Afrofuturism & Africanfuturism

Over the next two years, Maine Humanities Council programming will focus on Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism. Our staff have enthusiastically taken the first leap. For some of us, this focus has meant turning to texts we know and love; for others of us, it has meant stepping into something unfamiliar and new. To really champion this programmatic work, we wanted to make sure that everyone on staff has some foundational knowledge about the genre, as well as a basic and fundamental understanding of the Black historical context of the genre and its significance to Black people – readers, creatives, and everyone in between. We wanted to make sure everyone on staff had a solid sense of the impact Afrofuturism has had on the broader genre of sci-fi and speculative fiction. Why not use the tools at our disposal to get at this learning?

This summer, Maine Humanities Council staff is engaging in our first ever staff Discussion Project! We’re spending the summer reading and discussing three texts: Ytasha Womack’s Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture, Octavia E. Butler’s Parable of the Sower (the graphic novel), and Bloodchild – Butler’s short story collection. In 2022, Octavia E. Butler’s Wild Seed will be the featured book at Readers Retreat, our annual deep dive into one incredible book. Over the next year, the Maine Humanities Council will begin highlighting Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism in a variety of ways.

In 2022, Octavia E. Butler’s Wild Seed will be the featured book at Readers Retreat, our annual deep dive into one incredible book. We’ve also created an Afrofuturism & Africanfuturism featured readers retreat, our annual deep dive into one incredible book. This fall, people will for the first time be able to host our programs among the extraordinary people living their lives in this place we call Maine.

We also saw that for some people, facing barriers to using or accessing digital tools, meeting in person really is the best or only way to gather for a discussion. And we also saw that for some people, separated by distance and other barriers to travel, meeting online is the best or only way.

And we learned again, anew, that gathering in itself does not guarantee a rich discussion. We are constantly looking for ways to foster genuine, reciprocal communication. Right now, we’re finding that starting a meeting by breathing and finding the ground gives people time to settle; that people often welcome the invitation to really listen to what others are saying; and that they often feel freed to speak by the invitation to contribute imperfectly.

This fall, people will for the first time be able to host our programs either online or in-person – choosing the way of meeting that works best for them. We are so grateful to be able to keep learning, every day, among the extraordinary people living their lives in this place we call Maine.