



Transcript

The HU Writer's Festival and Preserving the Black Experience feat. Dr. Benjamin Talton

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[00:00:00] **Kweli:** The Moorland-Spingarn Research Center is the largest and most comprehensive repository of books, documents, and ephemera on the global Black experience, including the personal and official papers of Kwame Nkrumah, Paul Robeson, Elaine Locke, Mary Francis Berry, Dr. Benjamin Mays, Vernon Jordan, and Amiri Baraka, to name but a few from its over 700 collections.

Two years ago, a class of 1996 Howard alumnus returned to lead the center. Amongst the many ways he's rejuvenating it is by establishing an international Black writers festival. Let's dig into it.

Welcome to HU2U, the podcast where we bring today's important topics and stories from Howard University to you. I'm Kweli Zukeri, Howard alumnus and today's host. I'm here with Dr. Benjamin Talton, Howard alumnus, African studies scholar and author, and director of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, or MSRC, at Howard University. He's also the lead organizer for the MSRC's International Black Writers Festival, which will take place September 26th to the 29th of this year.

Peace, Dr. Talton, thank you for joining me today.

[00:01:17] **Benjamin:** Peace, Kweli. This is exciting. Thank you.

[00:01:19] **Kweli:** Yeah, I'm very excited to have this discussion as well. I've been waiting a while. So, first, I want to talk about the center, and then we can move on to the writers festival. So, to begin with, renowned author and journalist and Howard alum and faculty member, Ta-Nehisi Coates, describes his own transformative experience as an undergraduate who studied daily in the MSRC, where his father, book publisher and former Black Panther, Paul Coates, worked at the time.

In his book, *Between the World and Me*, speaking to his son, he wrote about the university's importance to the African diaspora, stating, "I was admitted to Howard University but formed and shaped by the Mecca. These institutions are related, but not the same. Howard University

is an institution of higher education concerned with the LSAT, magna cum laude, and Phi Beta Kappa. The Mecca is a machine crafted to capture and concentrate the dark energy of all African peoples and inject it directly into the student body.” And I just love that last piece.

[00:02:20] **Benjamin:** Yeah. We could talk about that for the whole podcast. That's fantastic.

[00:02:24] **Kweli:** He goes on to say that, “One of the greatest collections of books could be found in the MSRC,” where your grandfather once worked. Moorland held archives, papers, collections, and virtually any book ever written by or about Black people.

Dr. Talton, you attended Howard with Ta-Nehisi, where you two became close friends. And the center's been around a long time, it turns 110 this year. Can you tell us some about your own experience with the center as an undergraduate and then about its mission and history?

[00:02:53] **Benjamin:** Yeah. I think Ta-Nehisi captures it amazingly well. That's his memory of it, and it's pretty much my memory of it, my feeling about the center. I started going there as a sophomore. I was a history major, as was Ta-Nehisi. And back then, this is the '90s, we, we were required to go to Moorland to do research, to read, to write book reviews. It was mandatory for most history majors, political science majors, anthropology majors, African studies majors.

And so, it was a bustling place. It's like 60 seats in there, and almost all of them were full in the '90s. And this is where a lot of our friendships were formed, Ta -Nehisi and I. And many, many people we can name, we hung out there as undergrads, as, as well as doing research there. It's a special place, just the energy there. You never knew who you were going to encounter, with scholar, graduate students were hanging out in there. The energy was amazing, and a lot of synergy in there, but you described it as the largest repository and library on the global Black experience.

And what's important is that it's private. So, we can get into the Schomburg, which I love the Schomburg. Grew up much of my youth in Harlem. So, I, I love Harlem, I love the Schomburg, the King Center. There's the library. Many places you can study the global Black experience. But Moorland, it's private. The Schomburg is public.

And it's... to me, that's significant distinction, because when you're private, it's a little more difficult because you have to raise the money to run it. You don't just get the government money. But this is a repository buying about Black people around the world controlled by Black people from around the world.

