a literary horror novel. The heroine, after all, propels us into action with a curse on her drama-school mentor. But the story is framed like a three-act play, complete with blocking and stage directions, all performed in the midst of exquisite prose writing and expert plot building.



A copy of the novel is included in the registration fee of \$45.

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