James Baldwin

James Arthur Baldwin (August 2, 1924 – December 1, 1987) was an American novelist, playwright, and activist. His essays, as collected in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), explore intricacies of racial, sexual, and class distinctions in Western societies, most notably in mid-20th-century North America.[1] Some of Baldwin's essays are book-length, including *The Fire Next Time* (1963), *No Name in the Street* (1972), and *The Devil Finds Work* (1976). An unfinished manuscript, *Remember This House*, was expanded and adapted for cinema as the Academy Award–nominated documentary film *I Am Not Your Negro*.[2] One of his novels, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, was adapted into an Academy Award-winning dramatic film in 2018.

Baldwin's novels and plays fictionalize fundamental personal questions and dilemmas amid complex social and psychological pressures thwarting the equitable integration of not only African Americans, but also gay and bisexual men, while depicting some internalized obstacles to such individuals' quests for acceptance. Such dynamics are prominent in Baldwin's second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, written in 1956, well before the gay liberation movement.[3]

James Baldwin

Baldwin in 1969

Born	August 2, 1924 Manhattan, New York City, U.S.
Died	December 1, 1987 (aged 63) Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France
Nationality	American
Occupation	novelist · playwright · activist
Years active	1947–1985
Notable work	*Go Tell It on the Mountain* *Giovanni's Room* *Notes of a Native Son*

Contents

Early life

James Arthur Baldwin was born on August 2, 1924. His mother, Emma Berdis Jones,[4] left his biological father because of his drug abuse.[5] She moved to Harlem where Baldwin was born in Harlem Hospital. In New York, his mother married a Baptist preacher, David Baldwin, with whom she had eight children, born between 1927 and 1943; her husband also had one son from a previous marriage who was nine years older than James.[6] The family was poor and Baldwin's stepfather, whom in essays he referred to as his father, treated him more harshly than his other children.[4] His intelligence combined with the persecution by his stepfather caused Baldwin to spend much of his time alone in libraries. By the time Baldwin had reached adolescence, he had discovered his passion for writing. His educators deemed him gifted, and in 1937, at the age of thirteen, he wrote his first article, titled "Harlem—Then and Now", which was published in his school's magazine, *The Douglass Pilot*.[7]

Baldwin spent much time caring for his several younger brothers and sisters. At the age of 10, he was teased and abused by two New York police officers, an instance of racist harassment by the NYPD that he would experience again as a teenager and document in his essays. His stepfather died of tuberculosis in the summer of 1943 on the day his last child was born, just before Baldwin turned 19. The day of the funeral was Baldwin's 19th birthday and the day of the Harlem riot of 1943, which was portrayed at the beginning of his essay "Notes of a Native Son."[8]

Education

Growing up in Harlem, Baldwin faced many obstacles, one of which was his education. "I knew I was black, of course, but I also knew I was smart. I didn't know how I would use my mind, or even if I could, but that was the only thing I had to use," he said. Baldwin attended P.S. 24 on 128th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues in Harlem, where he wrote the school song which was used until the school closed.[9]

As recounted in "Notes of a Native Son," when he was ten and a half years old, Baldwin wrote a play that was directed by a teacher at his school. Seeing his talent and potential, she offered to take him to "real" plays. This caused some backlash from Baldwin's stepfather because the teacher was white. His uncertainty was ultimately overruled by Baldwin's mother, who said that "it would not be very nice to let such a kind woman make the trip for nothing." When his teacher came to pick him up, Baldwin noticed that his stepfather was filled with disgust. Baldwin later realized that this encounter was an "unprecedented and frightening" situation for his parents:

> It was clear, during the brief interview in our living room, that my father was agreeing very much against his will and that he would have refused permission if he had dared. The fact that he did not dare caused me to despise him: I had no way of knowing that he was facing in that living room a wholly unprecedented and frightening situation.[10]

His middle-school years were spent at Frederick Douglass Junior High where he was influenced by poet Countee Cullen, a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance, and was encouraged by his math teacher to serve as editor of the school newspaper, *The Douglass Pilot*.[11] (Directly preceding him at Frederick Douglass were Brock Peters, the future actor, and Bud Powell, the future jazz pianist.[12]) Also in "Notes of a Native Son," Baldwin gives advice to little James to "Take no one's word for anything, including mine—but trust your experience."[13]