And we decide what's important. We decide what's significant. We decide the collections that we, that we hold. We control the space. So, I think, that, that distinction is worth homing in on and meditating on, because it's very important.

[00:04:37] **Kweli:** No, I think that's key to say that Black people have control over decision - making around how it gets used, right?

[00:04:43] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:04:43] **Kweli:** You talk about historiography and things like that.

[00:04:44] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:04:45] **Kweli:** It's not just the information itself, but how it's framed, how it's used, where it goes, who's connected, etc.

[00:04:50] **Benjamin:** Precisely, particularly in this age when people have weaponized history. Of course, our history has always been under attack. But we are, in large part, defined by our history. So, controlling that is very important. So, more than it is significant because we decide, "Okay, these are the books. These are the archives. This is what's significant for understanding the global Black experience."

That's important for the past, but also important for the present. But then, also, in terms of the future, we decide what new collections and new books will be in there. So, not only saying the past defines us, but we're also defining the future. And so, I feel that we're in a very powerful position.

[00:05:27] **Kweli:** Yeah, the narratives that come about because of what's accessible and who is controlling that and framing that narrative is key. So, it's, yeah, it's huge.

[00:05:35] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:05:36] **Kweli:** Can you tell us more about your current role there? What challenges and accomplishments have you experienced, thus far?

[00:05:41] **Benjamin:** Yeah, it's, it's, just listening to the introduction, it, it gave me chills because, again, I described how I interacted with Moorland as a student. And now, my job is to talk about Moorland. I do it for a living. And I've been given this incredible task of moving Moorland into the future.

I was a history professor at Temple University for 13 years. Before that, I was at Hofstra University. I left Howard in '96 and I got a PhD at University of Chicago. I was just planning to just be a history professor.

Coming back to Howard has been incredible. It's coming, really, coming home, literally. And so I've been here for almost two years, but I don't feel like I... I don't feel new. I feel like this, again, this is home for me. And being in founders just feels very comfortable and natural. We have a phenomenal staff.

But the time that I described, the '90s, we describe it, Ta -Nehisi describes it as this amazing period and this amazing space, but it was actually the low point of Moorland, because you also talked about Paul Coates, Ta-Nehisi's father, who worked in Moorland, I'm not quite sure how long, at least 10 years.

When he was here in the '80s, late '70s, '80s, Moorland had a staff of about 50 people. They had an oral history project. We have the Black Press archive. There are many librarians in there, reference librarians. They had a publications division. So, they were putting out publications. The staff was much larger.

When I came in the '90s as a student, the staff was probably about 10, and shrinking. When I arrived in January, 2022, when they introduced me to the staff, I believe they're, not including the student employees, there were seven people in the room, one of whom was on his way out. So, we started with a staff of... I started with a staff of six. You can imagine, we were founded as a center in 1973. We became Moorland-Spingarn Center, founded in 1910 as the Moorland Foundation, Moorland Library. Continued to grow into the '80s, and then the '90s we fell off.

I'm happy to say, though, because we have the tremendous support of the administration and we've had some grants — Mellon Foundation grant, the Jonathan Logan Family Foundation — we've been able to staff up very, very quickly. And so, we're, we're in the teens now. We just, we're onboarding a new archivist today. In fact, she's online at her orientation today. We onboarded another archivist two weeks ago. And we have a, a chief librarian for the first time in a decade and a half. And we have a rare books librarian now for the first time ever. And we just, I have a new reference library started about a month ago. So, we're in the high teens pushing toward the 20s.

[00:08:26] **Kweli:** So, it's capacity building.

[00:08:28] **Benjamin:** Capacity building because you mentioned all these collections that we have. First of all, we have this huge library, the largest privately owned library on the global Black experience in the world. And I'm very proud that it's at Howard University.

