



*"The prodigiously talented Jeffrey Renard Allen is without question one of our most important writers. His novel, *Rails Under My Back*, kicked ass, and these tough beautiful stories are a gift. You cannot finish this collection without being dazzled by Allen's manifold talents."*

-Junot Diaz

Jeffery Renard Allen

Featured Author of the 2011 African American Read-In at Penn State Altoona

Will give a reading on Monday, February 21st, 5:30 p.m.

Slep Student Center, Penn State Altoona

Jeffery Renard Allen is the author of two collections of poetry, *Stellar Places* (Moyer Bell 2007) and *Harbors and Spirits* (Moyer Bell 1999), and two works of fiction, the widely celebrated and influential novel, *Rails Under My Back* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000), which won *The Chicago Tribune's* Heartland Prize for Fiction, and the story collection *Holding Pattern* (Graywolf Press 2008), which won the Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence. His other awards include a Whiting Writer's Award, a support grant from Creative Capital, The Chicago Public Library's Twenty-first Century Award, a Recognition for Pioneering Achievements in Fiction from the African American Literature and Culture Association, the 2003 Charles Angoff award for fiction from *The Literary Review*, and special citations from the Society for Midlands Authors and the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation. He has been at fellow at The Dorothy L. and Lewis B. Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers at The New York Public Library, a John Farrar Fellow in Fiction at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, and a Walter E. Dakins Fellow in Fiction at the Sewanee Writers' Conference.

His essays, reviews, fiction, and poetry have appeared in numerous publications, including *The Chicago Tribune*, *Poets & Writers*, *Triquarterly*, *Ploughshares*, *Bomb*, *Hambone*, *The Antioch Review*, *StoryQuarterly*, *African Voices*, *African American Review*, *Callaloo*, *Arkansas Review*, *Other Voices*, *Black Renaissance Noire*, and *XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics*. His work has also appeared in several anthologies, including *110 Stories: New York Writes after September 11*, *Rainbow Darkness: An Anthology of African American Poetry*, *Chicago Noir*, *Homeground: Language for an American Landscape*, and *Best African American Fiction 2010*.

Born in Chicago, he holds a Ph.D. in English (Creative Writing) from the University of Illinois at Chicago and is currently a faculty member in the writing program at the New School. He has also taught for Cave Canem, the Summer Literary Seminars program in St. Petersburg, Russia, KwaniFest in Kenya, the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Foundation, North Country Retreat for Writers of Color, and in the writing program at Columbia University. And he is the founder and executive director of the Pan African Literary Forum, an international, non-profit literary organization that serves writers and which holds an annual writers' conference in Ghana.

Among other projects, Allen is presently at work on *Talking Talk*, a book of interviews and conversations with fiction writers of African descent from around the world, *Africa Calling Africa: A 21st Century Anthology of New and Emerging Writers from the Continent*, and the novel *Song of the Shank*, based on the life of Thomas Greene Wiggins, a nineteenth century African American piano virtuoso and composer who performed under the stage name Blind Tom. Graywolf Press will publish the novel in 2011. Allen lives in Far Rockaway, Queens.

Dr. Allen will read from his work and talk about his experiences with the Pan African Literary Forum on Monday, February 21st, at 5:30 p.m. in the Slep Student Center on the Penn State Altoona campus. A book signing will immediately follow the presentation. This event is free and open to the public.

Sponsored by the Penn State Altoona English Program's Writers & Speakers Series