

50-state Women Honorees for September 2012

(Read About These Talented Women!)

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(* Each month, AWWNM's 50-state Project features premier American women writers from four states)

NEW YORK

2008 Daytime Emmy winner and Buffalo native **Cherie Bennett** (1960-) a screenwriter, playwright, and novelist nicknamed "Big & Tall Barbie Doll," worked as a soap opera writer on CBS' daytime "Young & the Restless." Bennett has authored more than a dozen plays and novels, including the *Dawson's Creek* series and the script for the film *Broken Bridges*.

Born in Elmira, NY, **Susy Clemens** (1872-1896) was the oldest daughter of writer Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and is said to have inspired many of his works. At age 13, Susy Clemens authored a poignant biography of her father entitled *Papa: An Intimate Biography of Mark Twain* (not published until 1988). At age 24, she died of spinal meningitis.

Lucille Clifton (1936-2010) author of children's books and poetry, was born in Buffalo where she graduated from high school. Her writings address social issues in or around the Black community, such as her Everett Anderson series depicting a black child's inner-city life. Clifton was Poet Laureate of Maryland, won the National Book Award for poetry, and in 1988, was the first writer to have two books named Pulitzer Prize finalists in the same year.



NORTH CAROLINA

Called "one of 10 best children's writers in the world," **Betsy Byars** (1928-) born in Charlotte, N.C., has authored more than 50 children's books. In 1971 she won the Newbery Medal for her novel *Summer of the Swans*, in 1980 she won a National Book Award for her book *The Night Swimmers*. Byars and her husband, both pilots, have a home where the ground floor is an airplane hangar.

Virginia DeBerry, born in Wadesboro, N.C., is a former high school English teacher and plus-size model who became a best-selling novelist. She is the author of *Tryin' to Sleep in the Bed You Made* (1997), *Far from the Tree* (2000) and *Better Than I Know Myself* (2004), and other works. In 1998 she received the Book of the Year Award from the Blackboard, and the Open Book Award from the African-American Literary Awards Show.

New York Times best-seller and NASCAR racing fan **Sharyn McCrumb** (1948-) is the author of *The Devil Amongst the Lawyers* (2010) which details how national journalists stereotype rural areas. The Wilmington, N.C. native, in her Ballad series, weaves legends, geography and contemporary issues of Appalachia, each work centering on an event from N.C. history. Her other series include *Elizabeth McPherson* and *St. Dale*. McCrumb is a six-time Agatha Award winner, a seven-time Anthony Award winner, as well as other major recognitions. Her novels are translated into 11 languages.

NORTH DAKOTA

Poet and dramatist **Madeline Gleason** (1903-1979) born in Fargo, N.D., tap danced in touring vaudeville shows during her childhood. In 1947 Gleason organized the first Festival of Modern Poetry in the U.S. and founded the San Francisco Poetry Guild. Her poems have been featured in various publications including Donald Allen's anthology *The New American Poetry 1945-1960*.

Musician and singer **Jennie Shortridge's** short stories have been featured in *Glamour*, *Mademoiselle* and *Natural Home* magazines. Born in 1959 in Grand Forks, N.D., her first novel, *Riding with the Queen*, was published in 2003, and she since has written three more novels. Shortridge volunteers at literacy organizations teaching adults and children how to read and write. "As a child, reading was my salvation," Shortridge explains.



Barbara Handy-Marchello, author of non-fiction *Women of the Northern Plains: Gender & Settlement on the Homestead Frontier 1870-1930*, has lived in N.D. since 1980, teaching women's history at the University of N.D. for 15 years, retiring in 2006. Her book, which won the 2005 Caroline Bancroft Prize for best book on Western History, "tells the story of the unsung heroines of N.D.'s settlement era: farm women. Their efforts made the difference between success and failure for N.D. families."

OHIO

1987 Pulitzer prize winner **Rita Dove** (1952-) born in Akron, Ohio, is the first Black person selected as Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. Dove is the current Poet Laureate of Virginia where she teaches at the University of Virginia. (Dove is pictured on AWWNM's Home Page.)

Cleveland-born *Washington Post* journalist **Mary Jordan**, who won a 2003 Pulitzer Prize for her reports on corruption in Mexico's criminal justice system, co-authored a 2005 book *The Prison Angel: Mother Antonia's Journey from Beverly Hills to a Life of Service in a Mexican Jail*, which earned her a Christopher Award.

Toni Morrison (1931-) won the Pulitzer Prize (1987) for her novel *Beloved*, as well as the Nobel Prize in literature (1993) for her body of work. An internationally famous literary icon, Morrison, born in Lorain, Ohio, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom this year. In 2000, her novel *The Bluest Eye* was chosen for Oprah's Book Club. She has won dozens of major awards. (Morrison is pictured on AWWNM's Home Page.)