But imagine having this amazing library but no librarian. And so, we've changed that. We have these collections. We have upwards of 700-plus collections. That's just in the manuscript division, because we have the university's archive as well. So, we get the president's papers, board of trustees, athletic departments. So, many of these programs are having anniversaries. Swim team has an anniversary. Swim team had amazing season last year. The women's basketball team has an anniversary. We have their collections as well, in addition to personal and professional papers of many of our professors. So, that's the university archive. And we have an amazing university archivist, Sonja Woods. She cooks with a high flame with grease every single day. I love her to death.

And then, we have the manuscript division. That's the papers that you described. That's Amiri Baraka. Can you imagine? We go right downstairs and, usually, right now, Amiri Baraka's personal papers are, are there.

[00:09:28] **Kweli:** Yeah, that's there.

[00:09:29] **Benjamin:** Elaine Locke. What is the Harlem Renaissance without Elaine Locke, professor of philosophy here at Howard University, arguing against this idea that Africans have no history, have no role in shaping the humanities? His papers are with us. And so, that's the Mary Francis Berry, Congressional Black Caucus, TransAfrica. We can go on Robeson, we can go on. But only 250 of those 700-plus collections are processed and available to the public. And that's because of a staffing issue. We accumulated more collections than we could process and make available to the public.

Now, we make special dispensation for people. So, if you want to come and see, for example, Charles Diggs, founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, influential in founding TransAfrica, one of the champions of Africa in Congress from the 1960s until 1979, we have his papers, a huge collection.

We are a public service institution. So, of course, if you want to study Charles Diggs, we're not going to say no. We might. But what makes special dispensation, even though those papers aren't processed, right? So, we have scholars who come and study Charles Diggs.

[00:10:38] **Kweli:** Right. So, if someone's aware, they can come at least to access that, still a public service, but your goal is to make sure that all these things are more accessible online and advertised and people know what's there, and it's much more easy to get to it.

[00:10:49] **Benjamin:** Absolutely. So, that's moving us into the 21st century with digitization. Digitization is also preservation because we want to preserve these for the next generation.

[00:10:55] **Kweli:** For sure. No, it is so important. It reminds me of, you know, Black studies, in general, was marginalized until the '70s and '80s when Black students demanded it.

[00:11:04] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:11:04] **Kweli:** But there were people that were... had to build a foundation for that to even become a thing. And then, more recently, when it... with the pandemic and police oppression becoming so prominent, you know, I noticed that all these universities start to say Black Lives Matter on their websites. It's like Howard didn't have to say that, because that's what it's been about, right?

[00:11:20] **Benjamin:** Yeah.

[00:11:20] **Kweli:** So, it's in the same way. It's like we've been... the center has been doing the work.

[00:11:24] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:11:24] **Kweli:** And other places, it becomes a trend or in Vogue, but it's like, no matter what, we're going to be here and do this work.

[00:11:30] **Benjamin:** And it's also the small things that historically white institutions will probably miss. For example, we have collections from roller skate clubs in D.C. Roller skating was a very, very central part of the Black, particularly, urban experience through the 1980s. It's coming back, I hear.

I think White institutions, curators, archivists, libraries, might miss that. Jack and Jill, that name means something very significant to people of African descent in particularly suburban spaces in the United States. But a White curator might miss that. But we recognize why that matters. Activists like Sylvia Hill, or even, again, Charles Diggs, we understand their importance and important role that they played in, in, in politics and in culture and in, also, our connections to

the African continent. So, that, again, is not just being privately owned, but being conscious of what, what makes these significant.

[00:12:31] **Kweli:** Thank you for all that insight regarding the center. I think we need to move on to talking about the writers festival. So, the original National Black Writers Conferences sponsored by Howard University's Institute for Arts and Humanities took place between 1974 and 1983, and the MSRC revived this tradition last year with its inaugural festival. This will be its second annual iteration. Can you tell us about the International Black Writers Festival, its history, and its purpose?

