

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) was born to enslaved parents freed after the Civil War. He published three poetry collections, three novels, and one short story collection before tuberculosis cut his life short at 33.

Courtesy of the Ohio History Connection

Charles Waddell Chesnutt (1858-1932), the son of free Black émigrés from the South, grew up in Fayetteville, North Carolina, eventually settling in Cleveland, writing short stories and novels that explored racial issues in the post-Civil War South.

*Author Charles Waddell Chesnutt at age 40.
Chesnutt Bros. (Cleveland, Ohio)*

Cleveland Public Library Image Collection



Anna Julia Cooper (1858?-1964) was born into bondage.

At her death at 105, she had degrees from Oberlin and Columbia, and the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1925, at the age of sixty-seven, Cooper became the fourth African American woman to obtain a Doctorate of Philosophy.

She authored lectures, sociological pamphlets, a biography of the Grimkés, and essays including those collected in *A Voice from the South*.

*Portrait of Anna J. Cooper from her A Voice from the South, published 1892 by the Aldine Printing House, Xenia, Ohio
archive.org*



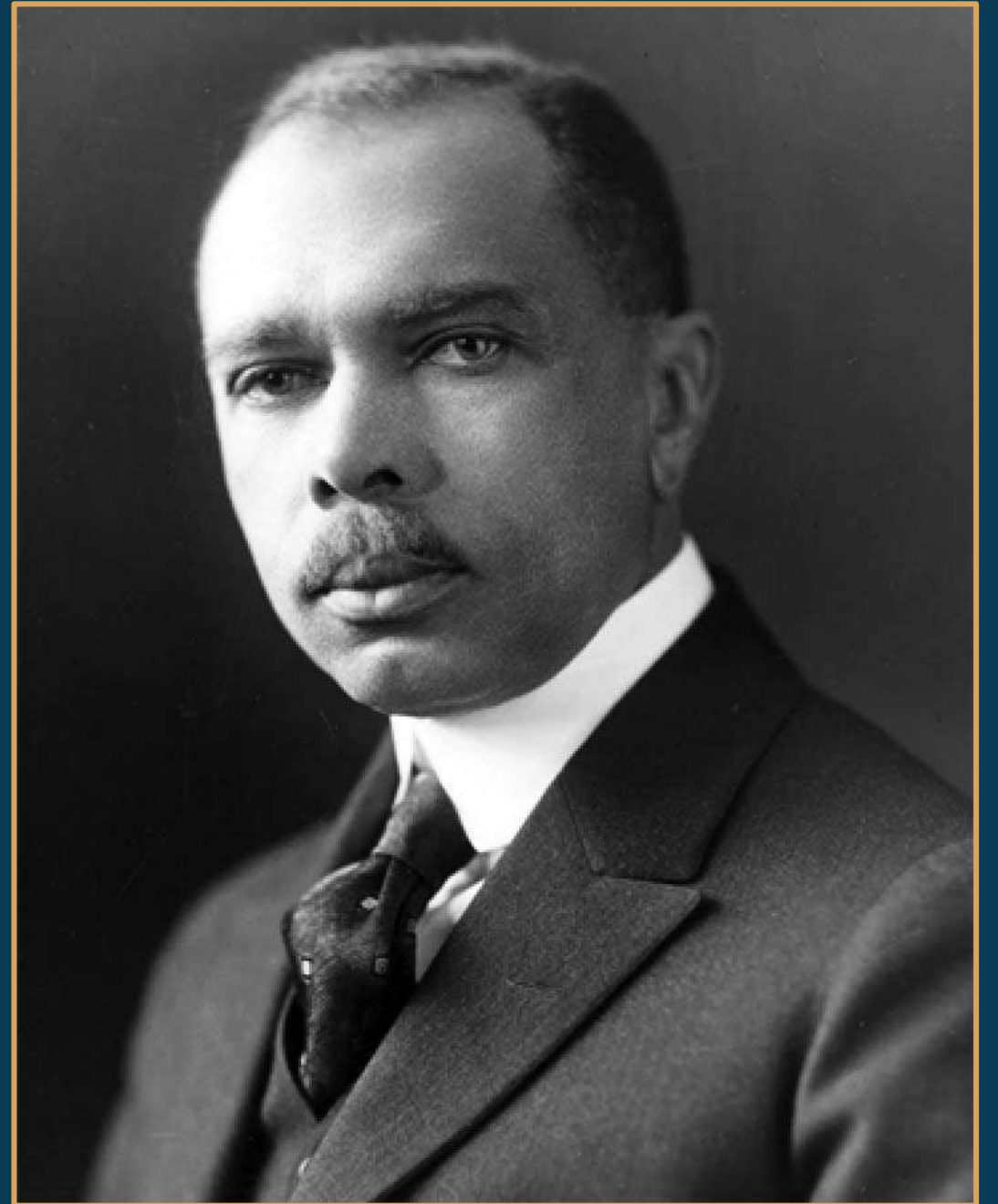


W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) has been called the founder of Black studies in American academic life. He founded the Niagara Movement in 1905 and the NAACP four years later, and edited its magazine, *The Crisis*.

photograph by Cornelius Marion Battey

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), born in Jacksonville, Florida, became a school principal and later a lawyer before moving to New York to write songs for Broadway musicals. His poem “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” set to music, became Black America’s “anthem” in its cry for liberation and affirmation.

