



WORKBOOK

**@TUBOokeXPO PRESENTS THE
INTERNATIONAL WRITERS' WORKSHOP**

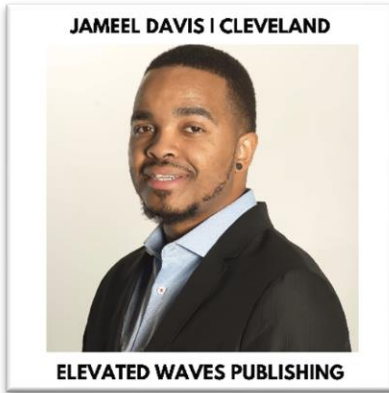
**"LITERARY CULTURAL BARRIERS
IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA"**

Presented by TUBookExpo | Edited by Kya Publishing



WORDS OF WISDOM

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OUR PRESENTERS



JAMEEL DAVIS, ELEVATED WAVES PUBLISHING

Setting a goal to publish a book and actively working to achieve that goal is the start to overcoming a barrier as a writer. While working on your writing goals, it is necessary to eliminate distractions, receive early and frequent relevant feedback, ask for help, and attend writing events such as the International Writers' Workshop to knock down some of those writing barriers. Events like this are a hub where you can find the resources you need to make your own personal writing goals

come true.

For many, the only writing training, writing methods, and writing styles we have are those obtained from educational institutions like grade school and higher education where we were required to learn how to write sentences, paragraphs, essays, book reports, and research papers on topics selected from our instructors in order to pass the class and/or course. Also, for many that is when our writing training, writing methods, and writing styles ceased. I believe one of the reasons why our writing training stops is due to those educational institutions' inability to make writing enjoyable for students. For many, it was a slow and boring process with no reward except for a passing grade if you passed.

Book writing is not a major you can take up in college/university, which makes it challenging for new writers to learn how to become an author. However, some schools do offer creative writing programs that make writing enjoyable for participants—these programs aren't popular, which means they receive very little marketing. In my opinion, it could be a waste of time to attend college for a degree in writing, when you can visit your local library, or search on Facebook and Eventbrite.com for creative writing groups and courses at a much more affordable cost.



Many people believe I majored in journalism, creative arts, or writing, and are shocked when I inform them that my background is in criminology and justice studies. I taught myself how to write, to become an author, as well as taught myself the business of books. Why? Because educational institutions did not offer the programs.

Like writing projects in school, to begin writing a book, you must first:

1. Form ideas
2. Create outlines
3. Create writing webs
4. Write your first draft
5. Get feedback
6. Correct your errors and make changes
7. Repeat steps 4-6 until you are satisfied with your manuscript

Once your manuscript is complete and you are satisfied, your next objective is to seek resources to assist you with turning your manuscript into a published book. That is where the TUBookExpo, its members, partners, guests, and events such as the International Writers' Workshop (IWW) come into play—to assist you with turning your writing dreams into reality! Here we help you tackle those barriers you may face, but how bad you want it is determined by the commitment, dedication, and effort you are willing to put in.



MUTENDEI WRITES, [MUTENDEI WRITES](#)

With this workshop session being based on literary cultural barriers in the diaspora, within this context, I believe the following outlined tips and guidelines will be of great value to overcoming literary cultural barriers.

1. Clearly identify your Diaspora or what Diaspora means to you.

- The African Diaspora is too widespread and diverse to be approached as a single homogenous entity.
- Once you have identified your diaspora framework or construct, seed that into the base of your writing.
- Different regions of groups of the diaspora have particular identifiers. Be wary of presenting them as stereotypes either knowingly or unknowingly. In the age of the internet sources of information are clicks away. For demonstrative purposes, not every Ethiopian or Jamaican is a Rastafarian.

1. Write what you know; don't write what you don't.

- In seeking to overcome literary cultural barriers in your work, be cognizant of who you are writing as. For demonstrative purposes, a Black North American/Canadian without direct or holistically developed cultural links to a specific region of the diaspora outside of North America cannot write about life in the Caribbean, in the same way Africans alien to the Caribbean or the US/Canada cannot honestly write about the culture or life experiences of persons from there.
- There is a lot below the surface of what one may see in passing or a limited time frame. The Sex Lives of African Women by Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah is one currently relevant, good modern example of this in literature. In particular regions of Africa (and by extension the Caribbean diaspora) open discussion on sex and the sexual liberation of women can be a slippery slope, especially with patriarchal dominated censorship.



