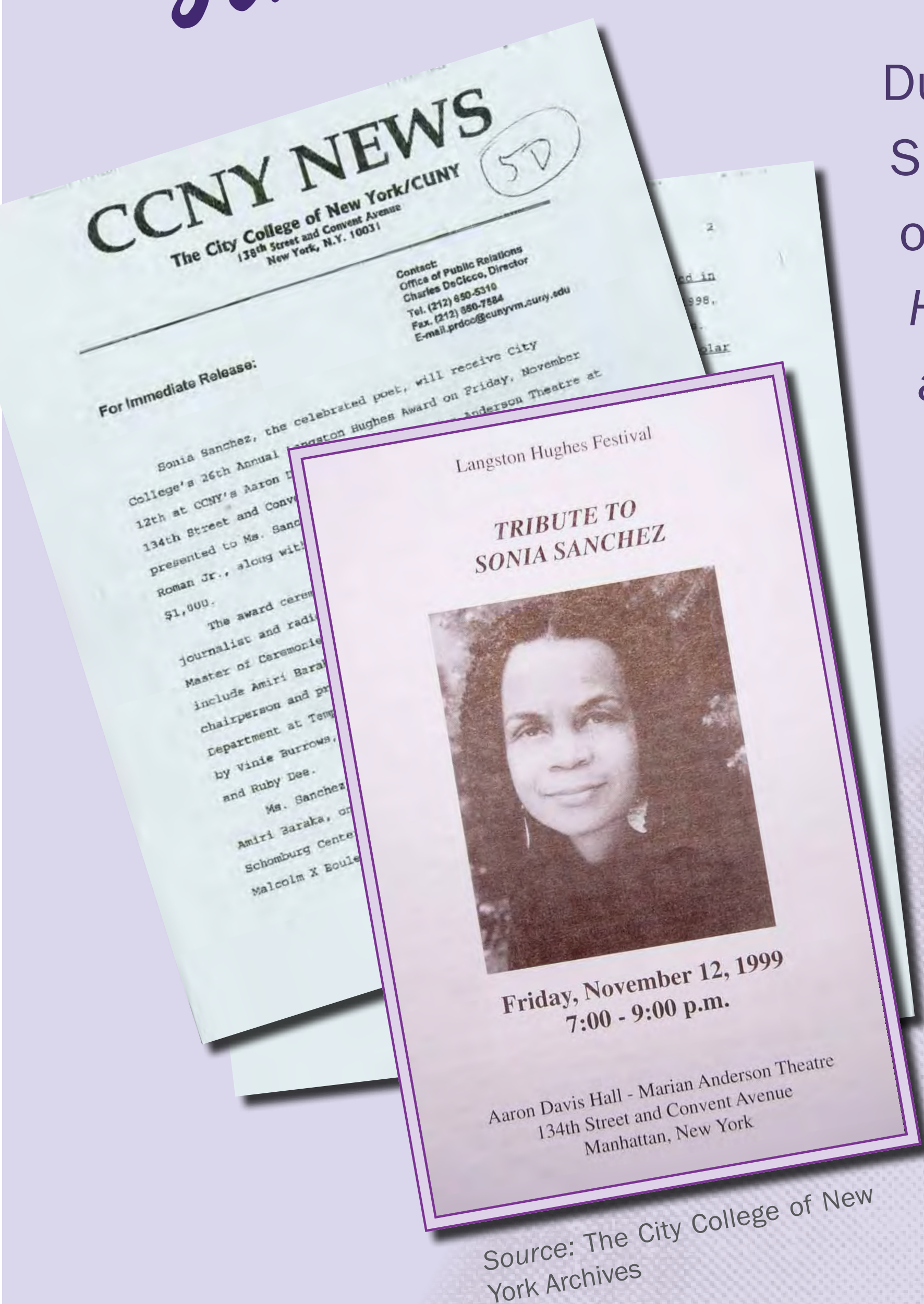




# THE LANGSTON HUGHES FESTIVAL HONOREES

*From Sonia Sanchez to Lucille Clifton 1999–2003*

## 1999 Sonia Sanchez



Source: The City College of New York Archives

One of the major poets of the Sixties Black Arts Movement, Sonia Sanchez continues to be a force to be reckoned with.

During the course of her career, Sanchez has authored over 15 books including *Homecoming* (1969) and *a baddDDD people* (1970). She has been the recipient of a host of impressive awards including the P.E.N. Writing Award. She is a poet, mother, activist, playwright, professor, and national and international lecturer and her dedication to these various roles has placed her at the forefront as an artist and political activist for black culture, racial justice, peace, and women's liberation.