blackpast.org





Georgia Douglas Johnson (1877-1966), an Atlanta native prominent in the Harlem Renaissance, wrote plays, a syndicated newspaper column, and four collections of poetry.

In 1910 she moved with her husband to Washington, D.C. The Johnson house, known as the S Street Salon, was an important meeting place for writers of the Harlem Renaissance in Washington.

New York Public Library Archives, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Claude McKay (1889-1948); At 20, Jamaican-born McKay published the award-winning *Songs of Jamaica* and used its cash prize to attend Tuskegee and Kansas State University.

Reading W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, he was called to political action, joining New York's Harlem Renaissance in its earliest days. In addition to his poetry, McKay was also known for his novel *Home to Harlem* (1928), which portrayed the unvarnished realities of Black life.

photograph by James L. Allen





Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) was an American folklorist, writer, and filmmaker who celebrated the African American culture of the rural South and was associated with the Harlem Renaissance. She wrote short stories, plays, essays, and novels, most famously *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937.

The Library of Congress



Langston Hughes (1902-1967), born in Joplin, Missouri, became a leader in the Harlem Renaissance, a prolific author, anthologist, librettist, songwriter, columnist, founder of theaters and jazz, and inventor of a literary art form called jazz poetry.

Langston Hughes, 1943; photo by Gordon Parks
Library of Congress LC-USW3-033841-C

Jean Toomer (1894-1967) was born into an elite Black family in Washington, D.C. By 1920, Toomer settled in New York, where he began writing poems and short stories. In 1923, the novel *Cane* established his importance in the Harlem Renaissance.

