

Features

New Brooklyn Writers Join Old Hands at Fort Greene Park Lit Fest

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By [Abbie Fentress Swanson](#) : Culture Editor & Interactive Content Producer

On Saturday, some 30 young writers will read poetry and fiction alongside well-known Brooklyn writers at Fort Greene Park's monument. The younger set, aged 7 to 17, have been working with the New York Writers Coalition, which organized this year's seventh [Fort Greene Park Summer Literary Festival](#), on honing their creative writing chops for the past six months.



The Fort Greene Park Summer Literary Festival young writers in

2010. (Courtesy of the New York Writers Coalition)

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Talaia Regist, a 10-year-old who lives in Flatbush and attends P.S. 235, is one of the young writers who will be reading on Saturday. Listen to her reciting her poem, "Just Chillin'" [here](#).

00:00 / 00:00

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It's beautiful out here
I can just sit back, relax and enjoy the sun.
I don't have to worry about my cow Billy
That's all I do — worry, worry and worry
But today's the day where I'm going to chill on my hay
And say Heyyyyy to all the people who pass by
And think about what I'll do next week. It's great.

Talaia's 12-year-old brother Tristan and 8-year-old brother Tayon will also be reading on Saturday, as will her older sister Tema Regist, who is 15. Tema wrote this poem in honor of her cousin Jabari Nkosi Thompson, a Marine who was killed in Afghanistan two weeks ago. Here she is reading "If I Could Say A Few More Words:"

00:00 / 00:00

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If I could say a few more words
A model of dedication, honor and true determination
Jabari Nkosi Thompson is his name
Unique and powerful aura
Time he did not take for granted
Quality time was spent with me
Life is a journey, I heard the angels say
The day God called you home

Jabari Nkosi Thompson was his name
 Birth is a beginning and death is a destination
 If I could say a few more words
 It would be that I am truly honored to be your cousin
 Love always, Tema Naya Regist

Pascale Leone, a 10-year-old who lives in Bayridge and goes to P.S. 185, will read the following verses, which were inspired by Coney Island:

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Coney Island is crowded
 Coney Island is dirty
 Coney Island is crazy
 Coney Island is weird
 And that's why we like it

"It's thrilling to me to be reading alongside young Brooklynites," said Bernice McFadden, one of the adult writers from Crown Heights who will be reading. "Because this is the very place I started writing and dreaming and wishing, and now I basically feel like I've come full circle right here in Brooklyn."

McFadden (pictured right) will read from her historical novel *Glorious*, published by [Akashic Books](#) in 2010.

Bryonn Bain, who is from Flatbush and spent five years teaching cultural literacy to teen inmates at Rikers Island, will also be reading from his book, *The Prophet Returns*, which will be released this weekend by Blackout Brooklyn Press.

"You can't underestimate the power of the word, the power of stories," Bain said, who will also be performing with the hip-hop theater group [Lyrics from Lockdown](#) at the festival. "And the young folks are getting an opportunity to do that at an age when I think it matters most."

Other adult writers reading are the novelist Rick Moody, best-known for his book made into a hit film, *The Ice Storm*; poet R. Erica Doyle, whose work has appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Our Caribbean*, *Gumbo*, *Callaloo*, *Ploughshares*, *Bum Rush the Page*, *Bloom*, and *from the Fishhouse*; and performance poet Jon Sands, who recently wrote *The New Clean*.

The New York Writers Coalition partnered with [Greenlight Bookstore](#) and Akashic Books to put on the festival.

"Bringing an event like this to a public park is a great way to expose people to books and literature," said Rebecca Fitting, one of the owners of Greenlight, which will host the festival's afterparty from 6 to 8 P.M. "And it is so important to foster young writers and encourage them to write."

The New York Writers Coalition works with more than 1,000 people a year at its writing workshops. The workshops are geared toward youth and adults; inmates and the formerly incarcerated; the homeless and the formerly homeless; and at-risk teens.

"Our mission says that we serve people not heard from enough in society," said Aaron Zimmerman, the executive director of the coalition.

Zimmerman added that the coalition had chosen Fort Greene Park seven years ago as a place to host the festival for its long, rich literary history: Richard Wright wrote part of *Native Son* in the park, poet Marianne Moore lived nearby and Walt Whitman was instrumental in getting the park built.

Amy Swauger, the director of the [Teachers & Writers Collaborative](#), said festivals like the Fort Greene Park Summer Literary Festival were especially good for the youth.

"If you're engaged in creative writing outside school, you start to get the message that writing can be something that you do for fun," she said. "It's not just something that people make you do...and I think that's one of the real benefits of the programs like the one at Fort Greene."

The festival kicks off at 3 P.M. on Saturday.

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Ramon Garcia from Falls Church, Va 22044

I just read a few days ago in the NYtimes about new Brooklyn writers book.I wouldlike to buy it,thank you,Ramon Garcia.

Aug. 24 2011 08:22 PM

Score: 0/0

Yolanda Williams from Plano, TX

Tema, Tristan,Talaia (Teresa) & Tayon,
You guys are the best nieces and newphews, anyone could wish for...You are exactly the fruit of your parents labor. Jackie & Mathias I know you both are proud and so are we. Thanks and keep up with the good work. With much love from the bottom of our hearts, Auntie Yoli and Uncle Freddie

Aug. 19 2011 04:10 AM

Score: 0/0

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