[00:12:58] **Benjamin:** Again, this goes back to conversations with the Ta-Nehisi Coates. We, we returned to Howard around the same time. And we were just thinking about Howard's past being at the core of conversations about the Black experience and lamenting that, I think, that had fallen off a bit. Although, people were still engaged in this. Not to say that we, two of us returned with our capes on and said, "Hey, now we're important." Again, Howard was doing great work before we arrived, and it'll be doing great.

[00:13:27] **Kweli:** Y'all are superheroes in my book.

[00:13:28] **Benjamin:** I appreciate that. I appreciate that. But, but also just thinking about that, like you said, the Black Writers Conference that began here in, in the '70s, then moved on to Medgar Evers in Chicago Stadium. We were considering all the important Black thinkers that are at historically White institutions. Now, we're thinking about all the awards that are given to artists, activists from White institutions.

So, how can Howard be at the center of that conversation again? So, the idea was to bring the Writers Conference back. Black Writers Conference still exists. It's an organization.

So, we thought about two things. One, to make it a festival, like the New Yorker Festival, we're not presenting papers. It's not workshops, but it's, it's conversation. The other part of it is Howard has always been, more than has always been, global. Howard has always been globally Black, right? Diversity in blackness. And so, we wanted to make the festival international, purposefully inviting writers based on the continent, writers based in Europe and the Caribbean, Spanish-speaking writers on the Black experience to be in conversation with each other.

So, last year, it was really just interesting people, who do we want to see in conversation? Who do we think is significant shaping the narrative right now? What's important? This year, and it was, I think it was a great success. Of course, there are many things that we could have done

better, but it was, it was, a successful event. Students are still talking about it. And what I found most generative is that you had students and elders and mid-career folks in conversation with each other, particularly after sessions, when they're mingling outside. And we had Sankofa selling books, which was fantastic. So, to have Haki Madhubuti in conversation with a sophomore at Howard.

[00:15:14] **Kweli:** Right.

[00:15:14] **Benjamin:** Paul Coates in conversation with Michael Ralph, who's professor of African-American studies here.

[00:15:20] **Kweli:** And it all flowed really well, just the intergenerational nature of it.

[00:15:23] **Benjamin:** That's so true. I think so.

[00:15:24] **Kweli:** Really, you could feel it when you were there.

[00:15:26] **Benjamin:** I think so. And it was really wonderful. You had people like Derecka Purnell, fantastic writer, powerful force on stage, hanging out with her children, her, her two young sons walking around. It just, the energy was, it was electric.

This year, I felt, rather than just having amazing writers in conversation, I want it to be deliberate about a theme, to have everyone thinking about meditating on a particular idea. Going back to the, the germ for the festival, which was bringing conversations among writers, activists, and scholars in conversations at Howard to make Howard the center of Black intellectual thought. We think about why we gather. Why do we still come together as Black people? Why do we still have HBCUs when we have deans of schools of journalism at Ivy Leagues that are Black, presidents of Ivy League universities that are Black, Penn Prize winner, Booker Prize winners, MacArthur Genius Award winners that are Black? Why do we still gather?

And so, that's the theme this year — to think about why we still come together as Africans and people of African descent to have conversation. Why do we still need to do that? So, it's a, it's a question and a provocation, is to say, we do gather and then we'll think about why that is. Of course, I have my answers.

[00:16:46] **Kweli:** Well, actually, I'd like to hear that. And I, I want to say, too, that, you know, I attended the festival last year, sort of, the inaugural rejuvenation of the festival. And yeah, I thought it was phenomenal, considering some of the circumstances and that was the first time

back. So, I had a great experience and just loved the energy and the dialogue and the, the Black excellence and the critical thought that was just put through the dialogue. And then, you saw how excited I was, and you recruited me to be on the organizing committee this year. So, it's been great to be a part of the process, kind of, think you took advantage of my excitement there, but I'm happy to be a part of it. So, what, what's your answer to that question? Why do we gather?

