

J. Chester Johnson's Acclaimed "Damaged Heritage" To Shine Bright in Times Square, Offering Hope & New Year's Resolution

J. Chester Johnson's "DAMAGED HERITAGE: THE ELAINE RACE MASSACRE AND A STORY OF RECONCILIATION" Takes Center Stage in heart of NYC's Theatre District, Dec. 21st

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Acclaimed poet and book author J. Chester Johnson will see his peaceful bridge-building book "DAMAGED HERITAGE: THE ELAINE RACE MASSACRE AND A STORY OF RECONCILIATION" showcased on the iconic Times Square billboard on December 21, 2024.



NYC's Times Square billboard featuring "Damaged Heritage"

This special event, timed for the new year and resolution making, highlights the power of this true story to overcome divisiveness and inspire hope. By reading "DAMAGED HERITAGE," readers will witness how one man's story can illuminate the path for many others.

In Dr. Carol Strong's Green Mountains Review "Death and Hope from 'The Heart of Darkness'" piece, a book review of "Damaged Heritage: The Elaine Race Massacre and A Story of Reconciliation" by J. Chester Johnson, she wrote:

"Elaine Race Massacre is arguably the most significant race massacre against African-Americans in our country's history. The importance of 'Damaged Heritage' lies, in my opinion, in its vision to help guide our nation's future in racial discourse and decisions. Toward this end, this book accomplishes a major step in that direction by portraying a path of two people together – one Black and one white, one of whom is the author himself – as they reach racial reconciliation whose ancestors were on opposite sides of the Massacre...

An important twist in this book, however, is how the discussions between Chester and Sheila

show that this debate does not automatically sow division; instead, it demonstrates that when people respect each other and search for the 'genuinely human' in those around them, honest dialogue can bring true healing."

Strong is a Professor of Political Science at the University of Arkansas (Monticello), which is located only one county removed from the Elaine Race Massacre.

NYC Times Square Billboard Showcase

The billboard program, curated by publisher Ted Olczak of the "[INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARD and NYC Big Book Award](#)" magazine, ISSN 2836-9149, available at any local library, is a celebration of literary excellence that will showcase Mr. J. Chester Johnson and other distinguished authors' work to the world. From 12:01am to 11pm on December 21th, each hour will feature a couple of minutes of content from these award-winning authors. The strategically placed billboard on Broadway, just north of 46th Street, promises unprecedented exposure for these literary talents.

Mr. Olczak shared his contemplation for this initiative, saying, "It's so important to support literacy and the arts. This year, I have the opportunity to open up to books outside of the awards program to celebrate great authors' books making a difference as they chose to be featured on a billboard by the TKTS Broadway ticket booth in the heart of New York City's Times Square. I recommend others to think about when they are purchasing a book, I'm not just giving a gift to myself and the knowledge it brings, but I'm also supporting authors, illustrators, publishers, and the entire literary community." Olczak continued "In my own small way, I'm also promoting literacy and helping to ensure that books remain accessible to everyone."



Poet and Author J Chester Johnson



Damaged Heritage: The Elaine Race Massacre and A Story of Reconciliation

The Elaine Race Massacre: The Racial Conflagration That Changed American History

In the fall of 1919, a race massacre broke out on the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River Delta with more than a hundred (possibly hundreds of) African-American deaths, constituting one of the most deadly racial conflicts – perhaps, the most deadly race massacre – in our country's history. In addition to the sheer number of African-Americans who perished, the significance of Elaine also rests on the legal case that rose out of the massacre (Moore v Dempsey), decided by the Supreme Court in 1923 with Oliver Wendell Holmes writing the majority opinion, which gave life to the 14th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution (equal protection and due process under the law) and created legal underpinnings for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Notables about "DAMAGED HERITAGE: THE ELAINE RACE MASSACRE AND A STORY OF RECONCILIATION"

- Goodreads includes "Damaged Heritage" on a multi-year, international list (less than 500 books) for Best Nonfiction Books (alongside "The Diary of Anne Frank", "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass", "Hiroshima", "The Gulag Archipelago", among others).
- Appearances on "Damaged Heritage" at The Carter Center, Washington National Cathedral, Trinity Church Wall Street, and on National Public Radio, among over 80 presentations, including interviews.
- Amazon placed "Damaged Heritage" in July, 2020 among the top 3 biographies of social activists sold through Kindle.
- Harvard Magazine chose "Damaged Heritage" as one of six books to showcase its "Bookshelf" section.
- History News Network has published a series of four articles, written by J. Chester Johnson, based on "Damaged Heritage".
- The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education listed "Damaged Heritage" in June, 2020 as one of six recent books of interest to Black scholars.
- Nominee for Lillian Smith Award: "Selected by a panel of judges, nominated books represent outstanding creative achievements worthy of recognition because of their literary merit, moral vision, and honest representation of the South, its people, problems, and promises."
- Recently included to be among the select books for the Library of Congress Shop.

