

Michael S. Harper

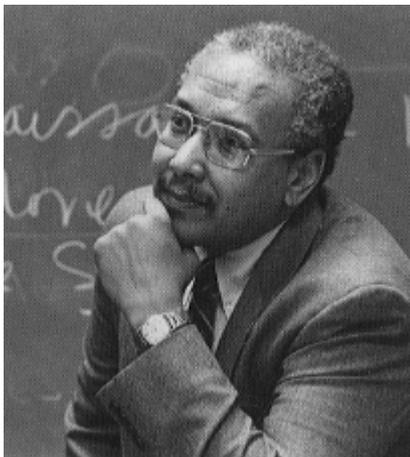
Poet Description:

Born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who were a postal worker and a medical stenographer, Michael S. Harper moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1951. While at Los Angeles City, then State, Colleges in the late 1950s, he also worked in the post office and met a number of articulate black coworkers blocked from more challenging employment. Finally settling on a writing career, he attended the Iowa Writer's Workshop, the only black writer in his class and forced to live in segregated housing. Soon after that he met the legendary jazz saxophonist and composer John Coltrane; their friendship had a profound impact on Harper's writing, making him perhaps the black writer whose poetry has the most original and intricate relation to music. He has worked out a wide range of techniques to make his poetry, which must be read aloud, musical, from the use of subtle irregular repetition and varying line lengths, to the more obvious placement of blues refrains. The lines are also rhythmically paced in surprising ways, with lines meant to be read rapidly mixed effectively with lines designed to be lingered over and read slowly. Meanwhile, his subject matter mixes strong acts of witness to America's racist history with wrenching accounts of family tragedy. The two counterpoint one another in such a way as to make individual lives mythic in their very specificity and history verified and lived in the pulse of individual experience. Harper has taught at Brown University since 1971.

Race/Ethnicity:

African ^[1]

Picture:



Gender:

Male ^[2]

Sexuality:

Straight ^[3]

First Name:

Michael S.

Last Name:

Harper

Birth & Death Dates:

Friday, March 18, 1938

School of Poetry:

Other ^[4]

Birth Place:

Brooklyn , New York

United States

See map: [Google Maps](#) ^[5]

New York US

Group visibility:

Private - accessible only to group members

Source URL: <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/poet/michael-s-harper>

Links

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[3] <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/category/sexuality/straight>

[4] <http://modernamericanpoetry.org/school-poetry/other>

[5] <http://maps.google.com?q=46.880607+-87.363281+%28%2C+Brooklyn%2C+NY%2C+%2C+us%29>