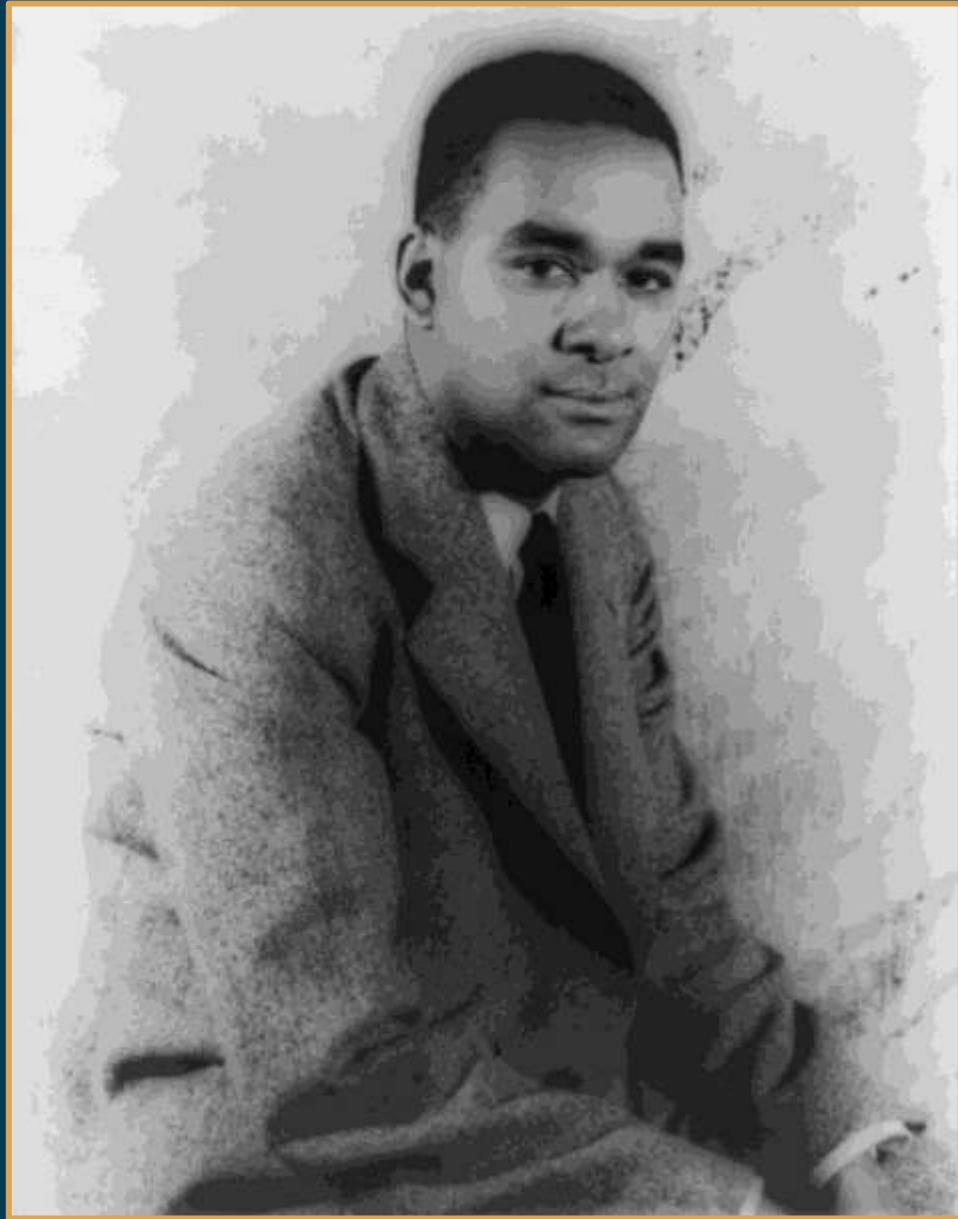
Jean Toomer c. 1934
by Marjorie Content, gelatin silver print
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution



Dorothy West (1907-1998) moved to New York in 1925 at 18, the youngest of the artists and writers in the Harlem Renaissance. West is best known for her novel *The Living Is Easy*, about the life of an upper-class black family; she also had a late bestseller with *The Wedding* in 1995.

*photograph by Judith Sedwick for the Black Women Oral History Project
Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America,
Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University.*





Richard Wright (1908-1960) was Mississippi-born, son of an illiterate sharecropper and a schoolteacher with a passion to become a writer. His *Native Son* (1940) became a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, and his autobiography, *Black Boy*, came out in 1945.

