



Richard Wright: Salute to a Native Son

1908 – 2008

Creating a Celebration in Mississippi

The Negro in Mississippi Historical Society is partnering with numerous organizations in order to present the monumental event “Richard Wright: Salute to a Native Son” in celebration of Richard Wright’s 100th birthday. To date, the Celebration’s partners include, Smith Robertson Museum, Jackson Public Schools, Jackson/Hinds Library System, The City of Jackson, Downtown Jackson Partners, The Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson State University, Smith Robertson Association, Women for Progress, Tougaloo College, Mississippi Humanities Council and Mary Church Terrell Literary Club. Together, these entities are The Richard Wright Centennial Celebration Committee.

Richard Wright was born in 1908, not far from the plantation where his grandparents were enslaved. The son of a schoolteacher and a sharecropper, he often had to work instead of going to school. His mother’s health problems meant he often lived with relatives and even in an orphanage once. He called much of Mississippi home, as he went from relative to relative, but Jackson held a special place for him because he attended school here. It was at Smith Robertson where Wright felt he really began to bloom.

Despite having to work most of his childhood, Wright was determined to get an education. It took him until he was 17 to attend enough part-time school to graduate from 9th grade. He was valedictorian, and that same year he published his first short story. He moved first to Chicago and later New York and started writing. By 1938, he was recognized as a new and talented voice in American literature, and he would go on to win many prizes and fellowships, as well as pen several bestselling books. Wright died of a heart attack in Paris in 1960. His books remain a universal call for struggle against oppression and examples of a great American voice. His three great masterpieces are *Native Son*, *Black Boy* and *Uncle Tom’s Children*.

Wright is a true son of Mississippi, giving voice to the noblest abilities of people to rise up despite their birth or disadvantages. People around the world read and study Wright’s books. Mississippi proudly points to the fact that our state has produced many of the world’s great writers, including the internationally famous Richard Wright. We commemorate our native son and his legacy with a series of events to honor the magnificence of Wright’s achievement in becoming one of the world’s most renowned authors. As we celebrate his works, we remind ourselves of what we can all achieve.

Calendar of Events

Tuesday, Sept. 2, 2008

Story Hour: “Richard Wright and the Library Card” by William Miller
Location: Richard Wright Library
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Thurs., Sept. 4, 2008

“The Agony of Life: Black Boy Revisited”
Storyteller: Rosea Crisler
Sponsored by: MS Humanities Council
Locations: Jim Hill High School
Calloway High School
Time: 9:30 am and 2:00 pm

Story Hour: “Richard Wright and the Library Card” by William Miller
Guest Reader: Mr. Charles Horn
Location: Annie Thompson Jeffers Library
Bolton, MS
Time: 9:30 a.m.

Story Hour: “Richard Wright and the Library Card” by William Miller
Location: Richard Wright Library
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Story Hour: “Richard Wright and the Library Card” by William Miller
Guest Reader: Sally Walton
Location: Raymond Library
Time: 10:30 a.m.

Story Hour: “Richard Wright and the Library Card” by William Miller
Sponsored by: Evelyn Taylor Majure Library

Guest Reader: Mrs. Michael Wells
Location: Utica Elementary School
Utica, MS
Time: 1:00 p.m.

Welcoming Reception

Location: Smith Robertson Museum
Time: 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 5, 2008

“The Agony of Life: Black Boy Revisited”
Storyteller: Rosea Crisler
Sponsored by: MS Humanities Council
Locations: Lanier High School
Murrah High School
Times: 9:30 and 2:15

“Tour: Richard Wright’s Jackson”
Introduction by Colia Lafayette-Clark
Nat’l Coord. Wright Centennial
\$50/person (lunch included)

Story Hour – School Age Children
Guest Reader: William Miller
Location: Richard Wright Library
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Dramatization – *Richard Wright and the Library Card* (based on scene from Wright's autobiography *Black Boy*)
Location: Richard Wright Library
Time: 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2008

Story Hour: “*Richard Wright and the Library Card*” by William Miller
Guest Reader: Mrs. Jeanette Whisenton
Location: Medgar Evers Library
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, Sept. 6, 2008
Morning

Wright Centennial Celebration Luncheon & Book Signing: “*A Father’s Law*”

Afternoon

Book Discussion: “*Black Boy*”
Rose Wright, Pres., Savvy Book Club
Cyrus Webb, Conversations Book Club
Location: Richard Wright Library
Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Julia Wright, author
Location: Tougaloo College
Time: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Evening

Stage Production: MADDRAMA, A discussion with Morgan Freeman
For information: 601.979.2460

Story Hour: “*Richard Wright and the Library Card*” by William Miller
Guest Reader: Mrs. Rosia Cirsler
Location: Lois A. Flagg Library
Edwards, MS
Time: 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, Sept. 7, 2008

Humanities Forum: “*Richard Wright and Activism*”
JSU College of Liberal Arts
Presenters: Julia Wright, Journalist
Chester Trotman, PA, author
Jerry Ward, Literature
Jennifer K. Young, English Literature

Wed., Sept. 10, 2008

“*Richard Wright: A force for Right*”
History is Lunch Series
Location: MS Dept. of Archives and History
Time: 12:00 NOON – 1:00 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 8, 2008

Book signing: “*The Oppressed Children of Giants: A Living Legacy of Pain*”
Julia Wright, Author
Time: 4:00 p.m.

Story Hour: “*Richard Wright and the Library Card*” by William Miller
Guest Reader: Dr. James Meredith
Location: Willie Morris Library
Time: 3:00 p.m.

Film: “*Black Boy*”, a presentation for high school students
Location: Alamo Theatre
Time: 9:30 a.m.

(Wed., Sept. 10 con't)

Story Hour: "Richard Wright and the Library Card" by William Miller

Guest Reader: Mr. Charles Horhn

Location: Annie Thompson Jeffers Library
Time: 9:30 a.m.

NOTE: Julia Wright, the daughter of Richard Wright will be here to celebrate this momentous occasion with us. Ms. Wright currently resides in Paris, France. For more information about the Celebration, contact Dr. Wilma E. Mosley Clopton, 601.259.7598 or e-mail cloptongroup@yahoo.com.

Thurs., Sept. 11, 2008

Tougaloo College Tour

Film: "Native Son"

Book Signing

Location: Tougaloo College

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Story Hour: "Richard Wright and the Library Card" by Wm. Miller

Guest Reader: Mrs. Margaret Hutton

Location: Beverly J. Brown Library
Time: 3:30 p.m.

Story Hour: "Richard Wright and the Library Card" by Wm. Miller

Guest Reader: Mr. Charles Horhn

Location: A.E. Woods Memorial Library

Guest Reader: Mayor Rosemary Aultman

Location: Clinton, MS

Time: 4:00 p.m.

"Richard Wright and the Blues"

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Marvin Haire

Music: Central MS Blues Society
Robert Johnson Blues Foundation

Location: 1st Floor Rotunda
New Capitol Building @ High St.

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.