He then went on to DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx's Bedford Park section.[14] There, along with Richard Avedon, Baldwin worked on the school magazine as literary editor but disliked school because of the constant racial slurs.[15]

Religion

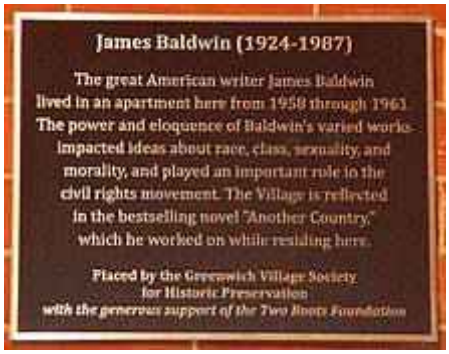
During his teenage years, Baldwin followed his stepfather's shadow into the religious life. However, he became dissatisfied with ministry, considering it hypocritical and racist, and ultimately left the church because his father's expectation was that he be a preacher. The difficulties of his life, including his stepfather's abuse, led Baldwin to seek solace in religion. At the age of 14 he attended meetings of the Pentecostal Church and, during a euphoric prayer meeting, he converted and became a junior minister. Before long, at the Fireside Pentecostal Assembly, he was drawing larger crowds than his stepfather had done in his day. At 17, however, Baldwin came to view Christianity as based on false premises and later regarded his time in the pulpit as a way of overcoming his personal crises.[16]

Baldwin once visited Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, who inquired about Baldwin's religious beliefs. He answered, "I left the church 20 years ago and haven't joined anything since." Elijah asked, "And what are you now?" Baldwin explained, "Now? Nothing. I'm a writer. I like doing things alone."[17] Still, his church experience significantly shaped his worldview and writing.[18] Baldwin reflected that "being in the pulpit was like working in the theatre; I was behind the scenes and knew how the illusion was worked."[19]

Baldwin accused Christianity of reinforcing the system of American slavery by palliating the pangs of oppression and delaying salvation until a promised afterlife.[20] Baldwin praised religion, however, for inspiring some American blacks to defy oppression.[20] He once wrote, "If the concept of God has any use, it is to make us larger, freer, and more loving. If God can't do that, it's time we got rid of him."[21] Baldwin publicly described himself as not religious.[22] A recording of him singing "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" *a cappella* was played at his funeral.[23]

Greenwich Village

When Baldwin was 15 years old, his high-school running buddy, Emile Capouya, skipped school one day and, in Greenwich Village, met Beauford Delaney, a painter.[24] Capouya gave Baldwin Delaney's address and suggested paying him a visit.[24] Baldwin, who worked at the time after school in a sweatshop on nearby Canal Street, visited Delaney at 181 Greene Street. Delaney became a mentor to Baldwin and under his influence Baldwin came to believe a black person could be an artist.[24]



Historic Plaque unveiled by Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation at 81 Horatio Street, where James Baldwin lived in the late 1950s and early 1960s during one of his most prolific and creative periods

While working odd jobs, Baldwin wrote short stories, essays, and book reviews, some of them later collected in the volume *Notes of a Native Son* (1955). He befriended the actor Marlon Brando in 1944 and the two were roommates for a time.[25] They remained friends for more than twenty years.

Emigration

During his teenage years Baldwin started to realize that he was gay. In 1948, in New Jersey, he walked into a restaurant where he knew he would be denied service. When the waitress explained that African Americans were not served there, Baldwin threw a glass of water at her, which shattered against the mirror behind the bar.[26] Disillusioned by American prejudice against blacks, he left the United States at the age of 24 and settled in Paris. He wanted to distance himself from American prejudice and see himself and his writing outside an African-American context. Baldwin did not want to be read as "merely a Negro; or, even, merely a Negro writer."[27] He also hoped to come to terms with his sexual ambivalence and escape the hopelessness that many young African-American men like himself succumbed to in New York.[28]

In Paris, Baldwin was soon involved in the cultural radicalism of the Left Bank. He started to publish his work in literary anthologies, notably *Zero*,[29] which was edited by his friend Themistocles Hoetis and which had already published essays by Richard Wright.

James Baldwin, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1955

Baldwin lived in France for most of his later life. He also spent some time in Switzerland and Turkey.[30][31] During his lifetime as well as since his death, Baldwin was seen not only as an influential African-American writer but also as an influential emigrant writer, particularly because of his numerous experiences outside the United States and the impact of these experiences on his life and his writing.

Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Baldwin settled in Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the south of France in 1970, in an old Provençal house beneath the ramparts of the famous village.[32] His house was always open to his friends, who frequently visited him while on trips to the French Riviera. American painter Beauford Delaney made Baldwin's house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence his second home, often setting up his easel in the garden. Delaney painted several colorful portraits of Baldwin. Nall also befriended Baldwin during this time. Actors Harry Belafonte and Sidney Poitier were also regular house guests.

James Baldwin at home in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France

Many of Baldwin's musician friends dropped in during the Jazz à Juan and Nice Jazz Festivals. They included Nina Simone, Josephine Baker (whose sister lived in Nice), Miles Davis, and Ray Charles, for whom he wrote several songs.[33] In his autobiography, Miles Davis wrote:

> I'd read his books and I liked and respected what he had to say. When I got to know him better, Jimmy and I opened up to each other. We became great friends. Every time I was in the South of France, in Antibes, I would spend a day or two at his villa in Saint-Paul-de-Vence. We'd get comfy in that beautiful, big house and he would tell us all sorts of stories ... He was a great man.[34]

Baldwin learned to speak French fluently and developed friendships with French actor Yves Montand and French writer Marguerite Yourcenar, who translated Baldwin's play *The Amen Corner*.

His years in Saint-Paul-de-Vence were also years of work. Sitting in front of his sturdy typewriter, his days were devoted to writing and to answering the huge amount of mail he received from all over the world. He wrote several of his last works in his house in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, including *Just Above My Head* in 1979 and *Evidence of Things Not Seen* in 1985. It was also in his Saint-Paul-de-Vence house that Baldwin wrote his famous "Open Letter to My Sister, Angela Y. Davis" in November 1970.[35]

Literary career

Baldwin's first published work, a review of the writer Maxim Gorky, appeared in *The Nation* in 1947.[36][37] He continued to publish in that magazine at various times in his career and was serving on its editorial board at his death in 1987.[37]

The Café de Flore in Paris, France, where Baldwin wrote his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953)

In 1953, Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, a semi-autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, was published. His first collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* appeared two years later. He continued to experiment with literary forms throughout his career, publishing poetry and plays as well as the fiction and essays for which he was known.


Baldwin photographed by Allan Warren

Baldwin's second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, caused great controversy when it was first published in 1956 due to its explicit homoerotic content.[38] Baldwin was again resisting labels with the publication of this work.[39] Despite the reading public's expectations that he would publish works dealing with the African-American experience, *Giovanni's Room* is predominantly about white characters.[39] Baldwin's next two novels, *Another Country* (1962) and *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), are sprawling, experimental works[40] dealing with black and white characters and with heterosexual, gay, and bisexual characters.[41]

Baldwin's lengthy essay "Down at the Cross" (frequently called *The Fire Next Time* after the title of the 1963 book in which it was published)[42] similarly showed the seething discontent of the 1960s in novel form. The essay originally was published in two oversized issues of *The New Yorker* and landed Baldwin on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1963 while he was touring the South speaking about the restive Civil Rights Movement. Around the time of publication of *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin became a known spokesperson for civil rights and a celebrity noted for championing the cause of black Americans. He frequently appeared on television and delivered speeches on college campuses.[43] The essay talked about the uneasy relationship between Christianity and the burgeoning Black Muslim movement. After publication, several black nationalists criticized Baldwin for his conciliatory attitude. They questioned whether his message of love and understanding would do much to change race relations in America.[43] The book was consumed by whites looking for answers to the question: What do blacks really want? Baldwin's essays never stopped articulating the anger and frustration felt by real-life black Americans with more clarity and style than any other writer of his generation.[44] Baldwin's next book-length essay, *No Name in the Street* (1972), also discussed his own experience in the context of the later 1960s, specifically the assassinations of three of his personal friends: Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Baldwin's writings of the 1970s and 1980s largely have been overlooked by critics, though even these texts are beginning to receive attention.[45] Several of his essays and interviews of the 1980s discuss homosexuality and homophobia with fervor and forthrightness.[43] Eldridge Cleaver's harsh criticism of Baldwin in *Soul on Ice* and elsewhere[46] and Baldwin's return to southern France contributed to the sense that he was not in touch with his readership. Always true to his own convictions rather than to the tastes of others, Baldwin continued to write what he wanted to write. As he had been the leading literary voice of the civil rights movement, he became an inspirational figure for the emerging gay rights movement.[43] His two novels written in the 1970s, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) and *Just Above My Head* (1979), placed a strong emphasis on the importance of Black American families. He concluded his career by publishing a volume of poetry, *Jimmy's Blues* (1983), as well as another book-length essay, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985), an extended meditation inspired by the Atlanta child murders of the early 1980s.

