

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES CREATION OF  
LANGSTON HUGHES FELLOWSHIP,  
TO BE HOUSED AT  
HUTCHINS CENTER'S W. E. B. DU BOIS RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

**Charles Blow to Serve as Inaugural Langston Hughes Fellow**

Cambridge, MA, January 17, 2025: Harvard University is proud to announce the establishment of the Langston Hughes Fellowship, to be housed at the W. E. B. Du Bois Research Institute within the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research. This prestigious fellowship will support scholars and artists whose work embodies the spirit of Hughes' literary legacy and commitment to social justice. Set to commence in the academic year 2025-2026, the fellowship honors the renowned African American poet and journalist and will be awarded to individuals who continue Hughes' tradition of exploring and illuminating the Black experience in America in fresh and exciting ways. The inaugural recipient of this fellowship is Charles M. Blow, the acclaimed journalist, author, and *New York Times* columnist.

"The Langston Hughes Fellowship represents our commitment to nurturing voices that challenge, inspire, and transform our understanding of the African American experience," said Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University. "Charles Blow exemplifies the spirit of Langston Hughes in his fearless pursuit of truth and justice. We are thrilled to honor Hughes' legacy and support the next generation of thought leaders with this fellowship."

Charles M. Blow, the inaugural recipient of the Langston Hughes Fellowship, brings a distinguished background in journalism and literature to this honor. Blow's journey at the *New York Times* began in 1994, where he rose from graphics editor to graphics director, earning prestigious awards for the paper's visual journalism. His career also includes roles as design director for news at the *Times*, art director at *National Geographic* magazine, and graphic artist at *The Detroit News*. Most recently a columnist for the *New York Times*, Blow has become a powerful voice on issues of race, politics, and social justice. A *magna cum laude* graduate of Grambling State University, he is the author of the memoir *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, which was adapted into a groundbreaking opera, and *The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto*. Blow's work, like Hughes', illuminates the complexities of the African American experience and advocates for equality.

"I am honored and thrilled beyond words to be the recipient of this fellowship, which is named for one of my literary heroes," said Blow.

The Langston Hughes Fellowship will provide financial support, research resources, and a platform for engagement with the academic community within the Hutchins Center, throughout

Harvard, and beyond. This initiative underscores the ongoing commitment of the Hutchins Center to amplify diverse voices and advance scholarship in African and African American research.

Langston Hughes (1901-1967), a literary giant and central figure of the Harlem Renaissance, reshaped American culture through his prolific work as a poet, novelist, playwright, essayist, and social critic. His writings, spanning poetry, fiction, journalism, and drama, became powerful expressions of the Black experience, addressing themes of racial pride, cultural identity, and social justice. His poems, such as “Harlem,” “I, Too,” and “Let America Be America Again,” along with his essays and the weekly column he published in *The Chicago Defender* over a span of twenty years, established him as an innovator in his use of Black vernacular language and jazz rhythms as well as a leading voice in the fight for civil rights and equality. Few have played a more important role in shaping the African American literary tradition than Langston Hughes. More than 50 years after his death, he remains an inspiration to writers, artists, and activists who continue to draw on his legacy of artistic freedom and social engagement.

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### **ABOUT THE HUTCHINS CENTER FOR AFRICAN & AFRICAN AMERICAN RESEARCH**

The Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard is the preeminent research center in the field of African, African American, and Afro-Latin American Studies. It supports research across the humanities and social sciences on the history and culture of people of African descent the world over and provides multiple platforms for collaboration and the ongoing exchange of ideas. Located in the heart of Harvard Square, the Hutchins Center houses eleven different units that support visiting fellowships, exhibitions, publications, multidisciplinary research projects, and art and music archives. Working in collaboration with other Harvard entities as well as programs and universities around the world, it seeks to expand awareness and understanding of this vital field in the academy and beyond.

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