2. Approach cultural literature of the specific region you come from—are seeking to connect with and explore—like you would approach food from different cultures.

- All appreciation of food starts with the recognition of food as an artwork. Cultural literary history should be afforded the same treatment. No one has a bias against food like salt fish, chapatis, plantain, mangoes, etc.
- Open objectivity can help lower suspicions, and give you access to holistic oral records and narratives. People become suspicious and withhold information if they feel you are going to misrepresent, draw wrong conclusions, or tell a story the wrong way.
- Food has multiple contributors, flavors, origins, and a history within it. So does literature. Do not rely on one source.
- Food is also created for survival or celebration. The same applies to literature in the diaspora. What are the reasons behind this? Understanding is the best road map to overcome barriers in literature and to ensure you get the right context.
- Food can tell you a lot about the migration of people, as can literature.

3. What are the social politics of the region in question, and how do they impact the literary culture as a barrier and source of direction?

- This differs according to each particular region. An example would be Critical Race Theory in America, and the struggle to reclaim and resurrect cultural histories before colonialism.
- Analyze which particular social political paradigms are valid considerations, and determine which can be discarded.

4. What is the right media to communicate in to circumvent technological redundancies and use as a source of information to obtain relevant information?

- Despite the majority of the Western World perhaps being unaware of the technological vibrancy of Diaspora nations and Africa, blogging and micro-blogging via social media is a thriving means of literary engagement, achieved through the mass proliferation/distribution of smartphones with internet access in Africa.

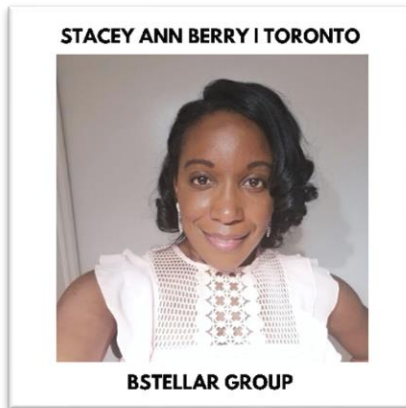


- Social media helps you tap into life-on-the-go as it is currently unfolding, as opposed to exploring books that may or may not be out of time and not in sync with current facts, and the actual history on the ground.

5. Always evaluate the differential weight of focus between history and modernity in respect to the specific diaspora your interest or work relates to.

- This guideline will provide you with the best foot forward to commence your literary engagement.
- This will also allow you to pre-determine whether or not you are rehashing previously covered ground or blazing new paths in cultural representation and literary knowledge.

It would be somewhat redundant to go to the cultural interior of Haiti and write about Touissant L'Overture or Jean-Jacques Dessaline. Writing about Alexandre Sabes Petion might prove more favourable. The same applies in Black America in respect to historical characters like Harriet Tubman or Malcolm X, yet opportunity still exists in developing stories for historical figures like Robert Smalls, Bass Reeves, or Queen Nanny. (To my knowledge, only one book has been written about Queen Nanny, *The Mother of us All - A History of Queen Nanny* by Karla Gottlieb)



STACEY ANN BERRY, [BSTELLAR GROUP INC.](#)

Marketing a book can feel overwhelming, time consuming, and expensive. There are barriers for accessing mainstream spaces like book retailers and conferences. Without the support of a major publisher, it is difficult to get access to book retailers or events that do not seem inclusive or welcoming to new or independent authors, especially authors from the African Diaspora. There are several strategies that you can use to market your book in an authentic and affordable way.

Here are 4 ways you can get started:

- Host a book launch
- Think outside the box
- Go on a book tour
- Share testimonials of your readers

Host a Book Launch

I released my first book at a launch in 2018, which was endorsed by several of my friends and supporters from my community. I used my skills in event planning to ensure that my book launch would be a memorable and meaningful experience for each person who attended. When hosting your book launch, it is important to have a clear purpose and message that goes beyond selling books. It helps to step outside yourself and focus on the story you want to share, people you want to honour, and how you want people to feel. My book launch was filled with inspiration, joy, music, poetry, laughter, dance, and beautiful décor.