Social and political activism

Baldwin returned to the United States in the summer of 1957 while civil rights legislation of that year was being debated in Congress. He had been powerfully moved by the image of a young girl, Dorothy Counts, braving a mob in an attempt to desegregate schools in Charlotte, North Carolina, and *Partisan Review* editor Philip Rahv had suggested he report on what was happening in the American south. Baldwin was nervous about the trip but he made it, interviewing people in Charlotte (where he met Martin Luther King Jr.), and Montgomery, Alabama. The result was two essays, one published in *Harper's* magazine ("The Hard Kind of Courage"), the other in *Partisan Review* ("Nobody Knows My Name"). Subsequent Baldwin articles on the movement appeared in *Mademoiselle*, *Harper's*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and *The New Yorker,* where in 1962 he published the essay that he called "Down at the Cross" and the *New Yorker* called "Letter from a Region of My Mind." Along with a shorter essay from *The Progressive*, the essay became *The Fire Next Time*.[47]

While he wrote about the movement, Baldwin aligned himself with the ideals of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Joining CORE gave him the opportunity to travel across the American South lecturing on his views of racial inequality. His insights into both the North and South gave him a unique perspective on the racial problems the United States was facing.

External audio

National Press Club Luncheon Speakers, James Baldwin, December 10, 1986 (https://www.loc.gov/rr/record/pressclub/baldwin.html), speech: 05:22–20:37, National Press Club[48]

In 1963 he conducted a lecture tour of the South for CORE, traveling to locations such as Durham and Greensboro in North Carolina, and New Orleans, Louisiana. During the tour, he lectured to students, white liberals, and anyone else listening about his racial ideology, an ideological position between the "muscular approach" of Malcolm X and the nonviolent program of Martin Luther King, Jr.[49] Baldwin expressed the hope that socialism would take root in the United States.[50]

By the spring of 1963, the mainstream press began to recognize Baldwin's incisive analysis of white racism and his eloquent descriptions of the Negro's pain and frustration. In fact, *Time* featured Baldwin on the cover of its May 17, 1963 issue. "There is not another writer," said *Time*, "who expresses with such poignancy and abrasiveness the dark realities of the racial ferment in North and South."[51][52]

In a cable Baldwin sent to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy during the Birmingham, Alabama crisis, Baldwin blamed the violence in Birmingham on the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, Mississippi Senator James Eastland, and President Kennedy for failing to use "the great prestige of his office as the moral forum which it can be." Attorney General Kennedy invited Baldwin to meet with him over breakfast, and that meeting was followed up with a second, when Kennedy met with Baldwin and others Baldwin had invited to Kennedy's Manhattan apartment. This meeting is discussed in Howard Simon's 1999 play, *James Baldwin: A Soul on Fire*. The delegation included Kenneth B. Clark, a psychologist who had played a key role in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision; actor Harry Belafonte, singer Lena Horne, writer Lorraine Hansberry, and activists from civil rights organizations.[53] Although most of the attendees of this meeting left feeling "devastated," the meeting was an important one in voicing the concerns of the civil rights movement and it provided exposure of the civil rights issue not just as a political issue but also as a moral issue.[54]

James Baldwin's FBI file contains 1,884 pages of documents, collected from 1960 until the early 1970s.[55] During that era of illegal surveillance of American writers, the FBI accumulated 276 pages on Richard Wright, 110 pages on Truman Capote, and just nine pages on Henry Miller.

