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The Goal

The North Country Institute and Retreat a) provides a retreat and institute for emerging and established writers of color, b) provides writers of color with an opportunity to draw upon their experiences as writers in a racialized society and c) provides the broader New York State area with an opportunity to become knowledgeable about the issues and concerns facing writers of color. Writing fellows are invited to study the genres of fiction, poetry, and memoir.

Download application NOW!

NCI Retreat Application

Applicants' materials must include:

- a cover letter expressing reasons for wanting to participate,
- two letters of recommendation from individuals familiar with their writing,
- and a sample of writing.
- A non-refundable application **fee of $25, payable to the Center for Black Literature**, should accompany the application.

Scheduled Retreats

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Applications will be reviewed as received until all spaces have been filled for each scheduled retreat. Scholarships are made available based on sponsorship.

Tuition fees vary based on location. Tuition fees include lodging based on double occupancy and meals at the Valcour Educational Conference Center. Please see the hotel options if traveling from out of town for the Medgar Evers College location.

Past NCI Faculty include:
Jeffrey Renard Allen, Martin Espada, Indira Ganesan, Aracelis Girmay, Tonya Hegamin, Sandra Jackson-Opoku, Victor LaValle, Tony Medina, E. Ethelbert Miller, Greg Pardlo, and Sonia Sanchez.

2009

Winter

Location: Medgar Evers College, CUNY / Brooklyn, NY
Dates: Thursday, February 26, 2009 – Sunday, March 1, 2009

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Time(s): Each day is scheduled as follows, 10 am - 3 pm unless otherwise indicated by instructor.
Genres offered:
Fiction - Tonya Cherie Hegamin www.tonyacheriehegamin.com
Poetry - Aracelis Girmay http://www.curbstone.org/authdetail.cfm?AuthID=167

Tuition: $400

Additional sponsorship provided by the Office of New York State Assemblyman Hakim Jefferies.

Summer There is limited space for this retreat. Please submit applications at your earliest opportunity.

Location: Valcour Educational Conference Center, Plattsburgh, New York
Sunday, July 26- Thursday July 30, 2009
Genres offered:
Fiction – Donna Hemans - www.donnahemans.com
Poetry – Major Jackson - www.majorjackson.com

Tuition: $600

2010

Winter

Location: Medgar Evers College, CUNY / Brooklyn, NY
Dates: To be determined.
Time(s): Each day is scheduled as follows, 10 am - 3 pm unless otherwise indicated by faculty workshop leader.
Genres offered:
Fiction
Memoir
Poetry
Tuition: $400

Summer

Location: Valcour Educational Conference Center, Plattsburgh, New York
Dates: July 2010
Genres offered:
Fiction
Memoir
Poetry
Tuition: To be determined.
Faculty Workshop leaders will be posted at a later date.

If you are interested in participating in an upcoming retreat down load application below or call 718.270.6983 or email writers@mec.cuny.edu.

Please note that dates and names of faculty workshop leaders are subject to change.

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Travel and Lodging

Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College site:

Out of State Participants:

Lodging is not included with the tuition fees and all out of town participants are to make their individual arrangements for accommodations and meals for the duration of the Retreat. A hotel list has been provided by the Center for your consideration (see link below).

Hotel List – for Medgar Evers College, CUNY Retreat location.

Nearest Airports:
JFK International Airport
LaGuardia Airport
Newark Liberty Airport

Nearest Train & Bus Stations:
Amtrak – New York Penn Station (NYP) – www.Amtrak.com
Grey Hound – New York Port Authority [at 42nd Street] or New York Penn Station –see your location(s) here: http://www.greyhound.com/home/TicketCenter/en/locations.asp?state=ny

For local travel, Subway and Bus travel directions visit: www.mta.info

Valcour Educational Conference Center site:

Tuition fees include lodging based on double occupancy and meals at the Valcour Educational Conference Center. To learn more about the Valcour Educational Conference Center and travel options visit: http://www.plattsburghcas.com/valcour/about-valcour.htm

Nearest Airports:
Burlington International Airport – Vermont*

Nearest Train & Bus Stations:
Amtrak – Plattsburgh, NY (PLB)* – www.Amtrak.com - This train runs daily.
Grey Hound – Plattsburg, NY*- to get station hours click here:
http://www.greyhound.com/home/TicketCenter/en/locations.asp?state=ny

*Additional travel required from these locations.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Can students apply?** Yes. Students at the upper level of high school and above may apply. If in high school they should be exceptional in the genre of writing for which they are submitting an application.

