



The Givens Foundation's education program, *Spirited Minds and Strong Souls Singing* is committed to being an **innovative solution** that supports Minnesota's academic standards for language arts and that helps to close the achievement gap for K-12 students. The program was developed in 2006 in response to community requests and strategic mandate that the Foundation focus its activities and resources on enriching cultural understanding and enhancing the quality of education for learners by increasing their access to African American literature and writers, by leveraging the rich local artistic community, as well as drawing on historic works within the Givens Collection of African American Literature at the University of Minnesota and the African American literary tradition.

Spirited Minds and Strong Souls Singing delivers black artists and writers into classrooms and after-school programs to use African American literature as a vehicle for cultivating literary minds and **enriching the quality of education** for students by introducing school and district partners to innovative and culturally responsive approaches to classroom instruction, teacher training, curriculum development, and family and community engagement.

Spirited Minds and Strong Souls Singing develops long-term strategic partnerships with schools and districts to advance students' literary skills — reading, writing, and critical thinking — and to use **culturally responsive methods** to promote student engagement and learning.

The program has **successfully engaged youth** in activities that help them explore their personal stories, family stories, and cultural histories through reading, storytelling, and creative writing. It is widely known that young people who engage in structured participatory, arts-based writing and reading are far more likely to succeed. We believe that learning about black literature from African American artists **benefits youth from all backgrounds**.

"A culturally responsive approach involves teachers using their students' culture as an important source of the students' education. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) argued for the centrality of a culturally responsive approach for helping students who have not been served well by our nation's public schools, and asserted that teachers create conditions for effective learning when they recognize the importance of culture and make use of students' culture in specific activities."

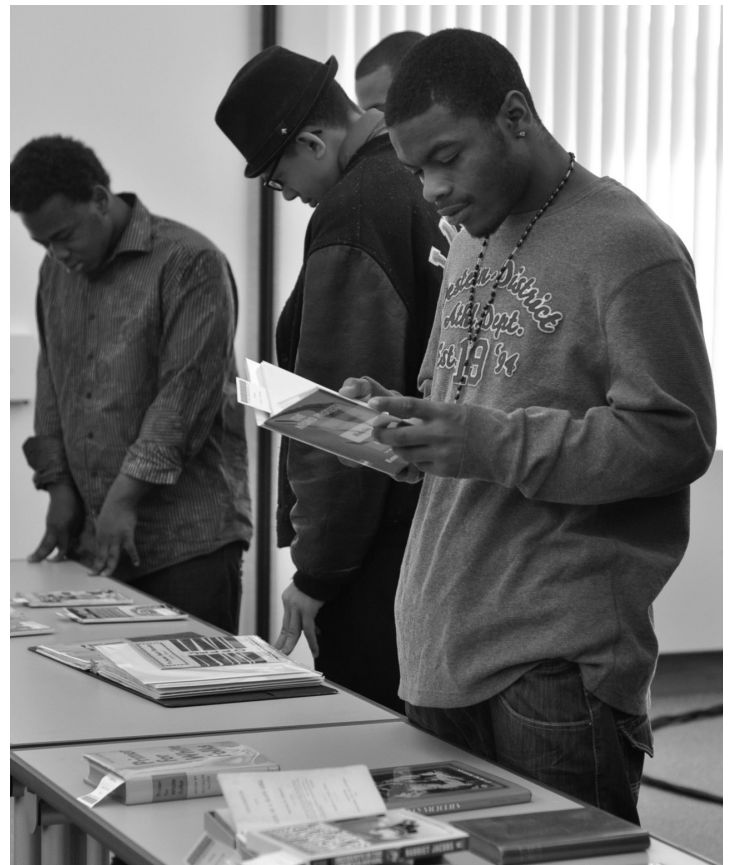
— Dr. Alfred Tatum, author of *Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males*.

Our program is available all year long. Our highly experienced and **qualified African American teaching artists** have served nearly 8,000 students from a variety of backgrounds in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, charter schools and after-school programs in public libraries.