Baldwin also made a prominent appearance at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, with Belafonte and long-time friends Sidney Poitier and Marlon Brando.[56] The civil rights movement was hostile to homosexuals. The only known gay men in the movement were James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin. Rustin and King were very close, as Rustin received credit for the success of the March on Washington. Many were bothered by Rustin's sexual orientation. King himself spoke on the topic of sexual orientation in a school editorial column during his college years, and in reply to a letter during the

1950s, where he treated it as a mental illness which an individual could overcome. The pressure later resulted in King distancing himself from both men. At the time, Baldwin was neither in the closet nor open to the public about his sexual orientation. Later on, Baldwin was conspicuously uninvited to speak at the end of the March on Washington.[57]

After a bomb exploded in a Birmingham church three weeks after the March on Washington, Baldwin called for a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience in response to this "terrifying crisis." He traveled to Selma, Alabama, where SNCC had organized a voter registration drive; he watched mothers with babies and elderly men and women standing in long lines for hours, as armed deputies and state troopers stood by—or intervened to smash a reporter's camera or use cattle prods on SNCC workers. After his day of watching, he spoke in a crowded church, blaming Washington—"the good white people on the hill." Returning to Washington, he told a *New York Post* reporter the federal government could protect Negroes—it could send federal troops into the South. He blamed the Kennedys for not acting.[58] In March 1965, Baldwin joined marchers who walked 50 miles from Selma, Alabama, to the capitol in Montgomery under the protection of federal troops.[59]

Nonetheless, he rejected the label "civil rights activist", or that he had participated in a civil rights movement, instead agreeing with Malcolm X's assertion that if one is a citizen, one should not have to fight for one's civil rights. In a 1964 interview with Robert Penn Warren for the book *Who Speaks for the Negro?*, Baldwin refuted the idea that the civil rights movement was an outright revolution, instead calling it "a very peculiar revolution because it has to ... have its aims the establishment of a union, and a ... radical shift in the American mores, the American way of life ... not only as it applies to the Negro obviously, but as it applies to every citizen of the country."[60] In a 1979 speech at UC Berkeley, he called it, instead, "the latest slave rebellion."[61]

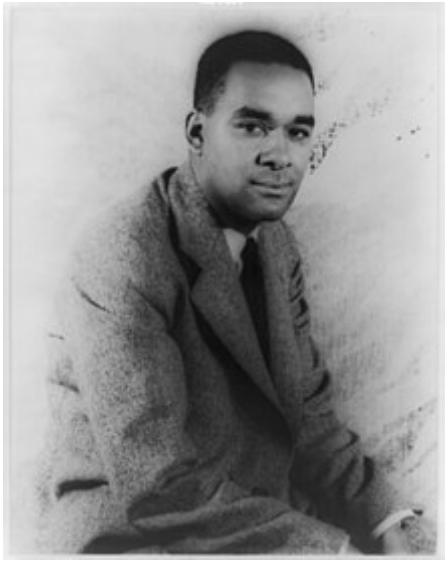
In 1968, Baldwin signed the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge, vowing to refuse tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War.[62]

Inspiration and relationships

As a young man, Baldwin's poetry teacher was Countee Cullen.[63]

A great influence on Baldwin was the painter Beauford Delaney. In *The Price of the Ticket* (1985), Baldwin describes Delaney as

> ... the first living proof, for me, that a black man could be an artist. In a warmer time, a less blasphemous place, he would have been recognized as my teacher and I as his pupil. He became, for me, an example of courage and integrity, humility and passion. An absolute integrity: I saw him shaken many times and I lived to see him broken but I never saw him bow.



Richard Wright (1908–1960) photographed in 1939 by Carl Van Vechten

Later support came from Richard Wright, whom Baldwin called "the greatest black writer in the world." Wright and Baldwin became friends, and Wright helped Baldwin secure the Eugene F. Saxon Memorial Award. Baldwin's essay "Notes of a Native Son" and his collection *Notes of a Native Son* allude to Wright's novel *Native Son*. In Baldwin's 1949 essay "Everybody's Protest Novel", however, he indicated that *Native Son*, like Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, lacked credible characters and psychological complexity, and the friendship between the two authors ended.[64] Interviewed by Julius Lester,[65] however, Baldwin explained, "I knew Richard and I loved him. I was not attacking him; I was trying to clarify something for myself." In 1965, Baldwin participated in a debate with William F. Buckley, on the topic of whether the American dream had been achieved at the expense of African Americans. The debate took place at The Cambridge Union in the UK. The spectating student body voted overwhelmingly in Baldwin's favour.[66]

In 1949 Baldwin met and fell in love with Lucien Happersberger, a boy aged 17, though Happersberger's marriage three years later left Baldwin distraught.[67] Happersberger died on August 21, 2010, in Switzerland.

