

# Lawrence Hill: About the Author

## Writing

Hill is the author of ten books of fiction and non-fiction. In 2005, he won his first literary honour: a National Magazine Award for the article “Is Africa’s Pain Black America’s Burden?” published in *The Walrus*. His first two novels were *Some Great Thing* and *Any Known Blood*, and his first non-fiction work to attract national attention was the memoir *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*. But it was his third novel, *The Book of Negroes* (HarperCollins Canada, 2007) — published in some countries as *Someone Knows My Name* and in French as *Aminata* — that attracted widespread attention in Canada and other countries.

Lawrence Hill’s non-fiction book, *Blood: The Stuff of Life* was published in September 2013 by House of Anansi Press. *Blood* is a personal consideration of the physical, social, cultural and psychological aspects of blood, and how it defines, unites and divides us. Hill drew from the book to deliver the 2013 Massey Lectures across Canada.

In 2013, Hill published the essay *Dear Sir, I Intend to Burn Your Book: An Anatomy of a Book Burning* (University of Alberta Press).

His fourth novel, *The Illegal*, was published by HarperCollins Canada in 2015 and by WW Norton in the USA in 2016.

Hill is currently writing a new novel and a children’s book, and co-writing a television miniseries adaptation of *The Illegal* for Conquering Lion Pictures. Hill is a professor of creative writing at the University of Guelph, in Ontario.

## Personal

Lawrence Hill is the son of American immigrants — a black father and a white mother — who came to Canada the day after they married in 1953 in Washington, D.C. On his father’s side, Hill’s grandfather and great grandfather were ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His mother came from a Republican family in Oak Park, Illinois, graduated from Oberlin College and went on to become a civil rights activist in D.C. Growing up in the predominantly white suburb of Don Mills, Ontario in the sixties, Hill was greatly influenced by his parents’ work in the human rights movement. Much of Hill’s writing touches on issues of identity and belonging.

Hill’s first passion was running, and as a boy he dreamed of winning an Olympic gold medal in the 5,000 meters. But despite years of intense training and thousands of kilometers, he never managed to run quite fast enough. As a teenager, he consoled himself by deciding to become a writer instead, and at 14 he wrote his first story on his mother’s L.C. Smith typewriter. It was a bad story, and a good beginning.

## Lawrence Hill: *About the Author* (continued)

Formerly a reporter with *The Globe and Mail* and parliamentary correspondent for *The Winnipeg Free Press*, Hill speaks fluent French and some Spanish. He has lived and worked across Canada, in Baltimore, and in Spain and France. He is an honorary patron of Crossroads International, for which he travelled as a volunteer to the West African countries Niger, Cameroon and Mali, and to which he lends the name of his best-known character for the Aminata Fund, which supports programs for girls and women in Africa. Hill is also a member of the Council of Patrons of the Black Loyalist Heritage Society, and is an honorary patron of Project Bookmark Canada. He has a B.A. in economics from Laval University in Quebec City and an M.A. in writing from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Hill lives with his family in Hamilton, Ontario and in Woody Point, Newfoundland.

## Awards

*The Book of Negroes* won several awards, including The Rogers/Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, both CBC Radio's Canada Reads and Radio Canada's Le Combat des livres, and The Commonwealth Writers' Prize, which came with a private audience with Queen Elizabeth II. *The Book of Negroes* television miniseries, which Lawrence Hill co-wrote with director Clement Virgo, attracted millions of viewers CBC in Canada and on BET in the United States in 2015, and won many awards, including eleven Canadian Screen Awards and the NAACP award for best writing of a television motion picture.

*Blood: The Stuff of Life* won the Hamilton Literary Award for non-fiction.

Defended by Olympic gold medallist and philanthropist Clara Hughes, *The Illegal* won Canada Reads 2016, making Hill the first writer to win the prize twice.

Hill has received five honorary doctorates from Canadian universities, and in 2015 received the Governor General's History Award, and was appointed to the Order of Canada and inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame.

## Contact

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