

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White's office hosts celebration recognizing Gwendolyn Brooks' 100th birthday

June 7 2017 1:19 PM



SPRINGFIELD - Illinois Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White hosted a poetic celebration of late Pulitzer Prize winner and Illinois Poet Laureate, Gwendolyn Brooks on her 100th birthday today at the State Library in Springfield. The event featured poetry written by Ms. Brooks and recited by outstanding local writers, artists and performers.

In 1968, Brooks was named Illinois Poet Laureate, succeeding Carl Sandburg, and held that title until her death on December 3, 2000. On June 6, 2003, the State Library building was officially rededicated in honor of Gwendolyn Brooks. Her name appears among other Illinois authors etched on the building's exterior fourth-floor frieze.

“Gwendolyn Brooks was a pioneer for African-American poets, writers and artists becoming the first African-American to win the Pulitzer Prize in 1950,” said White. “We honor Ms. Brooks with this celebration on what would have been her 100th birthday to keep her works alive and to inspire future generations of writers and artists.”

In addition to writing more than 20 books of poetry, Brooks taught poetry and creative writing at numerous colleges and universities, including Columbia College Chicago, Northeastern Illinois State College (now Northeastern Illinois University), Elmhurst College, University of Wisconsin–Madison and Clay College of New York. The Gwendolyn Brooks Center for Black Literature and Creative Writing was founded in 1990 at Chicago State University, where she served as distinguished professor and writer-in-residence.

Brooks was renowned for using her influence as a leading figure in American literature to promote the value of poetry and inspire young writers. She established the Illinois Poet Laureate Awards in 1969 to encourage elementary and high school students to develop their skill and passion for creative writing. Brooks was also well known for her generosity, and personally funded countless literary awards and poetry events throughout her lifetime.

For more information on the legacy of Gwendolyn Brooks, [Please Click Here](#).