

John McCluskey, Jr.

Professor of African American Studies and Adjunct Professor of English

John's career as a teacher began at Miles College in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1967. He came to Indiana University in 1977 after a year teaching at Valparaiso University and eight years teaching at Case Western Reserve University. He has served as a faculty member in African American Studies as teacher, researcher/writer, and administrator. His most demanding administrative assignments were as associate dean of the Graduate School (1984–1988), director of the CIC Minorities Fellowship Program (1983–1988), and department chair (1994–2000). At the Graduate School his primary responsibilities were the recruitment and support of American minority students at Indiana University Bloomington. As the director of the CIC program, his duties were consortium-wide (the "Big Ten" universities and the University of Chicago), attracting students from across the country for graduate study in programs within the consortium. Many of the students who entered under John's watch are currently tenured at colleges and universities around the country, including IU Bloomington. As department chair, he instituted an undergraduate honors track and an internship course. He guided the proposal and eventual institution of the M.A. program and three joint M.A. programs. During 1996–1999 a generous foundation grant provided summer support for 30 undergraduates to work in interdisciplinary and comparative areas while in residence in Bloomington.

As a teacher, John taught literature courses to undergraduates and graduates. His courses focused on works written by North American authors. Over time he also included works from writers reared in the Caribbean and Africa. He was comfortable teaching in all the genres—short stories, novels, poetry, social essays, dramatic plays, and autobiographies. In addition to the courses already established when he arrived in Bloomington, he developed five courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, three of which can be termed "interdisciplinary." As a member of the Creative Writing Program, he has also taught undergraduate and graduate fiction writing. Several of his writing students have won awards in national competitions. He has also served as chair or member of several dozen dissertation and thesis (M.F.A. and M.A.) committees, ranging from African American studies, English, creative writing (fiction and poetry), philosophy, American studies, comparative literature, sociology, and education.

The majority of his creative work has been in fiction writing. He has published two novels and over a dozen often-reprinted short stories. His fiction varies widely in setting, historical period, region, and theme. Several of his stories have been included in "best of" collections. His critical writing has appeared as book chapters, journal articles, and encyclopedia entries. He has edited or co-edited two additional books—one a collection of short stories by a writer prominent during the Harlem Renaissance; the other a collection of interviews and essays on the unique challenges faced by contemporary African American males. He served as manuscript reader for many publishing projects and as an outside referee for tenure and promotion cases. John was also the co-founder of a book

publishing project ("Blacks in the Diaspora"). For 15 years (1985–2000) the series attracted interest and manuscripts from all over the world. More than 50 scholarly books were published in the series. John was responsible for the procurement and initial evaluation of the work in the humanities.

John served with distinction on many of the major committees at IU Bloomington, including search and screen committees (College of Arts and Sciences dean and university president), budgetary affairs, educational policies, strategic planning, tenure (dean of the faculties), and promotion (College of Arts and Sciences). Realizing the importance of service, as department chair, John nominated and successfully guided the supporting documentation for university-wide faculty and staff awards for two members of the department. Outside of the IU community John has taught in writing workshops around the country. He is often called upon for advice on start-ups of graduate programs in African American studies and of small journals.

John met his wife, Audrey, while she was a guest junior at Wellesley College and he was in his senior year at Harvard. They married in 1969. They have three very accomplished sons, Malik, Jerome, and Touré. John enjoyed coaching them and their friends on various Boys' Club basketball and soccer teams. John and Audrey plan to remain in Bloomington, though they will continue to travel, with their most consistent destinations remaining Sapelo Island, Georgia, and St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Their roots and friends are here. John will continue to write, garden, and fish.