

# Gloria Naylor: In Memoriam



Gloria Naylor (1950-2016) was a celebrated author and educator; she joined the ancestors in September 2016 while visiting St. Croix, United States Virgin Islands. She is best known for her 1982 novel *The Women of Brewster Place* for which she won the National Book Award for the best first novel. The book was later adapted into a television miniseries produced by Oprah Winfrey, a fictional work that chronicles the communal strength of seven Black women living in decrepit rented houses on a walled-off street in an urban neighborhood. Naylor

was a native of New York City, she earned a bachelor's degree in English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York in 1981, and in 1983 she earned a master's degree in African American Studies from Yale University.

She had been distinguished with numerous honors, including Scholar-in-Residence, the University of Pennsylvania; Senior Fellow, The Society for the Humanities, Cornell University; the President's Medal, Brooklyn College; New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship for screenwriting and Visiting Professor, University of Kent, Canterbury, England.

In 1985 Naylor received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, and went on to win a Guggenheim Fellowship (1988), the Lillian Smith Award (1989), the Candace Award from the National Coalition of 100 Black Women (1986). She was also, the author of *Linden Hills* (1985), a story of an affluent Black community that reveals the truth about the American dream in that the price of success may very well be on a journey down to the lowest circle of hell; *Mama Day* (1988) set on the island of Willow Springs, off the Georgia coast where the powers of healer Mama Day are tested by her great niece; *Bailey's Café* (1992), a loosely intertwined group of stories, told in first person about the owners and patrons of the café; *The Men of Brewster Place* (1999) wherein Naylor returns to the fictional neighborhood, this time focusing on the men behind the women who inhabited that desolate block of row houses, telling their tragic, sad, funny, and heroic stories; *1996* (2005), and editor of *Children of the Night: The Best Short Stories by Black Writers, 1967 to the Present* (1995).

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