

# LifeStyles



THE WORLD'S most celebrated Black male author is Walter Mosley. (Photos by Albert C. Jones)

## World's most celebrated Black male writer visits

*Walter Mosley reluctant to talk about ranking among other famous writers*

BY ALBERT C. JONES  
Managing Editor

Ask Walter Mosley the question destined to increase with frequency, especially as he adds to his list of social commentary and the freethinking and well-spoken mystery writer becomes a reluctant conversationalist.

Where he ranks as a writer with the likes of Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, among others, does become something of a loaded question.

"What's to say," Mosley said. "It's not my place to say. I like who I am. My fiction is almost always about Black male heroes. I write about their experience in a way that doesn't insult. Richard Wright was tough on his heroes. James Baldwin was tough on his heroes."

"The reader has an identification with the characters, who have some kind of problem that the reader has, same solution that the reader has, same flaws that the reader has. I want Black men to feel comfortable with the literature. Black males have to have the answers."

Mosley, the author of 12 books, including "Devil in a Blue Dress," spoke before about 600 of his fans Friday, Feb. 18 at Columbus Metropolitan Library's African American History Month celebra-

tion. Mosley lectured from his most recent book, "Workin' on the Chain Gang: Shaking Off the Dead Hand of History" (\$16.95). The nonfiction book is part of a series published by Ballentine Books called the Library of Contemporary Thought.

In "Workin' on the Chain Gang," Mosley becomes social critic and deals with visible invisibles or what binds as individuals and a society.

"Slavery was outlawed in this country more than a century ago, but Americans still wear chains," Mosley said. "Each one of us, Black and White alike, is shackled by a system that values money over humanity, power over truth, conformity of creativity."

"Everywhere I look I see chains, from the planned obsolescence, that binds us to an endless line of ever more useless machines to captivating television shows about nothing to the value of the dollar bills insecurely nestled at the bottom of my pocket."

Mosley's critique doesn't end there.

"In America and elsewhere," he said, "race, gender, sexual preference and even physical size lock us into roles that rarely come naturally. We are cinched into work schedules, production lines, codes of behavior and timetables for personal advancement based on the

array of the rest of our chains."

Mosley, who lives in New York, is most famous for his Easy Rawlins mysteries. "Devil in a Blue Dress" was made into a motion picture starring Denzel Washington. Other Easy Rawlins mysteries include "Gone Fishin'," "Black Betty" and "A Red Death." President Bill Clinton lists Mosley as his favorite writer.

"It's not just me," Mosley said. "President Clinton is well versed in Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Richard Wright and the list goes on. He is not like President Kennedy. In public, Jackie [his wife] had to whisper in his ear at the mention of any Black writer. He didn't know. President Clinton is not like that."

Last August, Mosley began serializing "Rufus Coombs" short stories in *Gentlemen's Quarterly* and a second story appeared in the *New Yorker* in December. Rufus, a biracial Black, is a Wall Street employee who refutes the notion that all Wall Street employees earn big bucks, have sex with super models and snort cocaine.

"It's not like that," said Mosley, who once worked as a computer programmer on Wall Street. "We live a series of lies. We believe if it's Wall Street, it's a White guy. If it's basketball, then it's a Black guy. The problem is we don't know who we are and what we are."

## Turner lights up Blue Chip

BY SCOT LACY  
Contributing Writer

"The choices you make can create ripples, like those in a pond, that radiate all through your life," Dr. Debbye Turner told an audience at the recent Blue Chip awards gala.

During her speech, Turner noted that today's youth has the intelligence, creativity and imagination, along with the ability to develop the work ethic to achieve success in life. She cautioned that recognizing one's identity and motivation accompany vision in reaching one's goal.

"Without vision, which clarifies one's plan to reach a goal, people perish," she said. "If you do nothing, you will get nothing."