LITERARY ARTS CURRICULA

The Givens Foundation for African American Literature has developed curriculum units that are aligned with Minnesota Standards. These units are for residencies of 20 hours or more. The units are usually based on a book or author's work. New and custom curriculum units can also be developed for a fee.

- 1. African American Poets Inspire Us to Raise Our Creative Voice**
Grade Level(s): 4 - 8
Subjects/Related Disciplines: Language Arts, Cultural History
- 2. Ashley Bryan: Listen For the Voice in the Written Word**
Grade Level(s): 2, 3, and 4
Subjects: Language Arts, African American Literature, Cultural Heritage, Visual Arts, Creative Expression
- 3. Patricia Smith — Poetry about "Things That Matter"**
Grade Level(s): 6 - 12
Subjects: Reading, Literature, Writing, Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling, Theater and Performance
- 4. Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself, by Harriet Jacobs**
Grade Level(s): 2, 3, and 4
Subjects: Language Arts, African American Literature, Cultural Heritage, Visual Arts, Creative Expression
- 5. Living Legends In African American Literature**
Grade Level(s): 5-8, 9-12
Subjects: Language Arts, African American Literature, Cultural Heritage, Visual Arts, Creative Expression
- 6. The Skin I'm In, Sharon G. Flake**
Grade Level(s): 7-12
Subjects/ Related Disciplines: Literature, History, Sociology, Writing, and African-American Culture.
- 7. African American Contributions to Literature**
Grade Level(s): 5-12
Subjects/ Related Disciplines: Literature, History, Sociology, Writing, and African-American Culture.
Note: This unit can be combined with a field trip to the Givens Collection at the University of Minnesota.
- 8. A Lesson Before Dying, by Ernest Gaines**
Grade Level(s): 5-12
Subjects: Literature, History, Sociology, Writing and African American Culture.
- 9. Bud Not Buddy, by Christopher Paul Curtis**
Grade Level(s): 4-8
Subjects: Literature, History, Sociology, Writing, African American Culture.
- 10. The Short Stories of J. California Cooper; Homemade Love and A Piece of Mine**
Grade Level(s): 7-12
Subjects: History, Sociology, Theatre, Storytelling, Writing



High school students visit the Givens Collection at the University of Minnesota as a part of their Givens Foundation literary arts education residency.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is culturally responsive teaching?

A: According to researcher Geneva Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching:

- Acknowledges **students' cultural heritage** as it affects their dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning, and recognizes that it contains content worthy to be included in the curriculum.
- **Builds meaning** between students' home and school experiences as well as between "school stuff" and the students' lived realities.
- Uses a wide variety of instructional strategies.
- Teaches an appreciation of the students' own cultural heritage as well as that of others.
- Incorporates **multicultural** information, resources, and materials in all subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.

Q: When are Givens residencies available?

A: Givens residencies are available all year including traditional times of African American celebrations: Black History Month, Kwanzaa, African American Parent Involvement Day, Juneteenth, and others.

Q: What are the outcomes of a Givens residency?

A: We have three measurable outcomes:

- Develop and **enrich literary skills** — reading, writing and critical thinking — for K-12 students.
- Promote self-expression, communication and self-empowerment through the use of contemporary and classic African American literature.
- **Increase access** to African American literary resources for K-12 students, teachers, schools and families.

Q: What products can I expect at the end of a Givens residency?

A: Possible products include:

- a collection of student writing
- a mini play
- a spoken word CD
- a CD of stories developed during a storytelling residency
- a videotaped performance by students

Q: What are the benefits of a Givens residency?

A: Givens residency artists assist teachers in meeting the Minnesota Language Arts Standards by providing students with opportunities to develop literary skills — reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking — in **creative and meaningful activities** through close examination of contemporary and classic African American texts.

Q: What are some culturally diverse and age-appropriate books that I can get for my students?

A: The Givens Foundation offers resources online on African American literature, history, culture and social issues for K-12 students. Visit our web site www.givens.org.

Q: Who are the Givens Foundation's Literary Teaching Artists?

