

ALICE WALKER

b. February 9, 1944

“The truest and most enduring impulse I have is simply to write.”

Alice Walker is an award-winning writer, activist and self-proclaimed “Womanist”—a term she coined in her book “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens” (1974) to describe black feminists. The voices she brings to life in her novels, short stories and poems help educate and inspire readers.

Best known for her novel “The Color Purple,” Alice Walker was the first African-American woman to receive a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Walker was raised in Eatonton, Georgia, during segregation. She is the youngest of eight children born to poor sharecroppers.

Walker received her B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College in 1965. She moved back to the South to pursue civil rights work and met Mel Leventhal. Walker and Leventhal, a Jewish civil rights lawyer, were the first interracial couple to be legally married in Mississippi. Walker had her only child during the marriage. The couple divorced in 1976.

Walker began teaching at Wellesley College in 1972. Her course, dedicated to the study of African-American women writers, was the first of its kind.

Her most famous novel, “The Color Purple” (1983), won a National Book Award and made Walker the first African-American woman to receive a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In 1985, the novel was made into a movie directed by Steven Spielberg, starring Oprah Winfrey, Whoopi Goldberg and Danny Glover. The film earned 11 Oscar nominations. In 2005, “The Color Purple” was adapted into a Broadway musical, with Winfrey as the lead financial backer.

Walker’s awards include a Guggenheim Foundation Grant, an American Book Award, a Lillian Smith Award and an O’Henry Award. She was inducted into the Georgia Writer’s Hall of Fame and the California Hall of Fame. In 1997, Walker was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association.



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