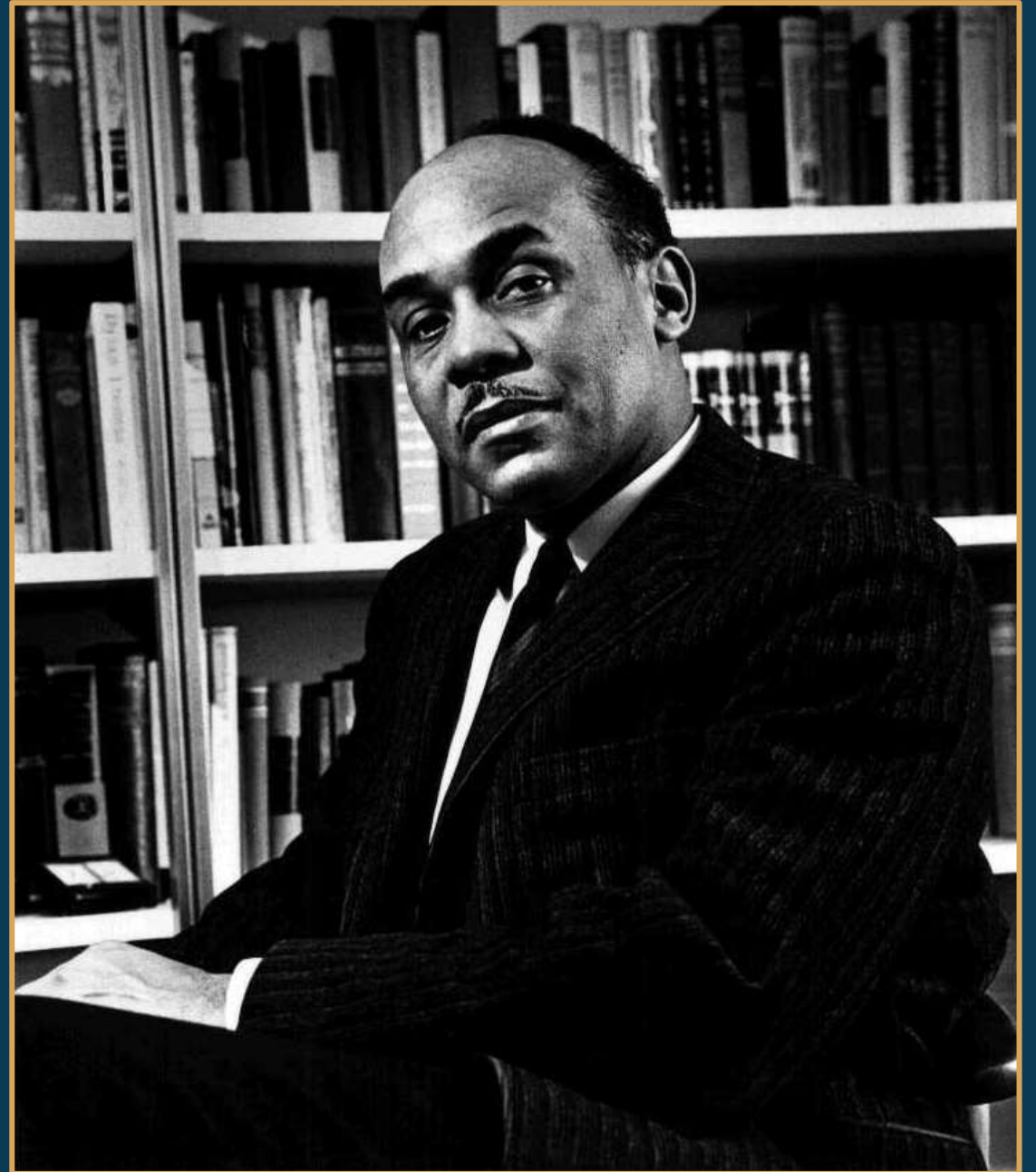
photograph by Carl Van Vechten
The Library of Congress



Ann Petry (1911-1997) was born in Old Saybrook, Connecticut, to a middle-class family. In 1938, she married and moved to New York, writing articles and short stories. Living for the first time among large numbers of poor Black people led Petry to write *The Street* (1946).

