FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AWP Returns to the Heart of America for #AWP24!

Norfolk, VA—The Association of Writers & Writing Programs returned to Kansas City, Missouri for its annual AWP Conference & Bookfair (#AWP24), twenty-four years after it first landed in the Paris of the Plains. The Midwest came out strong for #AWP24 with 8,000 attendees. #AWP24 also hosted 550 exhibitors, representing 630 organizations. Four hundred thirty-one events were held on-site at the Kansas City Convention Center, and more than 160 off-site events were held throughout Kansas City.

Missouri state senator Greg Razer welcomed AWP to the area and encouraged attendees to explore Kansas City, calling it “a city on the rise.” Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Jericho Brown delivered a thoughtful keynote address on Thursday, February 8, 2024 and touched on the reasons why we write, saying, “We must champion the writing we love most, yes. And we must continue to fight for the right of every writer to write whatever it is they must.”

Registered attendees were able to watch the full keynote address, along with all featured events and selected prerecorded events, on the virtual platform for over one month postconference. All featured events will be on AWP’s YouTube channel later this year.

More notable moments and highlights at #AWP24 include the following:

Kansas City and AWP: AWP was proud to partner with the Kansas City Public Library for the kickoff event on Wednesday, February 7 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. CT. The event featured the announcement of the winners for AWP’s various literary awards, including the Intro Journals Project, the National Program Directors’ Prize, the Small Press Publisher Award, and the George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature. Following the presentation of awards was a discussion titled “Poetry as Reciprocity: Indigenous Nations Poets Celebrate Language Back” featuring Indigenous writers Kimberly Blaeser, Heid E. Erdrich, Jake Skeets, and Elise Paschen.
AWP focused its support for LGBTQIA+ and women’s communities by updating a #AWP24 Updates & Resources webpage, in addition to accepting and highlighting more events from these communities.

**AWP HBCU Fellowship Program’s second year:** The AWP HBCU Fellowship Program returned for a second year! The fellows met during a private luncheon and discussion on goals and creating community with #AWP24 HBCU Fellowship Program creative advisor, HBCU alum, and professor Rion Amilcar Scott on Thursday, February 8. Later that evening, inaugural creative advisor A. J. Verdelle officially passed the torch to Scott at the celebratory AWP HBCU Fellowship Program Reception. On Friday, February 9, Scott held a public lecture titled “Many Moseses, Many Promised Lands Unseen.” He said,

> I’ve been asked to meditate on the HBCU tradition, which is to meditate on the visionary idea that a gathering of Black people in fierce intellectual pursuit can tear down the sturdy concrete walls of the castle of white supremacy and build in its place a Yard, an open greenspace for humanity, to shout, dance, hold hands, argue, sing, and flourish. This is a kind of Promised Land, but it is unfinished like any Promised Land must be. To be a writer in that tradition is to be in conversation with the Continuum, and to construct a vision, like any writer must, but to use that Yard as a foundation and build upwards from there.

To help send the 2025 fellows to the next AWP Conference & Bookfair, please donate to the AWP HBCU Fellowship Program fund.

**The #AWP24 Writer to Agent Program:** This program saw 854 applicants. All #AWP24 attendees have the opportunity to submit a sample of their work for review by Aevitas Creative Management, Ayesha Pande Literary, Folio Literary Management, The Friedrich Agency, Serendipity Literary Agency, and Trellis Literary Management. The agencies held 149 meetings during the week, both virtually and in person.

**#WritersServe Program:** AWP supported donations to Pride Haven, a Kansas City–based overnight shelter for transition-aged LGBTQIA+ youth. #AWP24 attendees donated items from the organization’s wish list, including cold weather necessities and books.

**Diverse attendance:** The checked-in registered attendees in Kansas City totaled 7,500, including 700 attendees with Saturday-only passes. Additionally, 500 attendees joined AWP through the virtual conference platform. About 1,800 students registered and attended, a majority of whom paid less than $65 for the entire conference. More than 375 attendees participated in the AWP Work-Exchange Program, which grants free registration to the conference in exchange for four hours of conference support on-site. Fifty-nine full scholarships were provided to the in-person conference, with most awarded to applicants of color, those in the Midwest region, LGBTQIA+
people, and disabled applicants. AWP is grateful to its community for sustaining the funding for the scholarship program.

**Twitter quotes:** Maurice Ruffin, Lucy Carson, Latorial Faison, Stephanie Austin, and Kundiman were among those who shared their experience at #AWP24.

The 2025 AWP Conference & Bookfair (#AWP25) will be held in Los Angeles, California on March 26–29, 2025. See you there!

*AWP provides support, advocacy, resources, and community to writers, college and university creative writing programs, and writers’ conferences and centers. Our mission is to amplify the voices of writers and the academic programs and organizations that serve them while championing diversity and excellence in creative writing.*