

AIKEN CENTER *for the* **ARTS**

Aiken Center for the Arts is offering an Author in Residence Program for 8th grade students in the Aiken County Public School District through SC Arts Commission Art in Education grant and Aiken Center for the Arts funds.



AUTHOR IN RESIDENCE **REAL LIFE HISTORY** WITH DR. WALTER CURRY

Dr. Curry, author of “The Thompson Family: Untold Stories from the Past (1830-1960)” and “The Awakening: The Seawright-Ellison Family Saga, Vol. 1, A Narrative History” uses literature and storytelling alongside visual art and artifacts to engage students with the ancestral stories of his own family history bringing to light African American history right here in Aiken County beginning with the middle passage through reconstruction.

MAKING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE PAST AND PRESENT



Dr. Curry utilizes stories from the past to empower students to embrace their future and create their own pathways. He demonstrates that education was crucial but not singularly sufficient for sustaining his journey to authorship. He emphasizes that it took the intertwining of education and passion to bring his book from research to reality. The engagement includes an exhibition of artifacts and visual art to help give form to the narratives being discussed. Extending the experience, students are given time to travel through the exhibition and write their reflections.

This residency for 8th grade students will supply the middle school with a class set (qty 30) of one of Dr. Curry's books with supplemental materials for the teacher which connect the narratives in the book to the 8th grade social studies standards. After students have read narratives from his book, Dr. Curry will conduct one session with the 8th grade classes where he shows that history is alive and an important source of connection to our communities.

The residency includes an exhibition of artifacts and visual art to help give form to the narratives being discussed. Extending the experience, the students are given the opportunity to explore the exhibition and write their reflections.

Below you will see a list of available exhibitions. Please read and discuss with Dr. Curry which exhibition focus area you would like him to bring to your school. Dr. Curry will follow up with related classroom materials.

AVAILABLE EXHIBITIONS

Slavery & The Civil War-The historical exhibition on Slavery and the Civil War examines the ancestral experiences of the Thompson Family's enslaved relatives in rural South Carolina, specifically in Aiken and Lexington counties, during the Antebellum period (1830-1860) and their involvement in the Civil War (1860-1865). It highlights the narratives of an enslaved individual who gained freedom, another whose mother was sold at an early age, and a woman who worked as a cook under her master's authority during the war. The exhibition features replicas, artifacts, visual art, and food samples from the eras of slavery and the Civil War, along with stories from the book, *The Thompson Family: Untold Stories From The Past* (1830-1960).



"I believe the shackles were used to put slaves in pain or to just keep them from running away or trying to defend themselves. They show how slaves were treated and help explain the suffering they went through."

-ACPSD eighth grader

Agricultural Life-The exhibition on Agricultural Life highlights the agricultural experiences of the Thompson Family's relatives in rural Aiken County, South Carolina, during the post-Reconstruction period. It presents the story of a former enslaved relative who became a prosperous entrepreneur and farmer known for producing cane syrup, as well as a relative who adopted soil conservation methods. Additionally, it includes the experiences of a relative who participated in a field study with other African American farmers in Aiken County and another who worked as a sharecropper picking cotton. The exhibition features replicas, artifacts, visual art, and food samples that reflect the agricultural heritage and farm life of these relatives, alongside narratives from *The Thompson Family: Untold Stories From The Past* (1830-1960).



"This is demonstrating the slave experience of Isaac Quatlebaum. He was only five when his mother was taken away. I feel it is to show that the pain and loss the slaves faced was immense."

-ACPSD eighth grader

AVAILABLE EXHIBITIONS

Slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction Era & Beyond-The historical exhibition titled "Slavery, Civil War, Reconstruction Era & Beyond" centers on the life of Martha Kitchings Seawright Ellison, who was born into slavery on November 20, 1849, in Aiken County, South Carolina. This presentation provides a contextualized narrative of her experiences, encompassing the local history of the antebellum period and the Civil War in South Carolina during her enslavement, as well as her life during the Reconstruction Era and subsequent years. The exhibition highlights replicas, artifacts, natural objects, visual images, and food samples that illuminate Martha's life and that of her family. Additionally, it features events from the chapter titled "Through Slavery, War, The Reconstruction Era & Beyond" in the book "The Awakening: the Seawright-Ellison Family Saga, Vol. 1."