[00:17:18] **Benjamin:** I want to take a chance to throw it right back at you, because everyone I asked last year to come, with the exception of, of maybe two said yes right away. Keeanga - Yamahtta, Traylor, MacArthur award... I think she was a runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize for her book. She had never been invited to Howard. Right away, she said, yes. Haki Madhubuti said yes. Sonia Sanchez said yes. I'm actually advertising. These are some of the people who were, who were there last year. Derecka Purnell, she said yes. Salamishah Tillet never spoke at Howard before, award-winning author, she said yes. Marcia Chatelain, Pulitzer Prize winning author, she said yes.

Why are they responding so enthusiastically from an invitation from Howard University? All of these people, with the exception of Haki, are at White institutions. This year, Vincent Brown, award-winning author of many books, including *Tacky's Revolt*, scholar at Yale University, I invited him. Immediately said yes. Never been invited to Howard University before. Never spoke here.

Monique Badase is going to be in conversation with, with Vincent Brown. She said yes. And we have a hip-hop panel. All of them said yes. So, the question is, you know, why do people, why are people still drawn to Howard when there's so much going on at the se historically White institutions? Why were you so excited last year to be part of the festival?

[00:18:36] **Kweli:** Well, you know, that's... I don't understand why anyone is anywhere else, honestly, except at HBCUs when it comes to higher ed, because I've been here for 10 years. And, you know, it's having a Black space, first and foremost, right? This is not necessarily going to be an institution that leads a revolution for Black people, right? But it is a Black space where a dialogue can take place and certain organizations can exist and organizing can exist that's just not going to exist elsewhere. The re's a lot of things here I don't necessarily agree with either, right? But it is a Black space, our space. Everything can exist within it.

And I think, you know, I think about Manning Maribel talking about the Black intellectual tradition. As a graduate student at Howard, you know, one of the things I loved was that I noticed that students in my cohort, I was in the psychology program, some o f them had come

from PWIs because they just didn't get the support they needed for the type of research they wanted to do. Because for them it was about, "I need to produce knowledge and I want to answer these questions, but also how is it relevant to actually applying what I learned to my community, to my people? How are we going to use this information to improve our conditions, improve our lives?" Like, it's relevant for a reason. It's not just for knowledge's sake, right?

And that is that tradition of an activist scholar that I think pervades the university and most HBCUs, you know. Like, it's, what are we doing with this information together, right, as we build this knowledge? So, I think, you know, that's a huge reason to gather. And I think a lot of the scholars that came, some of them understood that, but some of them, yeah, they want to come to a space where they can have a certain conversation and say things that everyone's going to understand and, and build on, right?

[00:20:03] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:20:05] **Kweli:** It's, it's different from other places where you probably have to prove yourself, number one, to be legitimate, right, or to be considered, you know, legitimate. And number two, you just can't build the same way and have the same dialogue. So, it is a space, first and foremost.

[00:20:19] **Benjamin:** Couldn't have said it better myself. That's one of the reasons why we gather. And I, I feel like at Howard and at the International Black Writers Festival, as you're saying, you, you don't have to spend a lot of time on context.

[00:20:29] **Kweli:** Right, right, right.

[00:20:30] **Benjamin:** Right. We're all coming from the similar places, but again, diversity and blackness is significant. But I, I feel that we're not just together because we're Black. Let's just get that off the table. We all have that in common. There are other issues that bind us and tie us together. We had a great conversation at last year's writers festival with Tricia Hersey and The Nap Ministry. And then, we got into a great conversation about capitalism and its consequences for the Black experience.

[00:20:58] **Kweli:** There's a lot of intersectionality.

[00:21:00] **Benjamin:** A lot of intersectionality. This year, I'm looking forward to, we have a banned books panel with Ibram Kendi, Nikole Hannah-Jones, and Te-Nehisi.

[00:21:08] **Kweli:** Yeah. I'm really excited about that.