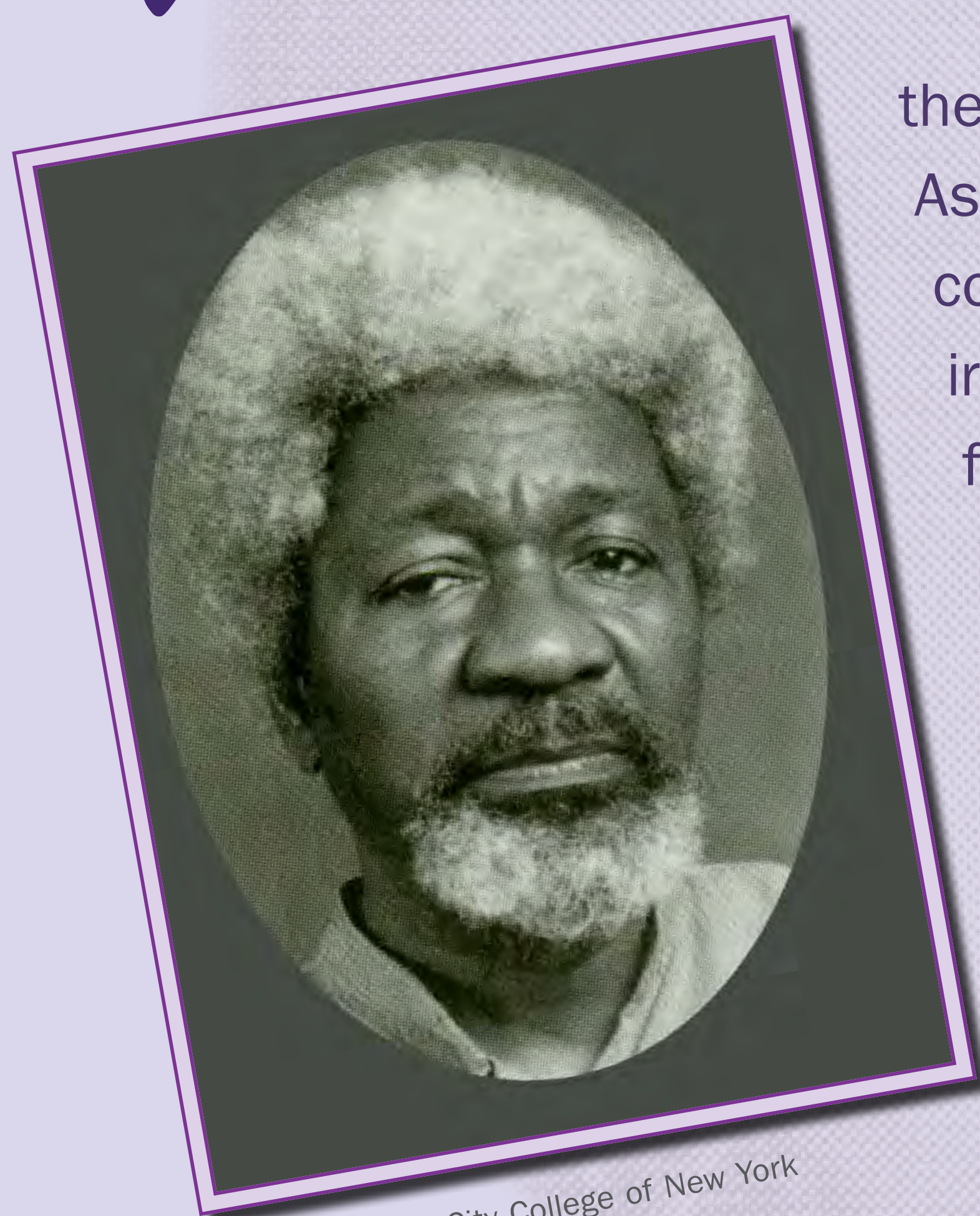
## 2001 Jayne Cortez



Source: The City College of New York Archives

African American jazz poet and author Jayne Cortez received high praise for her very first published book of poems, *Pisstained Stairs and the Monkey Man's Wares* (1969). Since then, she has published more than ten books and has performed her poetry with music on more than nine recordings. Cortez's work is celebrated for her political voice and the surreal quality of her writing. As an activist, she organized "The Slave Routes: Resistance, Abolition & Creative Progress," an international symposium. She directed the film *Yari Yari Pamberi: Black Women Writers Dissecting Globalization* and is co-founder and president of the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, Inc. Her books have been translated into more than 20 languages. Her latest publications include *The Beautiful Book* and *A Jazz Fan Looks Back* (2002).