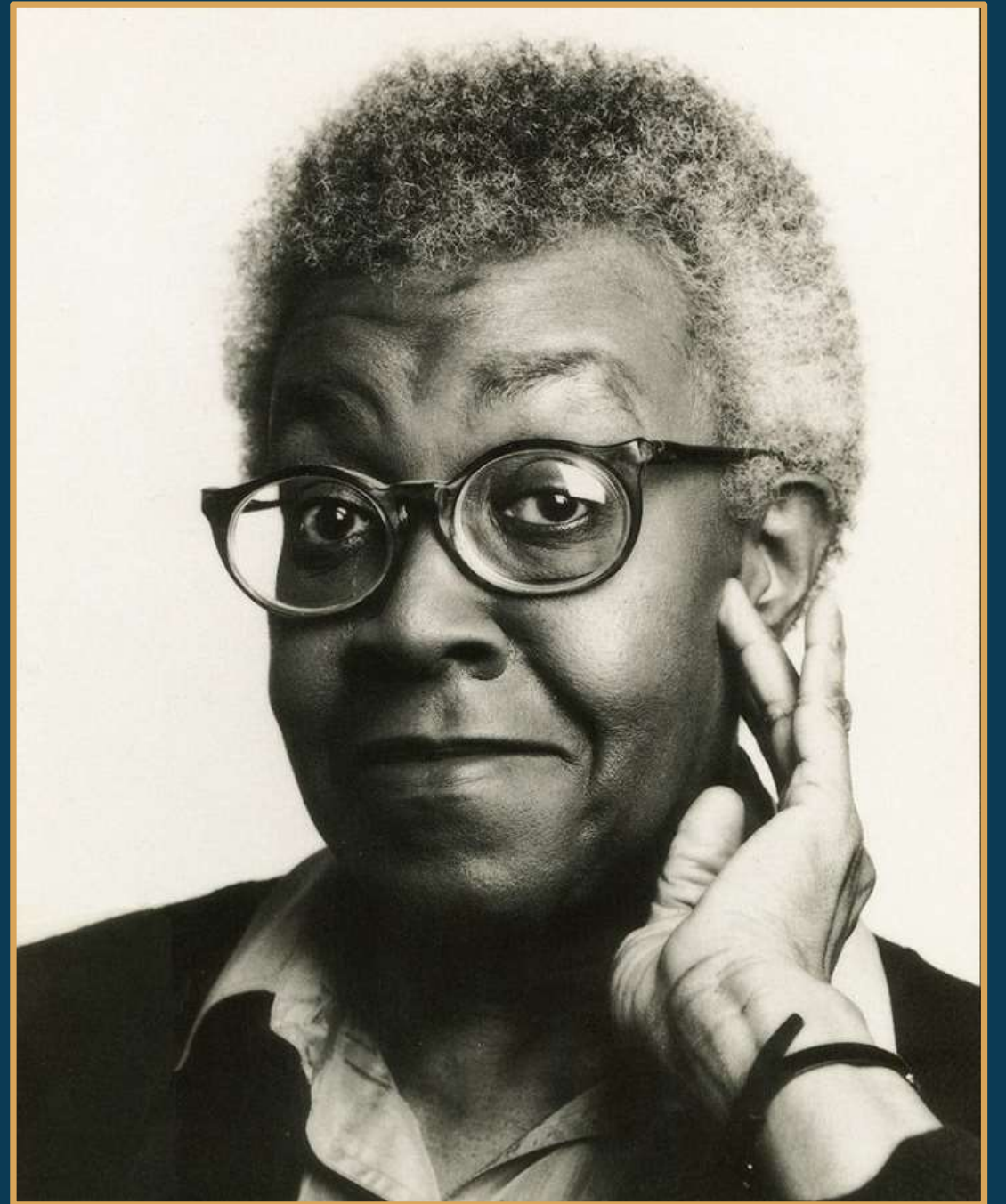
Ralph Waldo Ellison (1913-1994) was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and moved to New York's Harlem in 1936. In 1952 he published *Invisible Man*, winning the National Book Award.

*United States Information Agency staff photographer
The Library of Congress*



Gwendolyn Brooks' (1917-2000) family moved to Chicago during the Great Migration. By the age of 16, she had already written and published approximately 75 poems. In 1945 her poetry collection *Annie Allen* won the 1950 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.

Courtesy of University of Michigan Press



Paule Marshall (1929-2019) was born in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, where her 1959 debut novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, is set. She continued to publish, hold teaching posts around the country and, among many honors, was granted a MacArthur Fellowship in 1992.