Think Outside the Box

My first book signing was held at an optical store that had a community space. I hosted a two-day signing and sold my books at a discounted price. The event was marketed by using social media, email marketing, and by making personal phone calls. Personal phone calls



are still the best way to get people to attend your events. By being at an optical store, I changed perspectives about the type of spaces that can be used to host a book signing. I selected a location that was on a very busy street in my community so that I could be visible, accessible by transit, and also have the right atmosphere. You want to choose space that has warm colours, positive energy, good lights, and that feels welcoming.

Go on a Book Tour

My book tour consisted of being a vendor at a Caribbean festival, networking events, women empowerment events, conferences, and community business expos. Being visible in your community and building relationships with event planners in your community is a very grassroots way to raise awareness about your book. Many of these events were attended by several hundred people, and those who bought my book would share it with their followers on social media. A book tour is a great way to keep the momentum going about your book so that it is fresh in the minds and visible to current or potential readers. I am also a professional speaker, and would incorporate my book tour at places that I was speaking. I would usually use my book as a giveaway to someone in the audience, and this would naturally make others inquire about my book, which usually led to a purchase.

Share Testimonials of your Readers

A common way to share testimonials about your book is to include a book review or quote from your readers on social media. If you are not on social media, consider making a e-newsletter and include a post about a reader who provided a positive review about your book. Testimonials will let potential readers know that your book resonates with people, and that you are doing more than just selling books—you are providing hope and inspiration to others.

Marketing your book should be a strategy that is authentic to who you are, your style, and how you engage with your community. If you are lacking skills in public speaking, marketing, and event planning, take the time to develop those skills. It will give you the tools you need to market your book in grass roots, authentic, and cost-effective ways. It is essential to stay prepared—you never know when a huge opportunity to share your story will come knocking! There may be an opportunity for you to share your book on a TV, radio, or podcast show. Strive to market your book and share your story better than anyone else!



KAMILAH HAYWOOD, CHUUCH LIVE SHOW

Sometimes we may not realize that the creative gift is a force that comes from within. An idea, story, and/or a written poem comes to you for a reason. Everyone has their creative gifts and if you are a writer, you will realize that gift follows you and has a purpose for that story to be written.

This purpose is of divine guidance and is not something you can hold taste, smell, or touch. It is a gift that is within you and with constant watering and nourishment—just like “food for the soul”—you will notice the gift/purpose develop as your path begins to grow. “As above so below” and “cause and effect” ...we are just like the stars, 7.7 billion and counting. Each one of us with a purpose and path to shed light with experience for the future generations to come. Our stories leave history to connect the dots and leave a legacy for the future.

I realized as a writer (that was self taught through lived experience) that my path was a dark journey that eventually led to light. It was the gift of writing and the purpose of that gift that alchemized my journey while transforming me.

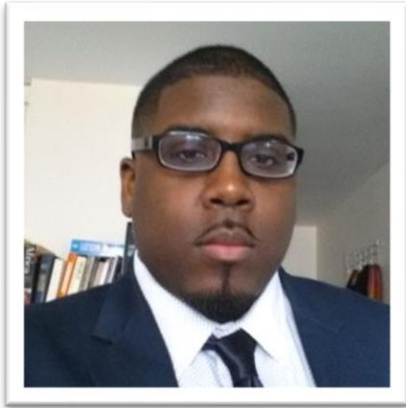
A few things that helped me along my journey:

- Consistency
- A “To Do” list/goal setting
- Never giving up or quitting
- Daily affirmations/gratitude
- Very loyal, solid team
- Write daily (even if journaling)
- Believe in yourself...be your biggest fan!

Thank you!



ADAM H.C. MYRIE, SPECIAL GUEST



1. Write what you love

When you are passionate about a subject, you can more easily immerse yourself in the project. You will have an easier time visualizing what you want the reader to see, and your writing will become a labour of love instead of just a labour. The enthusiasm you have for what you are writing will be apparent in your paragraphs and the readers will love you for it.