A: Beverly Cottman, Danielle Daniel, Shannon Gibney, Kimberly Jones, Ibe Kaba, Louis Porter, J. Otis Powell, and Nothando Zulu are on the Givens Foundation's artist roster. Givens Literary Teaching Artists are experienced in poetry, fiction, storytelling, spoken word, creative nonfiction, playwriting, critical media literacy, and journalism, using **diverse genres** and a variety of models for their work with students.

Q: Does the Givens Foundation have other programs?

A: Givens Foundation programs engage students, educators, readers and writers. In addition to our literary arts education program, our **NOMMO African American Authors Series** has explored the state of the art of African American literature with literary masters such as Amiri Baraka, Angela Davis, Yusef Komunyakaa, Ishmael Reed, Sonia Sanchez, Ntozake Shange, and John Edgar Wideman. Our **Givens Black Writers Collaborative Retreat** pairs national and state mentoring authors with emerging black writers to promote the "writing life" and to seed the future of African American literature. Our **Givens Black Books** Community Reading Campaign is designed to increase access to quality literature in the African American community and features diverse activities and events that encourage reading as an integral part of daily life. All of our programs are strongly inspired by the Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, a unique collection of more than 18,000 African American literary works and cultural objects at the University of Minnesota.

THE GIVENS FOUNDATION FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE THE GIVENS

BENEFITS OF A GIVENS FOUNDATION LITERARY ARTIST RESIDENCY:

- 1. African American Teaching Artists:** Modeling culturally responsive instructional methods for teachers and diversifying the instructional experience of students.
- 2. Innovative Classroom Instruction Methods:** Using literary arts such as storytelling, creative writing, spoken word, hip-hop, fiction, poetry, memoir, and journalism.
- 3. Inclusive Curricula:** Increasing access to classic and contemporary African American literature.
- 4. Family and Community Engagement:** Creating student-centered educational products and performances that serve as a platform for family and community engagement and support.

Residency curricula are developed and implemented in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms to engage students in **interactive residencies** using a variety of works from classic African American literature and selections from the artist's own body of work. In book-based residencies, literary artists collaborate with teachers to adapt classic works such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs, *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines, and others for use in the classroom.

Spirited Minds and Strong Souls Singing is inspired by the **Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature** at the University of Minnesota. The Collection is nationally known as one of the best in a number of topic areas, including the Harlem Renaissance period of the 1920s and the Black Arts Movement. Givens Literary Artists and teachers often draw from the literary content of the Collection in the development of classroom curricula. A special curriculum unit introduces students to the Collection by culminating in a field trip to Andersen Library.

Residencies of 20 hours or more culminate with Givens Literary Artists and teachers working with student participants to produce evidence of their learning. This evidence is demonstrated in bound or recorded collections of student works or through community events and performances where students have the opportunity to read or perform their works for their classmates, families, and community members.

The Givens Foundation works closely with school and district partners to **evaluate the impact** of our education program on student reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. *Spirited Minds and Strong Souls Singing* is evaluated by collecting evidence of student learning (reading and writing samples and test scores) as well as written and verbal feedback from participating students, teachers, and literary artists.

RESIDENCY MODELS

The Givens Foundation offers two residency models, **Model A** is a **short-term** residency that is one to three hours or as long as 20 hours. The cost of Model A is \$200/hr up (3 hours) to \$800 for a day, which is 4 hours (up to 4 classrooms). The 20-hour week-long residency costs \$2,500 (and includes up to 4 classrooms a day for five days).

Model B is a **long-term** residency which consist of 60 to 300 hours. In this model, multiple artists are involved in the school over the course of the year. Cost is negotiated.

Residencies are scheduled in the order that requests are received, so please schedule as early as possible, regardless of when the residency will take place. **For more information visit our website www.givens.org.**

INTERESTED IN A RESIDENCY?

Contact **Rosilyn M. Carroll**
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For more than 25 years, the Givens Foundation for African American Literature has been dedicated to enriching cultural understanding and learning through programs that advance and celebrate African American literature and writers.



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