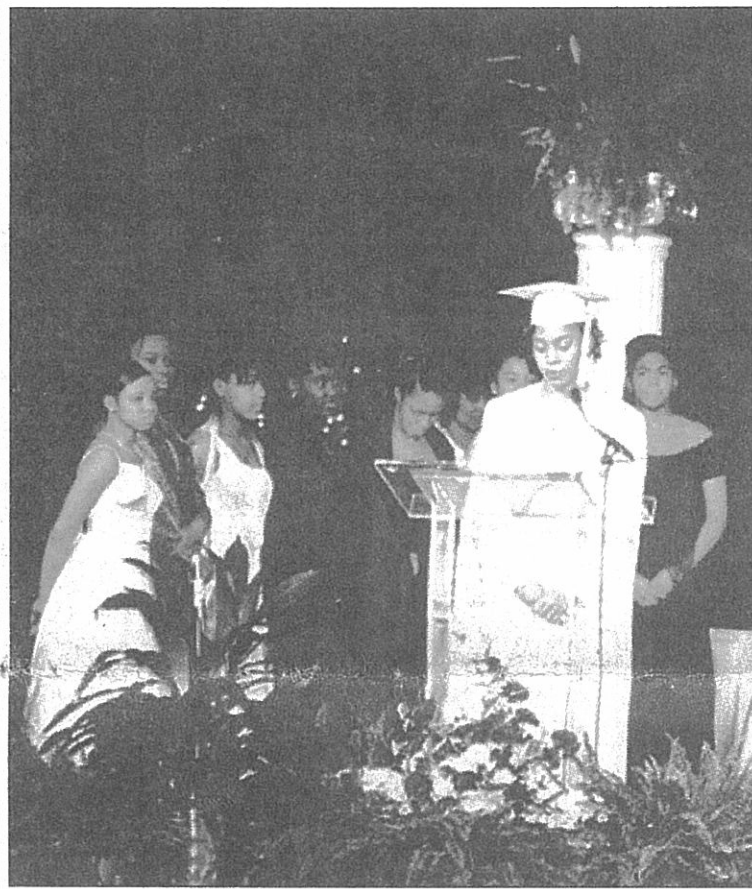
Introduced by ONN anchor and fellow Miss America Marjorie Vincent, Turner also told the crowd that "our stereotypes hold us back more than anything else and character is who you are in

the dark, while reputation is who you are in the light."

Turner was tapped for Blue Chip awards while speaking at a women's conference in Michigan as part of her Christianity. One of the committee members for the Blue Chip Foundation recommended her for the Blue Chip Gala.

Turner, a former 1990 Miss America, received her Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from Arkansas State University. The Turner family eventually settled in Jonesboro, Ark. Turner's father, the first African American on the Arkansas State University staff, taught in the ROTC department.

During her Ms. America year, Turner was a youth motivational speaker who traveled around the world. Speaking about leadership in the 21st century at the E



THE BLUE Chip Academy class now speak with more confidence.

## Second Baptist Church part of Underground Railroad

BY SCOT LACY  
Contributing Writer

Second Baptist Church was one of the 23 sites in Columbus along the Underground Railroad path which assisted runaway slaves to freedom.

In the late 1850s, after the Fugitive Slave Law, there was a split on the issue of slavery assistance in the church. The federal law made Underground Railroad operations illegal. Any individual or organization breaking the law was severely punished.

The law caused the Rev. James Poindexter, pastor of Second Baptist Church and the first Black city councilman, along with 40 other members, to break off from their congregation and start the Anti-Slavery Baptist Church. Poindexter, a member of the Columbus Public School Board of Education, and the 40 members served as Underground

the Anti-Slavery Baptist Church attempted to lobby the state legislature to get rid of the 1804 "B laws," which discouraged Blacks from coming to live in the state. Among other things, the mandated that Blacks could attend public schools, testify themselves in a court of law had to register their freedom the courthouse with a \$500 bond.

Along with publishing and tributing an anti-slavery newspaper for almost a year in 1851 called *The Palladium* of Liberty, Jenkins, a plasterer, glazier, painter, originated the Prince Masons. Jenkins, who started first Black school in Columbus, hosted Frederick Douglass when he spoke downtown at the street house.

John Ward was also a member of the Anti-Slavery Baptist Church and a principle railroad conductor who worked with Scottish immigrant James Westwater. Runa