2. Don't rush it, but don't put it off forever either

Writer's block is a problem that will never go away, no matter how many years you have been writing. While deadlines are important to keep you on track, forcing yourself to write when the inspiration isn't coming will impact your work. Create a schedule and do your best to stick to it when you can. If you can't write in that time, use it to do exercises or experience things that inspire you to write.

3. Always do background research before you write

A writer that does not know the nuances of the things they write will be obvious, especially to the savvy reader. When you are planning your story, look up colours, experience smells, listen to interviews, and research the cause-and-effect relationships that will appear in your book. For example, if you are writing about a character with mental illness, spend the time researching what that mental illness is, and how it would impact that person's speech, mannerisms, and interpersonal relationships. Show those things rather than saying it is said illness. Have the character perform the actions, describe the feelings the character has, and show the reactions of the other characters. Done well, it will generate a genuine connection between the character and the readers.

4. Be organized

Before you write the first line of your story, know what you want to happen. Choose your themes, name, describe your main characters, and outline the major events that drive the plot. Organizing all of this will tell you what happens. The magic you experience as a writer is in telling the story of how it all happens and what your characters experience through the



process. Having a clear line of sight to how the story will go will make your process much simpler. While this can change, it is always good to have a solid foundation.

5. Writing is an art form

Before anything else, writing is an art form. The goal of the author is to paint images in the reader's mind and to evoke emotions in them through what they see on the page. Your sentences should flow like music. Create rhythm in your work. Use vivid imagery. Similie, metaphor, alliteration, and onomatopoeia are tools for you to make this happen. Use small details to illustrate larger concepts, and don't be afraid to try something different.



BRAINSTORMING

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Who is your target audience? Where do they live? What is their cultural background?

What culture within the Diaspora are you comfortable writing authentically from?

What cultural perspectives are you interested in learning more about, and how will you obtain this information?

What purpose will your book(s) serve?

What conversation would you like your book to contribute to? What direction will it drive the conversation in?

Will you be using any elements of dialect, vernacular, or native tongues from the Diaspora? How will you verify the usage?

Will your writing have a positive effect on any particular individual, process, or activity within the Diaspora?

Do you have contacts in other nations that can connect you to cultural communities there, as potential sources, contacts, or readers?



EXERCISES

WRITING ACTIVITIES

[5 Writing Exercises to Avoid Writer's Block](#)

[4 Writing Activities for Celebrating Black History Month](#)

Make a list of countries/locations within the African Diaspora that you would like to visit. Find a writer's group, bookstore, or library program within the country/cities, and use a contact there as your starting point to network/connect with other community members.

What is your favourite book that spoke to you on a cultural level? Find the Amazon or personal book sales page, and contribute a 100-word book review to let the author know how it affected you, culturally.

Write a conversation between two Black characters (strangers) from different parts of the Diaspora. How will their communication styles differ? What will the similarities be? What can they potentially learn from one another during their brief encounter?



RESOURCES

WEBSITES, ARTICLES, LISTS

[African Diaspora & African Literatures](#): Anthologies (Columbia University)

Amazon's [KDP University](#) provides its authors with a collection of webinars, videos, articles and guides to help us writers take our best book to market.

Article: [Literature by Africans in the diaspora can help create alternative narratives](#)

[Creative Writing for Dummies](#)

[Fear of Public Speaking? 5 Ways to Strengthen your Message and Speak with Confidence](#)

Follow the **#ReadingBlack** hashtag on social media, and see where it leads you! *"The mission of #readingblack is to encourage everyone to read quality books written by Black people and to purchase those books from independent booksellers. We strive to develop strategies that will make it easier for book buyers to support our mission."*

Have you visited the website of the African American Literature Book Club? There are a lot of great resources there for Black Bookstores, book fairs, and authors. Here's the link: <https://aalbc.com/>

Here's a [book review](#) of *"Joseph: A Rasta Reggae Fable"* by Barbara Blake Hannah that provides great insight into the Jamaican and Rastafarian cultures.

IngramSpark's [How to Self-Publish a Book](#): The Complete Guide to Publish Like A Pro

[Publisher's Marketplace](#)

[QueryLetter.com](#)

[Writing a Novel and Getting Published for Dummies](#)

[Writing Fiction for Dummies](#)