[00:21:09] **Benjamin:** I'm super excited about that. Mikki Kendall is supposed to be there as well. So, these are conversations that we could have internally, but also speaking, speaking outward, which makes me very excited.

[00:21:19] **Kweli:** And so, I'm really excited about that banned books panel. Banned books, you know, it's a form of censorship that has greatly increased during the past few years. And it's mostly affected literature that illuminates the experiences of Black and Brown people, as well as people that identify as LGBTQ+. So, why do you think banned books is a very important subject? And why do you think we've seen a recent rise in centers of efforts?

[00:21:42] **Benjamin:** As we make progress, there's always this pushback. This just goes back to the founding of this country. There's a particular idea of what it means to be an American. There's an aspiration that they've never achieved, but they've always been going toward that. As we make racial progress, racists make progress as well.

So, this is part of the history of the United States: censorship, deciding what is legitimate, legally, intellectually, socially, culturally. And this is just part of that tradition. And what's important is that we always just keep moving, moving forward. But it's interesting now that we look at Florida and, and Texas, there's some other, other spots that they're not having the success that I think they believed they, they would.

I'm amazed at my colleagues who are able to teach in Florida and, and Texas. But what we'll do at the festival is engage these questions and not just to say, "Okay, these books shouldn't be banned, but let's really get into what are they really doing when they are banning books?" They know that these books are still going to be circulating, but they're creating a narrative.

[00:22:50] **Kweli:** Right, right.

[00:22:50] **Benjamin:** They're saying these things are not legitimate. These are not significant for the American experience. But this is part of the American tradition.

[00:22:57] **Kweli:** Right.

[00:22:57] **Benjamin:** But so was the pushback.

[00:22:58] **Kweli:** Right.

[00:22:59] **Benjamin:** So was protest.

[00:23:00] **Kweli:** Right.

[00:23:00] **Benjamin:** So was our response to it. That's also part of the American tradition.

[00:23:02] **Kweli:** For sure. I think it's a good sign, in fact, when you see people pushing back against some form of progress because that means something good has to be happening.

[00:23:09] **Benjamin:** That's right.

[00:23:10] **Kweli:** And I agree though that it is somewhat of a smokescreen to larger issues. You're trying to mobilize certain people and energize certain people that have a, that want to "make America great again," let's say, you know. But I think, yeah, the ironic... if you just look at the irony of banning books in this digital age, everyone's going to start looking for those books that are banned anyway because they become curious, at least, at minimum, right?

So, I'm sure, you know, Amazon sales and things for these authors has just blown up as, every time they get banned, they probably get more book sales, you know, because people are finding them around the country, even if it's banned in one small shop.

[00:23:42] **Benjamin:** And that's what's been happening. And libraries doing displays on these banned books and festivals like ours having sessions on banned books. But how, how un-American. It is very American, but in terms of America's image of itself, the idea that you will censor. A friend or my colleague from South Africa said, this is when I was at Hof Street. He said... this is after the 9/11. He said, "You in this country don't know what fascism looks like, so, you don't know if fascism appears when it's coming down the pike."

I think Black folks know what fascism looks like, who lived under fascism until about '65. But he's saying Americans in general don't know. So, all these, these creeping initiatives — banning books, censorship, all these debates — that's, that's, that's creeping fascism. But it's also a part of the American experience.

[00:24:29] **Kweli:** It definitely is. Another panel, which I also happen to be moderating, will feature prolific Africana studies heavyweights and also builders of independent educational institutions, including Anthony Browder and Dr. Sophicia Carol Lee, amongst others. The discussion will examine different approaches and frameworks for Africana cultures centric education for children of African descent.

So, for you, as a scholar activist for Africana studies and, even more importantly, as a parent of Black children, what impact do you think such educational approaches has on children of African descent, both K through 12 and in college, as well as maybe at home and in other spaces?