Baldwin was a close friend of the singer, pianist, and civil rights activist Nina Simone. With Langston Hughes and Lorraine Hansberry, Baldwin helped awaken Simone to the Civil Rights Movement. Baldwin also provided her with literary references influential on her later work. Baldwin and Hansberry met with Robert F. Kennedy, along with Kenneth Clark and Lena Horne and others in an attempt to persuade Kennedy of the importance of civil rights legislation.[68]

Baldwin influenced the work of French painter Philippe Derome, whom he met in Paris in the early 1960s. Baldwin also knew Marlon Brando, Charlton Heston, Billy Dee Williams, Huey P. Newton, Nikki Giovanni, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Genet (with whom he campaigned on behalf of the Black Panther Party), Lee Strasberg, Elia Kazan, Rip Torn, Alex Haley, Miles Davis, Amiri Baraka, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothea Tanning, Leonor Fini, Margaret Mead, Josephine Baker, Allen Ginsberg, Chinua Achebe and Maya Angelou. He wrote at length about his "political relationship" with Malcolm X. He collaborated with childhood friend Richard Avedon on the 1964 book *Nothing Personal*.[69]

Maya Angelou called Baldwin her "friend and brother," and credited him for "setting the stage" for her 1969 autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Baldwin was made a Commandeur de la Légion d'Honneur by the French government in 1986.[70]

Baldwin was also a cousin and close friend of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison. Upon his death, Morrison wrote a eulogy for Baldwin that appeared in *The New York Times*. In the eulogy, entitled "Life in His Language," Morrison credits Baldwin as being her literary inspiration and the person who showed her the true potential of writing. She writes:

> You knew, didn't you, how I needed your language and the mind that formed it? How I relied on your fierce courage to tame wildernesses for me? How strengthened I was by the certainty that came from knowing you would never hurt me? You knew, didn't you, how I loved your love? You knew. This then is no calamity. No. This is jubilee. 'Our crown,' you said, 'has already been bought and paid for. All we have to do,' you said, 'is wear it.'[71]

Death

On December 1, 1987,[72][73][74][75] Baldwin died from stomach cancer in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, France.[76][77][78] He was buried at the Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, near New York City.[79]

The house where James Baldwin lived and died in Saint Paul de Vence, France

Nall took care of James Baldwin on his deathbed. Nall had been friends with Baldwin from the early 1970s because Baldwin would buy him drinks at the Café de Flore. Nall recalled talking to Baldwin about racism in Alabama with the author shortly before his death. In one conversation, Nall told Baldwin that "Through your books you liberated me from my guilt about being so bigoted coming from Alabama and because of my homosexuality." Baldwin insisted: "No, you liberated me in revealing this to me."[80]

At the time of Baldwin's death, he had an unfinished manuscript called *Remember This House*, a memoir of his personal recollections of civil rights leaders Medgar Evers, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.[81] Following his death, publishing company McGraw-Hill took the unprecedented step of suing his estate to recover the $200,000 advance they had paid him for the book, although the lawsuit was dropped by 1990.[81] The manuscript forms the basis for Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film *I Am Not Your Negro*.[82]

Legacy

Tombstone of James Baldwin and his mother Berdis, Ferncliff Cemetery and Mausoleum, Hartsdale, Westchester County, New York, USA

Baldwin's influence on other writers has been profound: Toni Morrison edited the Library of America's first two volumes of Baldwin's fiction and essays: *Early Novels & Stories* (1998) and *Collected Essays* (1998). A third volume, *Later Novels* (2015), was edited by Darryl Pinckney, who had delivered a talk on Baldwin in February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of *The New York Review of Books*, during which he stated: "No other black writer I'd read was as literary as Baldwin in his early essays, not even Ralph Ellison. There is something wild in the beauty of Baldwin's sentences and the cool of his tone, something improbable, too, this meeting of Henry James, the Bible, and Harlem."[83]

One of Baldwin's richest short stories, "Sonny's Blues," appears in many anthologies of short fiction used in introductory college literature classes.

In the 1986 work *The Story of English*, Robert MacNeil, with Robert McCrum and William Cran, mentioned James Baldwin as an influential writer of African-American Literature, on the level of Booker T. Washington, and held both men up as prime examples of Black writers.

