

Kwame Dawes

Biography

Born in Ghana in 1962, Kwame Dawes spent most of his childhood and early adult life in Jamaica. He is a writer of poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and plays. His book *Bob Marley: Lyrical Genius* remains the most authoritative study of the lyrics of Bob Marley.

Of his sixteen collections of poetry, his most recent titles include *Duppy Conqueror* (Copper Canyon, 2013); *Wheels* (2011); *Back of Mount Peace* (2009); *Hope's Hospice* (2009); *Wisteria*, finalist for the Patterson Memorial Prize; *Impossible Flying* (2007); and *Gomer's Song* (2007). *Progeny of Air* (Peepal Tree, 1994) was the winner of the Forward Poetry Prize for Best First Collection in the UK. Other poetry collections include *Resisting the Anomie* (Goose Lane, 1995); *Prophets* (Peepal Tree, 1995); *Jacko Jacobus*, (Peepal Tree, 1996); and *Requiem*, (Peepal Tree, 1996), and *Shook Foil* (Peepal Tree, 1998). His book, *Midland*, was awarded the Hollis Summers Poetry Prize by the Ohio University Press (2001). Dawes was a winner of a Pushcart Prize for the best American poetry of 2001 for his long poem, "Inheritance."

Dawes is an actor, playwright, and producer, an accomplished storyteller, broadcaster, and was the lead singer in Ujamaa, a reggae band. Fifteen of his plays have been produced, and he has acted in, directed or produced several of these productions himself, most recently *One Love* at the Lyric Hammersmith in London. Through the years, Dawes has collaborated with musicians and artists to create a dynamic series of performances based on his poetry that have proven to be some of the most compelling and challenging presentations of poetry being performed today. *Wisteria* is a multimedia performance with composer Kevin Simmonds, who set the poems from Dawes' book of the same name, to music.

Until July 2011, Dawes was Distinguished Poet in Residence, Louis Frye Scudder Professor of Liberal Arts and founder, and executive director of the South Carolina Poetry Initiative. He was the director of the University of South Carolina Arts Institute and is the programming director of the Calabash International Literary Festival, which takes place in Jamaica in May of each year. Dawes is currently the Glenna Luschei Editor of *Prairie Schooner* at the University of Nebraska, where he is a Chancellor's Professor of English, a faculty member of Cave Canem, and a teacher in the Pacific MFA Program in Oregon.