[00:25:06] **Benjamin:** I'm so glad this panel is going to be part of the festival. I'm really happy about that and excited. Looking forward to it. And it just goes back to, were we speaking about controlling our spaces, controlling our education? The evidence is out there. How it just changes people's confidence, their mentality, small things like just traveling to Africa, learning about, we have a group of... they're not the Karsh STEM scholars, but they're at the humanities version that just launched. And they took a two-week trip to Africa, to Ghana, specifically. I was there at the same time. And I ran into a young man at Target yesterday who was part of that trip. And he said he's, he won't be the same again.

So, just being exposed to this type of education and being exposed to it by people who share your experience is empowering. And we live in a society where policy and culture has been shaped and framed around disempowering us beyond symbolics. We always... we can get a whole conversation about what diversity means. I, myself, am not, am not a diversity guy. But when you have institutions catered toward educating people of African descent for them and by them, the change is evident. I mean, all the studies have shown these students just are more confident and perform extremely well.

But I think the panel's also important because we're losing a lot of these institutions now. When they were thriving, many of them were already small. Whether it's an African-centered school or a cultural organization, a civic organization, they always tend to be, kind of, small, but we have fewer in number. So, we need to have this conversation.

[00:26:41] **Kweli:** Yeah, no, I obviously agree. And I hope people who attend the panel can really have a robust conversation, because I think that type of socialization can just exist on so many levels, right? And, and there's so many different dynamics to consider and how to optimize that.

[00:26:56] **Benjamin:** Mm-hmm.

[00:26:56] **Kweli:** So, I'm really excited about that.

[00:26:57] **Benjamin:** Yeah. I was on the, I'm on the board of a cultural organization, the Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy in Brooklyn. They've been around almost 30 years. And the different groups of students that come through there, it's, they teach capoeira, they do African dance drumming, and they have a heritage program. They teach about African and African American, Caribbean history.

You see the difference in these students when they reach college. It's a, it's a K through 12 program, even into young adulthood. You see the difference in them — the confidence, their



knowledge, just having a sense of self, and the ways in which they navigate the world. You see the difference. I could. I see those. I see Ifetayo students and I see other students. I could just tell the difference.

[00:27:38] **Kweli:** I agree. So, just to round us out, what can people expect to get out of attending? And how can they attend and, and find out more information about the festival?

[00:27:47] **Benjamin:** Well, this podcast is a great start. We are also going to do some social media posts beginning this week. You could also visit our website, msrc.howard.edu, and there'll be some links to the festival there. If you are on campus, pass through Sankofa books. In the next couple of days, we'll have flyers there. But just follow us @MoorlandHU on Twitter. Oh, it's X now, isn't it? It's not Twitter anymore. What is it called?

[00:28:11] **Kweli:** Yeah, X. I wanted to ask you about that.

[00:28:13] **Benjamin:** Yeah.

[00:28:13] **Kweli:** It's X now, if...

[00:28:15] **Benjamin:** Yeah, so more @MoorlandHU on all of our socials, particularly Instagram. And you'll see flyers around campus. We have a short story slam that we're going to announce for students. We have a poetry slam for the students. There'll be some readings. But all of the events will take place in founders' library browsing room, and also, hopefully, in the digital auditorium in Blackburn. We haven't set that up yet because we have some, I think some larger crowd willing to accommodate for some of these sessions, including our keynote conversation between Te-Nehisi Coates and Walter Mosley, which is going to be amazing.

[00:28:48] **Kweli:** Yeah, that's going to be great.

Thank you for coming to our podcast, Dr. Talton. This is HU2U, the podcast where we dig into today's important topics and stories from Howard University to you.

I'm Kweli Zukeri, today's host. And thank you for listening. HU...

[00:29:04] **Benjamin:** You know!

[00:29:07] **Outro:** For more stories from Howard University, visit our award-winning Howard Magazine at magazine.howard.edu and our award-winning news and information hub, The Dig, at thedig.howard.edu.