In 1987, Kevin Brown, a photo-journalist from Baltimore, founded the National James Baldwin Literary Society. The group organizes free public events celebrating Baldwin's life and legacy.

In 1992, Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, established the James Baldwin Scholars program, an urban outreach initiative, in honor of Baldwin, who taught at Hampshire in the early 1980s. The JBS Program provides talented students of color from underserved communities an opportunity to develop and improve the skills necessary for college success through coursework and tutorial support for one transitional year, after which Baldwin scholars may apply for full matriculation to Hampshire or any other four-year college program.

In 2002, scholar Molefi Kete Asante included James Baldwin on his list of 100 Greatest African Americans.[84]

In 2005, the United States Postal Service created a first-class postage stamp dedicated to Baldwin, which featured him on the front, with a short biography on the back of the peeling paper.

In 2012 James Baldwin was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display that celebrates LGBT history and people.[85]

In 2014, East 128th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues, was named "James Baldwin Place" to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Baldwin's birth. He lived in the neighborhood and attended P.S. 24. Readings of Baldwin's writing were held at The National Black Theatre and a month long art exhibition featuring works by New York Live Arts and artist Maureen Kelleher. The events were attended by Council Member Inez Dickens, who led the campaign to honor Harlem native's son; also taking part were Baldwin's family, theatre and film notables, and members of the community.[86][87]

Also in 2014, musician Marc E. Bassy released a song 'Only The Poets' which samples an excerpt from James Baldwin's speech on The Artist's Struggle for Integrity.[88][89][90]

In 2014 Baldwin was one of the inaugural honorees in the Rainbow Honor Walk, a walk of fame in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood noting LGBTQ people who have "made significant contributions in their fields."[91][92][93] A street in San Francisco, Baldwin Court in the Bayview neighborhood, is also named after the author. [94]

In 2016, Raoul Peck released his documentary film *I Am Not Your Negro*. It is based on James Baldwin's unfinished manuscript, *Remember This House*. It is a 93-minute journey into black history that connects the past of the Civil Rights Movement to the present of Black Lives Matter. It is a film that questions black representation in Hollywood and beyond.

In 2017, Scott Timberg wrote an essay for the *Los Angeles Times* ("30 years after his death, James Baldwin is having a new pop culture moment") in which he noted existing cultural references to Baldwin, 30 years after his death, and concluded: "So Baldwin is not just a writer for the ages, but a scribe whose work—as squarely as George Orwell's—speaks directly to ours."[95]

In June 2019 Baldwin's residence on the Upper West Side was given landmark designation by New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission.[96][97]

In June 2019, Baldwin was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes" inducted on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor within the Stonewall National Monument (SNM) in New York City's Stonewall Inn.[98][99] The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history,[100] and the wall's unveiling was timed to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots.[101]

Works

- *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (semi-autobiographical novel; 1953)
- *The Amen Corner* (play; 1954)
- *Notes of a Native Son* (essays; 1955)
- *Giovanni's Room* (novel; 1956)
- *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (essays; 1961)
- *Another Country* (novel; 1962)
- *A Talk to Teachers* (essay; 1963) (http://richgibson.com/talktoteachers.htm)
- *The Fire Next Time* (essays; 1963)
- *Blues for Mister Charlie* (play; 1964)
- *Going to Meet the Man* (stories; 1965)
- *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (novel; 1968)
- *No Name in the Street* (essays; 1972)
- *If Beale Street Could Talk* (novel; 1974)
- *The Devil Finds Work* (essays; 1976)
- *Just Above My Head* (novel; 1979)
- *Jimmy's Blues* (poems; 1983)
- *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (essays; 1985)
- *The Price of the Ticket* (essays; 1985)
- *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings* (essays; 2010) (https://www.amazon.com/Cross-Redemption-Uncollected-Writings-International/dp/0307275965)
- *Jimmy's Blues and Other Poems* (poems; 2014) (https://www.amazon.com/Jimmys-Blues-Other-Poems-Baldwin/dp/0807084867)

Baldwin (right of center) with Hollywood actors Charlton Heston and Marlon Brando at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Sidney Poitier (rear) and Harry Belafonte (right of Brando) can also be seen in the crowd.

