

The Givens Foundation for African American Literature  
**Bios for Retreat Mentoring Writers 2011-2012**



**National Mentoring Writer: Percival Everett**

*“If part of the mission of the artist is to expand the thinking of the culture in which he exists, I have my work cut out for me.” —Percival Everett*

Percival Everett is the author of nearly twenty novels, three collections of short fiction, and two volumes of poetry. Among his novels are *Assumption* (Graywolf, 2011), *I Am Not Sidney Poitier* (2009), *The Water Cure* (2008), *Wounded*, *Glyph*, *Erasure*, *American Desert*, *For Her Dark Skin*, *Zulus*, *Cutting Lisa*, *Watershed*, and *God's Country*. *Swimming Swimmers Swimming* is his newest collection of poems (Red Hen Press, 2011). He is the recipient of the PEN Center USA Award for Fiction, the Academy Award from an American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award, The Believer Book Award, The Vallombrosa Von Rezzori Prize, the PEN/Oakland-Josephine Miles Award for

Excellence in Literature, and a New American Writing Award. His stories have been included in the Pushcart Prize Anthology and Best American Short Stories. He has served as a judge for, among others, the 1997 National Book Award for fiction and the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1991. He teaches fiction writing and critical theory and is currently Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Southern California. With these novels and collections of stories to his credit, Everett has developed a reputation as a wordsmith. One critic describes him as a lyrical writer, whose “stark and sometimes powerful prose” leaves a lasting impression. His 1994 book *God's Country* drew measured praise from the New York Times: “[The novel] starts sour, then abruptly turns into Cowpoke Absurdism, ending with an acute hallucination of blood, hate and magic. It's worth the wait. The novel sears.” He has worked as a musician, a horse trainer, and a teacher. He lives with his wife and two sons in Los Angeles.



**State Mentoring Writer: Philip Bryant**

From 1989 to the present Philip Bryant, a native of Chicago has taught at Gustavus Adolphus College, where he is currently a Professor of English. He has had poems published in *The Iowa Review*, *The Indiana Review*, *The American Poetry Review*, and *Nimrod*. Crossroads Press published *Blue Island*, a chapbook of his poetry in 1997. New Rivers press released *Sermon on a Perfect Spring Day* in 1998. *Sermon on a Perfect Spring Day* was nominated for a Minnesota Book Award and a Forward Award in 1999. He also appeared in the poetry anthology edited by Pamela Gemin, *Are You Experienced*,

published by the Iowa University Press. In the spring, 2007, he appeared in *Where One Voice Ends Another Begins: 150 Years of Minnesota Poetry*, edited by Robert Hedin, published by Minnesota Historical Society Press. He appeared in the *Blueroad Reader* published by Blueroad Press in July 2007. Blueroad Press published his collection of Jazz poems, *Stompin' at the Grand Terrace* along with accompanying CD in Spring 2009. A section of *Stompin' at the Grand Terrace* published in the August 2009 edition of the *Utne Reader* was selected to be included in the anthology, *Best Music Writing 2010*, edited by Ann Powers, published by De Capo Press, and was released in the fall of 2010. Most recently his poems have appeared in two anthologies published in the spring of 2011. He is included in *American Tensions: Literature and the Search for Social Justice*, edited by William Reichard, and *Good Poems: American Places*, Selected and Introduced by Garrison Keillor. His audio essays have appeared on Minnesota Public Radio's *Morning Edition* and *All things Considered*.