More Responses And Reviews

"In 'Damaged Heritage', Johnson poignantly reveals the demons he discovered in his own life and family, his ties to one of the worst racial horrors in American history, his personal anguish, and his efforts to make amends and fill a desperate empty place in our hearts. Only a poet can see this clearly, be this honest, and still hope this much."

–Douglas A. Blackmon, author of Slavery by Another Name, winner of the Pulitzer Prize

"Johnson is a gifted writer. 'Damaged Heritage' is part memoir, part history, and part essay on racism, all tied together by a story of a friendship that transcended the racial gulf that plagues our country. This book is a model for calling on our better selves to foster a national reconciliation."

–American Book Review

"Johnson is making a profound contribution to that sacred healing work. . ."

–Catherine Meeks, co-author, *Passionate for Justice: Ida B. Wells, As Prophet For Our Time*, and Former Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing

"J. Chester Johnson has done more than tell us a story that must be told – he has laid the healing tools in our hands, and left instructions. This is how it starts."

–Cornelius Eady, co-founder of Cave Canem and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize

"'Damaged Heritage' offers a heartfelt narrative, calling to mind other classic Southern memoirs."

–Arkansas Times

"An important history."

–Library Journal

"Johnson poignantly tells (in 'Damaged Heritage') of a personal family history that stretches from the darkest days of 1919 to a moment of grace nearly a century later, when he met Sheila Walker. A moving and inspiring read."

–Robert Whitaker, author of *On the Laps of Gods, The Red Summer of 1919 And The Struggle For Justice That Remade A Nation*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. Chester Johnson is a well-known poet and nonfiction writer, who grew up along the Mississippi River Delta in southeast Arkansas. He has written extensively (poetry and prose) on race and civil rights, composing the Litany for the National Day of Repentance when The Episcopal Church formally apologized for its role in transatlantic slavery and related evils. A number of his writings are part of the J. Chester Johnson Collection in the Civil Rights Archives at Queens College (New York City), alma mater for Andrew Goodman, one of three martyrs murdered by white supremacists in Mississippi during Freedom Summer.

Published in 2020, Johnson's "Damaged Heritage: The Elaine Race Massacre and A Story of Reconciliation" was an Amazon Bestseller and appears on a Goodreads' multi-year, international list for Best Nonfiction Books (alongside "The Diary of Anne Frank", "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas", "Hiroshima", "The Gulag Archipelago", among others). It has recently been included among the select books for the Library of Congress Shop.

Three other, recent books, authored by Johnson, are *St. Paul's Chapel; Selected Shorter Poems* (2010), *Now And Then: Selected Longer Poems* (2017), and *Auden, the Psalms, and Me* (2017), the story of the retranslation of the Psalms, now contained in the current Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopal Church, for which W. H. Auden (1968-1971) and Johnson (1971-1979) were the poets on the Psalter drafting committee; published in 1979, this version of the Psalms

became a standard. His poem about the iconic St. Paul's Chapel, relief center for the recovery workers at Ground Zero in New York City, has been the Chapel's memento card since soon after the 9/11 terrorists' attacks (1.5 million cards distributed); American Book Review said of the poem in 2017: "Johnson's 'St. Paul's Chapel' is one of the most widely distributed, lauded, and translated poems of the current century". One of fifteen writers selected to be showcased for the inaugural Harvard Alumni Authors' Book Fair in 2019, he was educated at Harvard College and the University of Arkansas (Distinguished Alumnus Award, 2010).

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the U. S. Treasury in the Carter Administration, Johnson owned and ran, for several decades, an independent consulting firm for large domestic governments and non-profit organizations on capital finance and debt management. He has lived in New York City for decades with his wife, Freda.

For more information, consult Johnson's writing website: <https://jchesterjohnson.com/>.

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