Together with others:

- *Nothing Personal* (with Richard Avedon, photography) (1964)
- *A Rap on Race* (with Margaret Mead) (1971)
- *A Passenger From The West* (in English), narrative with Baldwin conversations, by Nabile Farès; long-lost interview appended (1971)
- *One Day When I Was Lost* (orig.: A. Haley; 1972)
- *A Dialogue (with Nikki Giovanni)* (1973)
- *Little Man Little Man: A Story of Childhood* (with Yoran Cazac, 1976)
- *Native Sons* (with Sol Stein, 2004)

Collections

- *Early Novels & Stories: Go Tell It on the Mountain, Giovanni's Room, Another Country, Going to Meet the Man* (Toni Morrison, ed.) (Library of America, 1998), ISBN 978-1-883011-51-2.
- *Collected Essays: Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name, The Fire Next Time, No Name in the Street, The Devil Finds Work, Other Essays* (Toni Morrison, ed.) (Library of America, 1998), ISBN 978-1-883011-52-9.
- *Later Novels: Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone, If Beale Street Could Talk, Just Above My Head* (Darryl Pinckney, ed.) (Library of America, 2015), ISBN 978-1-59853-454-2.
- *Baldwin for Our Times: Writings from James Baldwin for an Age of Sorrow and Struggle*. Notes and Introduction by Rich Blint (2016).

Music/spoken word recordings

- *A Lover's Question* (CD, Les Disques Du Crépuscule – TWI 928-2, 1990)

See also

- List of civil rights leaders

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Further reading

Archival resources

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- James Baldwin Papers (http://archives.nypl.org/uploads/collection/pdf_finding_aid/James_Baldwin_Papers_finding_aid_AP__4_.pdf), Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the New York Public Library (30.4 linear feet).
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External links

- Works by James Baldwin (https://openlibrary.org/authors/OL391839A) at Open Library
- Works by or about James Baldwin (https://worldcat.org/identities/lccn-n79-76619) in libraries (WorldCat catalog)
- James Baldwin (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0049924/) on IMDb
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- James Baldwin talks about race, political struggle and the human condition (http://www.sam-network.org/video/race-political-struggle-art-and-the-human-condition) at the Wheeler Hall, Berkeley, CA, in 1974
- James Baldwin Photographs and Papers (http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/digitallibrary/baldwin.html), selected manuscripts, correspondence, and photographic portraits from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (http://www.library.yale.edu/beinecke/) at Yale University
- Comprehensive Resource of James Baldwin Information (https://web.archive.org/web/20080420113813/http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/baldwin.htm) at the Wayback Machine (archived April 20, 2008)
- *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (http://www.newsreel.org/nav/title.asp?tc=CN0049&s=James%20Baldwin), distributed by California Newsreel
- Baldwin's *American Masters* page (https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/james-baldwin/about-the-author/59/)
- "Writings of James Baldwin" (https://www.c-span.org/video/?170519-1/writings-james-baldwin) from C-SPAN's *American Writers: A Journey Through History*
- Baldwin in the Literary Encyclopedia (http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=229)
- Audio files of speeches and interviews (http://dpg.lib.berkeley.edu/webdb/mrc/search_vod.pl?avr=1) at UC Berkeley
- See Baldwin's 1963 film (http://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187041) *Take This Hammer*, made with Richard O. Moore, about Blacks in San Francisco in the late 1950s.
- Video: Baldwin debate with William F. Buckley (https://web.archive.org/web/20101212011402/http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/videodir/asx2/2299.asx) (via UC Berkeley Media Resources Center)
- Discussion with Afro-American Studies Dept. at UC Berkeley (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8klsr2TB5pA) on YouTube
- *Guardian* Books "Author Page" (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jun/10/jamesbaldwin), with profile and links to further articles
- The James Baldwin Collective in Paris, France (http://collectifbaldwin.fr/)
- Transcript of interview with Dr. Kenneth Clark (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/mlk/sfeature/sf_video_pop_04_trqry.html)
- James Baldwin (https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/1420) at Find a Grave
- FBI files on James Baldwin
- FBI Docs (http://fbidocs.com/james-baldwin), contains information about James Baldwin's destroyed FBI files and FBI files about him held by the National Archives
- A Look Inside James Baldwin's 1,884 Page FBI File (http://lithub.com/a-look-inside-james-baldwins-1884-page-fbi-file)
- James Baldwin (https://www.biography.com/people/james-baldwin-9196635) at Biography.com

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