"Lavinia C. Thompson is being sold in a white dress but when she refuses she got beat and the dress turned bloody red. This shows you how she was treated."

-ACPSD eighth grader

Learn more about the Author

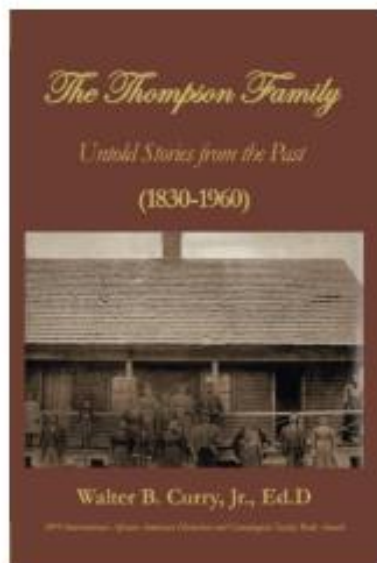


Dr. Walter B. Curry, Jr. is a native of Orangeburg, S.C. Dr. Curry received a bachelor's degree in political science for S.C. State University, and has earned graduate degrees in education, which includes a doctorate degree in Curriculum & Instruction from Argosy University, Sarasota. In 2018, Dr. Curry launched Renaissance Publications, LLC., a self-publishing company that focuses on publishing and producing works in the literary arts, specializing in historical scholarship through ancestry and local history. Dr. Curry has published two award winning books, *The Thompson Family: Untold Stories from the Past (1830-1960)*, and *The Awakening: The Seawright-Ellison Family Saga, Vol. 1, A Narrative History*. Both books consist of stories that cover the lineage of Dr. Curry ancestry from slavery, The Civil War, The Reconstruction Era, and family life near Salley, S.C. and beyond.

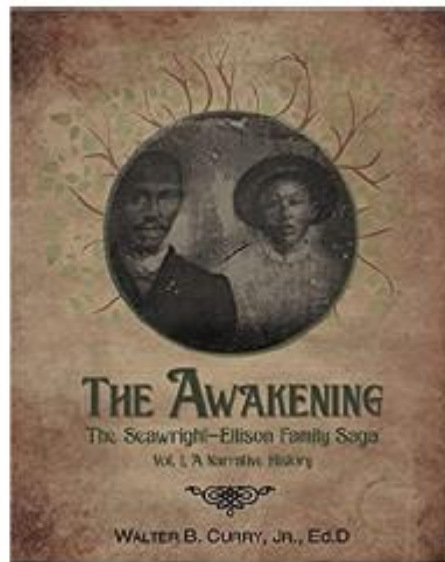
Learn more about the Author (cont.)

Dr. Curry is the Author-In-Residence at the Aiken Center for the Arts. As an Author-In Residence, Dr. Curry provides learning engagements through exhibits to Aiken County Public Schools that bring the stories from his books to life. Dr. Curry has received numerous accolades for his work and service which includes two African American Historical and Genealogy Society book awards; legislative resolutions from the South Carolina General Assembly for his significant work in service to African American History and Heritage in South Carolina; Literary Titan Gold Awards; a recipient of the Martha Schofield “Work The Legacy” Award; member of the Inaugural South Carolina State University 40 Under 40; and 2022 Richland Two School District Black History Month honoree. Dr. Curry also serves as a member of the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room & Military Museum Commission, the South Carolina Arts Directory, and the South Carolina Humanities Speakers Bureau. Dr. Curry currently lives in Columbia, South Carolina with his wife, Takiyah S. Curry, who is a registered nurse and graduate of the University of South Carolina. They have two sons, Braxton & Braylon.

BOOKS BY DR WALTER CURRY



“The Thompson Family:
Untold Stories from The Past
(1830-1960)”



“The Awakening:
The Seawright-Ellison Family Saga,
Vol. 1, A Narrative History”

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