

LORENE CARY

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Libretto:

Jubilee, Commission for opera treatment based on the original Jubilee Singers of Fisk University, from Portland Opera, to be written with composer Damien Geter and produced in 2026..

Play:

Ladysitting, Commission for new work with Arden Theatre, Philadelphia, based on my memoir. World Premiere: January 2024.

My General Tubman, Arden Theatre (January 16-March 1; extended twice through March 13) During her spells of temporal lobe epilepsy, Harriet Tubman travels through time to a Philadelphia prison and brings men back in time as her Combahee River Raid spies; one figures out how to go back in time by himself to become her second husband.

Books:

Ladysitting: My Year with Nana at the End of Her Century (W. W. Norton & Co, 2019; paperback due June 2020) Everything changed when my grandmother moved in and our loving, funny, and complicated family faced death and shared life with her. I had to write the story to understand the loss and let it go, from free landowning progenitors in the South to my own spiritual challenge of forgiveness.

If Sons, Then Heirs (Paperback: Atria Books/Simon and Schuster, 2012)

Deeded to his ex-slave ancestors by General Sherman, Rayne Needham's "heir property" has been held together, barely, for 50 years by his Nana Selma, now holed up in a tiny trailer on the old family farm. Rayne travels from Philadelphia to accept his inheritance: savage American story of black land ownership, family diaspora, and tragic loss.

Free! Great Escapes from Slavery on the Underground Railroad (New City

Community Press/Third World Press, 2005; Kindle, 2013). Based on the records of Pennsylvania abolitionist William Still, *Free's* true stories of escapes—on foot, trains, horses, boats, in mail trunks—exhibit brazenness, stealth, and courage. (YA)

Pride (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 1998; Anchor, 1999) This "girlfriend" novel pushes an accessible genre toward greater complexity. Written in four distinct voices, *Pride* explores family, addiction, class, politics, sex, and religion in black America.

The Price of a Child (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995; Vintage, 1996) An Underground Railroad novel based on the 1855 case of Jane Johnson. A woman's escape

from slavery begins her odyssey to uncompromising intellectual and spiritual freedom. Inaugural choice for One Book One Philadelphia, 2003. [Curriculum guide](#) available.

Black Ice (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991; Vintage, 1992) Coming-of-age memoir about my experience as student, teacher, and trustee at the exclusive New England boarding school, St. Paul's, examines class, race, gender and identity. An American Library Association Notable Book. [Random House teachers guide](#) available.

Scripts:

“The President’s House: Freedom and Slavery in the Making of a New Nation”
Opened December 2010, five LED screen presentations commemorate the lives of the enslaved Africans owned by George and Martha Washington as part of the National Park Service at Independence Mall. Filmed by Louis Massiah of Scribe Video, these screens create an immediate, emotional experience, grounded in fact, for 5 million visitors a year.

Blogs, Essays, articles: [Blog entries](#) culture, education, community events. Articles have appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer Sunday Magazine*, *TV Guide (Associate Editor)*, *TIME (Apprentice writer)*, *Essence*, *O Magazine*, *Philadelphia Magazine*, *Newsweek (Contributing Editor)*.

Opera libretto: [The Gospel According to Nana](#). culminating work of my 2017-18 Development American Lyric Theater's Composer-Librettist Program fellowship.

Senior Lecturer: University of Pennsylvania, Department of English, Philadelphia, PA: 1995-present. In 2015, I began [SafeKidsStories](#) to encourage students to write for publication, together. In 2018, after the Parkland shooting and the youth led March for Our Lives, I created, at my students’ urging, [#VoteThatJawn](#), which has partnered with more than 30 local organizations and schools to encourage youth in Philadelphia to vote.

Varied teaching assignments: St. Paul’s School, NH: 1982-83; Sunday Schools/Church of the Advocate/Philadelphia, St. Paul’s/Doylestown, Good Shepherd/East Falls: 1989-2011; Art Sanctuary at the Philadelphia Detention Center, 2010-2011.

Founder:

[#VoteThatJawn](#), an online initiative featuring UPenn students’ and others’ writing and other arts to support youth vote in Philadelphia. In 2018, VTJ helped on-the-ground partners increase 18-year-old registration from less than 3,000 to nearly 7,000. This year’s goal is to bring it to 10,000. The Jawn crowdsources stories and multimedia content for a wide audience and is now transitioning it real-world events to online.

Art Sanctuary, www.artsanctuary.org, is a community arts organization that I founded in 1998 in North Philadelphia with a \$5,000 grant to use black arts to enrich our region, bring great contemporary black arts to schools, and create connections among artists. With a budget and capital expenses of \$1 million a year before the recession, Art Sanctuary served up to 15,000 participants in programs such as the signature Celebration of Black Writing with such diverse artists as The Roots, Nikki Giovanni, Bill T. Jones, Chinua Achebe, the Cuban Folkloric National Dancers, and Walter Mosley. In July 2012, I stepped down as director to allow the crucial non-profit transition from founder-led to new, professional leadership. The board of directors are currently aligning Art Sanctuary with the Africa-American Museum of Philadelphia for a likely merge.

Education:

1979 Sussex University, Falmer, England, M.A.

1978 University of Pennsylvania, M.A., B.A.

Honorary Doctorate of Letters: Swarthmore College (2013), Arcadia University (2007), Muhlenberg College (2005), Keene State College, NH (1997), Chestnut Hill College, PA (1997), Colby College, ME (1992)

Civic Service:

Member, School Reform Commission for the School District of Philadelphia, 2011-2013
Chair, Committee for Safety and Engagement

Fellowships and Awards (partial list):

Provost's Award for Teaching Excellence by Non-Standing Faculty, 2017; *Philadelphia Tribune's* 2014 *Most Influential African-Americans*; Distinguished Daughters of PA, 2011; Civitella Ranieri Fellowship, Italy 2006; Philadelphia Award, 2004. 1990s: fellowship from The Leeway Foundation, residency at Yaddo Artists Retreat.