## 2000 Wole Soyinka



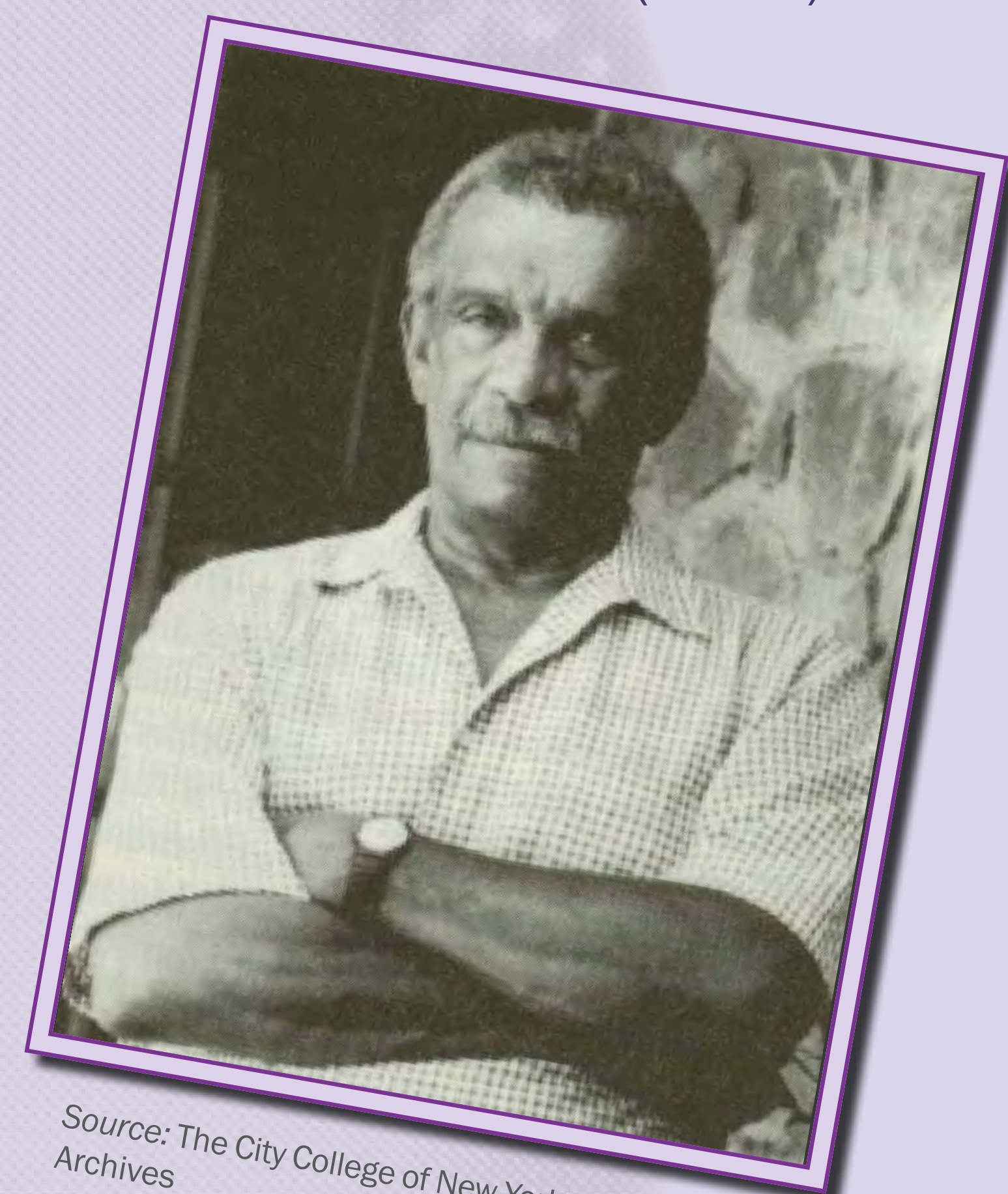
Source: The City College of New York Archives

Wole Soyinka was born in Isara, Nigeria, in 1934 and reared in the village of Ake. As a teenager, Soyinka was given the rite of manhood by his grandfather. As a part of the rite, Soyinka was consecrated to the god Ogun, ruler of iron and war. Ogun remains a recurring figure in Soyinka's work and has been described by the author as his muse. Before leaving Africa for the University of Leeds in England, Soyinka published poems and short stories in the Nigerian literary magazine *Black Orpheus*. His first play, *The Invention*, is a comic satire based upon a sudden loss of pigment by South Africa's black

population, and began the author's career as

a playwright known for using drama as direct commentary upon the political situation in Africa. Well established as Nigeria's premier playwright, Soyinka published his first novel, *The Interpreters*, in 1965. That year also marks his first arrest by Nigerian police. This developed into a long antagonistic relationship that led to another arrest and two year imprisonment for Soyinka. According to one commentator, his diary, published as *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka*, constitutes "the most important work that has been written about the Biafran war." Soyinka received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986 and his more recent works include *Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World* (2005) and *You Must Set Forth at Dawn: A Memoir* (2006).

## 2002 Derek Walcott



Source: The City College of New York Archives

Derek Walcott was born in Saint Lucia and began his career writing plays. Creolizing practices and pan-Caribbeanism have remained focal ideas in all his work. Many critics review Walcott because of his multicultural background. Having parents with black and white heritage as well as growing up in Catholic and Protestant institutions, readers expect his work to reflect these differences and similarities with personal sensitivity. Although he is as much a playwright as a visual artist, Walcott is celebrated in America primarily for his poetry. He was awarded the Noble Peace Prize for Literature in 1992 after his publication of an epic poem called *Omeros*, a new conceptualization of Homer's epic poems.

## 2003 Lucille Clifton



Source: The City College of New York Archives

In 1969, Lucille Clifton's first book of poems *Good Times* was named one of the best books of the year by the *New York Times*. Several of her poems are found in *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1970* (1970), an anthology Langston Hughes put together before his death in 1967. Hughes referred to Clifton as an important new voice in American poetry and she certainly lived up to that and beyond. By the time of Lucille Clifton's passing in 2010, after a battle with cancer, the author had published more than 25 books, including many written for children.