

Shake out your finest words.
Get ready to shimmy 'til your line breaks.
Writers and readers and lovers of the work
of LGBTQ writers of African descent take note:

The time for Fire & Ink III: Cotillion is almost here!

In 2002, Fire & Ink organized the first, historic, national gathering of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) writers of African descent, held at the University of Illinois in Chicago.

"Mixing 'page' and 'stage' poets with fiction writers, filmmakers, playwrights, journalists and academics at all stages of their careers, the groundbreaking Fire & Ink: A Writers Festival for GLBT People of African Descent, held in Chicago in 2002, helped introduce a wide range of writers to each other and their work in ways previous, mainly non-black writers' gatherings and small literary salons could not match." – "Out No Doubt," [Black Issues Book Review](#)

Fire & Ink was initially conceived as a periodic national gathering to strengthen and nourish our creative community, while contributing our unique voices to the complex weave of documented culture. It has since grown into much more. Fire & Ink remains the only organization that exists solely to support writers, readers, and lovers of literature, academic and cultural work written from throughout the LGBTQ African diaspora. In 2005, Fire & Ink II: Revival, a regional gathering, was held at the University of Texas, Austin. Fire & Ink, in furtherance of its mission, was proud to benefit from the publication of *Carry the Word: A Bibliography of Black LGBTQ Books* (published by RedBone Press and Vintage Entity Press in July 2007). In 2008, Fire & Ink is programming literary events and writing workshops in conjunction with Black Pride events across the country.

In 2009, **Fire & Ink III: Cotillion** will bring together hundreds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent whose work spans the genres, including: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, songwriting, playwriting, multi-media arts, performance arts, scholars and academic writers, as well as editors, publishers, curators, audio and visual artists, students, teachers, thinkers, media professionals, readers and art lovers from diverse backgrounds and of diverse interests from around the country to:

- ✓ **Create** a body of writers dedicated to reversing negative trends in cultural, literary and artistic marketplaces, while creating more positive, powerful arenas for those expressions.
- ✓ **Teach, inspire and encourage** each other while creating lasting alliances.
- ✓ **Discuss** the position and importance of Black LGBT literature, culture, and artistic expression in the context of national and world literature and artwork.
- ✓ **Develop** and implement strategies to lobby and encourage universities, libraries, mainstream and independent bookstores and other venues to integrate more LGBT literature and artwork created by writers of African descent within and outside of traditional curricula and offerings, as well as to provide more opportunities for distribution, marketing and presentation.
- ✓ **Plan, share and implement** professional and artistic opportunities. Cotillion will meet this goal with:
 - **Conversation:** including panel discussions and public conversations with craft masters in various genres;
 - **Knowledge Sharing:** skills-building workshops developed to promote artistic growth and help produce our best work;
 - **Readings & Performances:** see and hear the work of some of the best LGBT writers of African descent in the U.S.;
 - **Idea Exchange:** meet, work, and rub elbows with writers, readers, publishers, editors, artists, critics, and scholars;
 - **Celebration! The Fire & Ink Cotillion Ball** will take place on Saturday night, deep into Sunday morning, October 11, 2009, in celebration of National Coming Day. We are coming out as artists and cultural creators, embracing our power and our work, celebrating our accomplishments, and stepping out together into the future we are busily creating.

Fire & Ink III: Cotillion will begin on Thursday, October 8th and conclude on National Coming Out Day, October 11, 2009. The theme of Cotillion was conceived to acknowledge that some of the best creative and cultural work being produced today is created, supported, and/or inspired by LGBT writers and artists of African descent. Cotillion will create a one-of-a-kind experience where creative artists can meet and work together in an open and supportive environment that fosters the freedom to be who we are and encourages us to live to our best potential. In a world where our contributions are often ignored, silenced or written out of history, Cotillion is our creative, declarative coming out festival where we as artists affirm the power and significance of our lives and our work.

Come out, come out wherever you are! Come make history with us!