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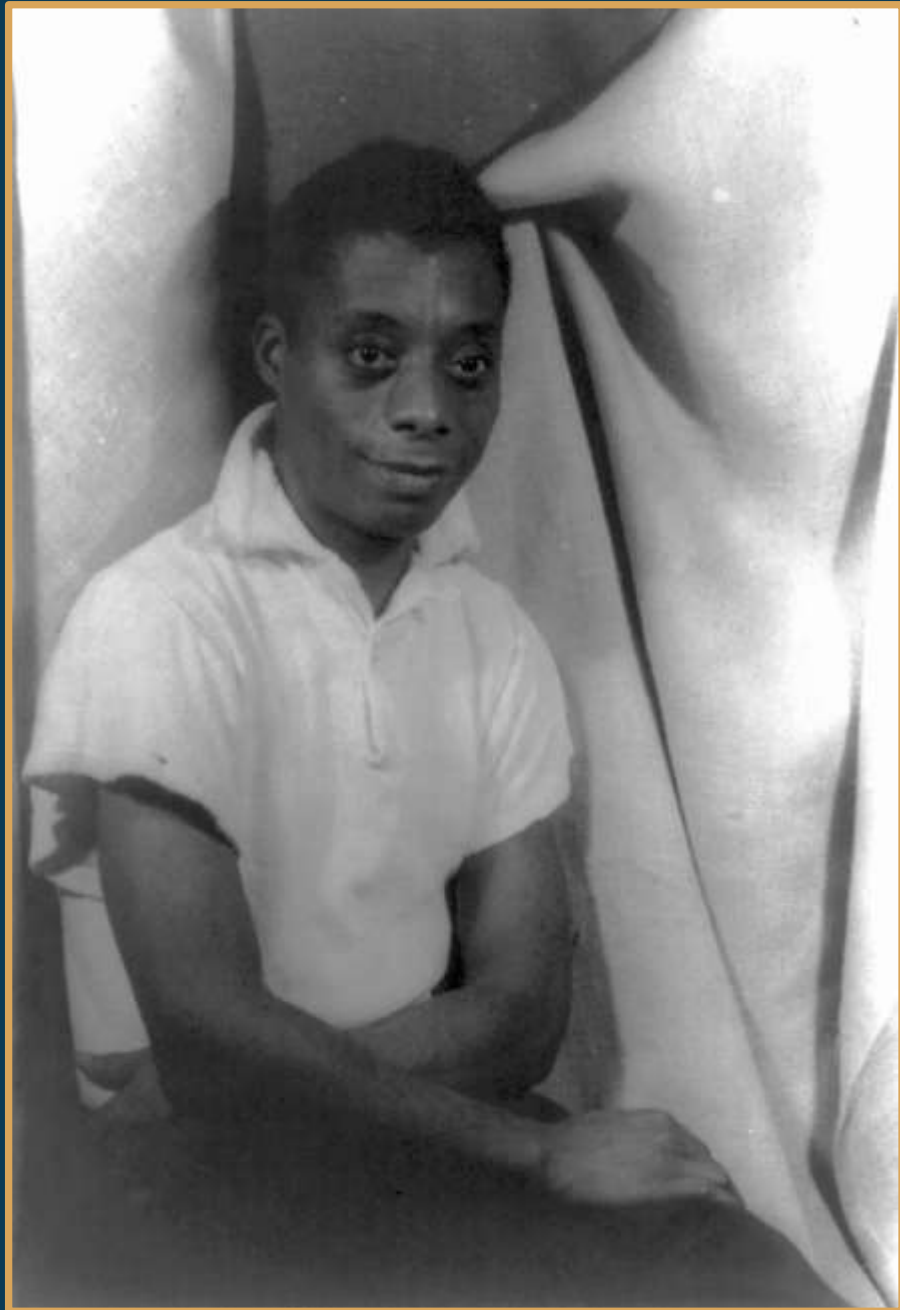




Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) was born in Chicago, the granddaughter of a freed slave. Her play *A Raisin in the Sun* was a great success at Broadway's Ethel Barrymore Theatre in 1959. She was the first Black playwright and youngest American to win a New York Critics' Circle Award.

Sound: Studs Terkel Radio Archive, courtesy Chicago History Museum and WFMT

Image: blackpast.org



James Baldwin (1924-1987), grandson of a slave, grew up in poverty in Harlem. At age 24, he moved to Paris, publishing novels *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *Giovanni's Room* (1956), and essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955).

photograph by Carl Van Vechten, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



LeRoi Jones (1934-2014) was born into Newark's "Black bourgeoisie." Following a stint in the Air Force, he moved to Greenwich Village, becoming a music critic and founding, with his wife, two magazines and Totem Press, which published Beat writers and his own first poetry collection.

By 1968, he had changed his name to Amiri Baraka.

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