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2. **Do I have to be a professional writer?** No. Anyone with an interest in the craft may apply.
3. **How are Fellows selected?** Fellows are selected by a committee that includes writing instructors, writers and other qualified individuals for the genre. All recommendations for potential writing fellows and sample writings are reviewed.
4. **Do I have to submit my references *with* the application?** No. References may be submitted separately via mail or internet to writers@mec.cuny.edu with your name and "NCI" in the subject heading. References must be received at least one to two weeks prior to the first day of the scheduled retreat.

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Notes: Applications received without the $25 application fee will be considered incomplete until the payment is received by the Center for Black Literature.

History of the Retreat

The first three retreats were held in northeastern New York at the Valcour Educational and Conference Center overlooking Lake Champlain and the Fourth Annual Retreat was held at Medgar Evers College. The Retreat is a collaboration between several organizations and is a continuation and expansion of the alumni program for the Paden Institute and Retreat for Writers of Color.

The North Country Institute and Retreat for Writers of Color developed in response to the Paden Retreat for Writers of Color which provides writers with an opportunity to work on their writing in a cottage located in Essex, New York. In August 2003, alumni from the Paden Retreat came together and held a series of readings in Elizabethtown, New York. This event was co-sponsored by the Adirondack Center for Writing, John Brown Lives, the Alice Moore Foundation, the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College, and the Center for Law and Social Justice at SUNY, Albany. Former Paden writing residents, Brenda Greene from Medgar Evers College, CUNY and Jose Torres from SUNY, Plattsburg, came together, established an advisory board and created the North Country Institute and Retreat in Valcour, New York www.plattsburgh.edu/offices/academic/writersofcolor.

Funding for the First and Second Annual Retreat was provided by the Nathan Cummings Foundation and the Winkel Foundation. Faculty mentors for the first retreat in July 2004, included poet, Sonia Sanchez; fiction writer, Indira Ganesan; and poet, essayist, and children's author, Tony Medina. The second retreat was held in June, 2005 and included nationally renowned poet, Martin Espada, journalist, non-fiction and memoir writer, Patrice Gaines and novelist Sandra Jackson-Opoku. Award-winning poet and memoirist Ethelbert Miller and fiction writer and poet and novelist Jeffrey Renard Allen were faculty leaders for the Third Annual North County Retreat and Institute. Funding for this retreat was provided by the Winkel Foundation at SUNY, Plattsburgh and the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College. The Fourth Annual Retreat at Medgar Evers College featured poet, Gregory Pardlo and fiction writer Victor LaValle.

As a result of the challenges related to supporting a retreat for a small number of writing residents (12 at the Valcour Educational Conference Center) and in response to our desire to impact more writers of color in the New York City area and to expand the number of writers of color who can benefit from the retreat and institute, we have restructured the North Country Institute and Retreat for Writers of Color to include venues at Medgar Evers College as well as Valcour, New York.

What the Fellows are saying…

"This was my first experience in a true writers' workshop. And it was outstanding. Sharing my story with the instructor and my fellow participants has really helped me to see my work in a new light. And, I got some great practical advice and ideas."
Holly E., Journalism Professor- Columbia, Missouri – Fiction Fellow

"The NCI retreat was a fabulous experience… having the chance to be exclusively with other folks of color allowed for a certain kind of safety, idea development and freedom of expression that I have yet to encounter in non-POC workshop spaces. Strong relationships were generated with other writers who I now consider good friends and allies. In four days we established networks to exchange and share our work; raising the workshop roof, if you will, to maintain the dialogue and run with it beyond the time constraints of the retreat."
– Amalia A., Creative Writing Instructor, California – Poetry Fellow

"The Retreat was everything I hoped it would be! Our instructor gave us exercises and readings that made us seriously consider not only the craft of writing, but also our personal development as writers. And, when it was time to workshop, [Victor] explored each piece with great sensitivity…My classmates, too, impressed me with their insight and commitment to writing. From them, I learned how varied the contemporary fiction of writers of color can be…Overall, I am so glad that I was able to be a part of a workshop that truly respected what each individual writer wanted to accomplish."
– Rochelle S., Freelance Journalist, Georgia – Fiction Fellow