

**2022**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**



**TORCH**

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THANK YOU, DONORS!

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

Thank you for making 2022 a historic year for Torch Literary Arts. After 15 years, Torch boldly moved to relaunch into a fully operational nonprofit organization supporting Black women writers across the diaspora.

With your support, we were able to restructure our publishing model to curate Monthly and Friday features with pay in our digital publication, *Torch Magazine*. We revived the Torch Wildfire Reading Series and welcomed authors back for in-person events in partnership with independent bookstores. Our workshops provided alternative educational opportunities for BIPOC womxn writers to enhance their creative skills and learn how to build literary careers. We became an official community partner with the Texas Book Festival and delivered exceptional programming for hundreds of attendees.

When I launched Torch in 2006, I dreamed of creating a space where Black women writers could write freely and share stories that center our lives and experiences. Thank you for being part of the realization of that dream!

Today, Torch is a global resource and destination for writers and lovers of literature. Torch is made possible because of you and we look forward to continuing this vital work together.

Onward,

**AMANDA JOHNSTON**  
FOUNDER &  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When I launched Torch in 2006, I dreamed of **creating a space where Black women writers could write freely and share stories** that center our lives and experiences.



# ALL ABOUT TORCH

Torch Literary Arts is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established to publish and promote creative writing by Black women. We publish contemporary writing by emerging and experienced writers alike. TORCH has featured work by Colleen J. McElroy, Tayari Jones, Sharon Bridgforth, Crystal Wilkinson, Patricia Smith, Natasha Trethewey, Elizabeth Alexander, and others. Programs include the Wildfire Reading Series, writing workshops, retreats, and special events.



## OUR MISSION

To promote the work of Black women by publishing contemporary creative writing by emerging and experienced writers alike, to archive contributors' literary work for posterity and educational purposes, and to provide resources and opportunities for the advancement of Black women through literary arts.

## DEIA STATEMENT

Torch Literary Arts centers Black women within their complex, intersecting identities. We provide inclusive and accessible programs to our community at large and we are committed to leveraging our unique platforms to help create positive change.



# OUR IMPACT

40

Paid Torch Features

Writers from

**UNITED  
STATES &  
NIGERIA**

represented

\$50

Pay Rate for Publication

3 FREE

Writing Workshops

11

Events held supporting  
Black women writers

# OUR PROGRAMS

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### Torch Relaunch Party

Celebrating 15 years of Torch's existence, Torch hosted a relaunch party celebrating the establishment of Torch as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations. The relaunch party was both in-person and virtual. Attendees enjoyed work from February '22 Feature, Ebony Stewart from her book, *BLOODFRESH*.

### This is Not a Book Club Meetup

Torch joined Future Front to present a gathering for readers to support local independent bookstores in Central Texas, discuss Torch Features, tour the Austin Central Branch Library.

### Torch x Texas Book Festival

Torch joined The Texas Book Festival as a community partner for a special conversation with Remica L. Bingham Risher, author of *Soul Culture: Black Poets, Books and Questions That Grew Me Up*, and Destiny O. Birdsong, author of *Nobody's Magic*, moderated by Torch's founder and executive director, Amanda Johnston. The weekend also included a reading and reception celebrating the two authors in collaboration with Eco Theo Collective.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## WORKSHOPS



### **Spoken Word and the Recording Academy**

Faylita Hicks, author of *HoodWitch* (Acre Books, 2019) and a voting member of the Recording Academy since 2021, and a special guest spoke about the history of the spoken word category, walked attendees through the submission process, discussed how the nomination for membership process works, and offered insight on the infamous voting process.

### **Speculative Fiction**

Fiction and game writer Erin Roberts explored some of the key elements of speculative fiction by dissecting the writer's toolbox, creating character depth to building story movement, and other tools writers need in speculative fiction to creating new worlds

### **Affirmations form the Body**

Attendees worked with Anastacia-Reneé to bravely confront negative self-chatter along with pop culture's non-affirming impact on minds and bodies. Reflecting on work like Audre Lorde's, *The Cancer Journals*, and Sonya Renee Taylor's *The Body is Not an Apology*, attendees writing micro-nonfiction affirmations.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## WILDFIRE READING SERIES

### LaToya Watkins

Torch hosted an evening with LaToya Watkins at Bookwoman celebrating the launch of her debut novel, *Perish*. Named “A Most Anticipated Book of 2022” by *Essence*, *Esquire*, *Bustle*, *Ms. Magazine*, and others, *Perish* introduces us to a Black Texan family, exploring the effects of inherited trauma and intergenerational violence as the family comes together to say goodbye to their matriarch on her deathbed.

*“With Perish, Watkins joins a tradition of Southern writers who delve into the taboo and grotesque to expose a dark past and a dim, backtracking present... Like Walker’s The Color Purple and Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye, Perish lures readers past the pain with a spellbinding, buoyant use of language.”*

—Texas Monthly

### Jasminne Mendez

Continuing on tradition, we hosted another reading series at Bookwoman with poet Jasminne Mendez, author of *City Without Altar* and *Islands Apart: Becoming Dominican American*. Reading from two of her books, Jasminne touched on her experience being an Afrolatina Dominican woman.

*“At times poignant and at others heartbreaking, this volume is sure to empower those who share the pressures of forced assimilation...the narrative choices feel intentional—every word in the 10 personal essays seems deliberately chosen, varying in tone and gravity but always striving for the same underlying tone of intimacy.”*

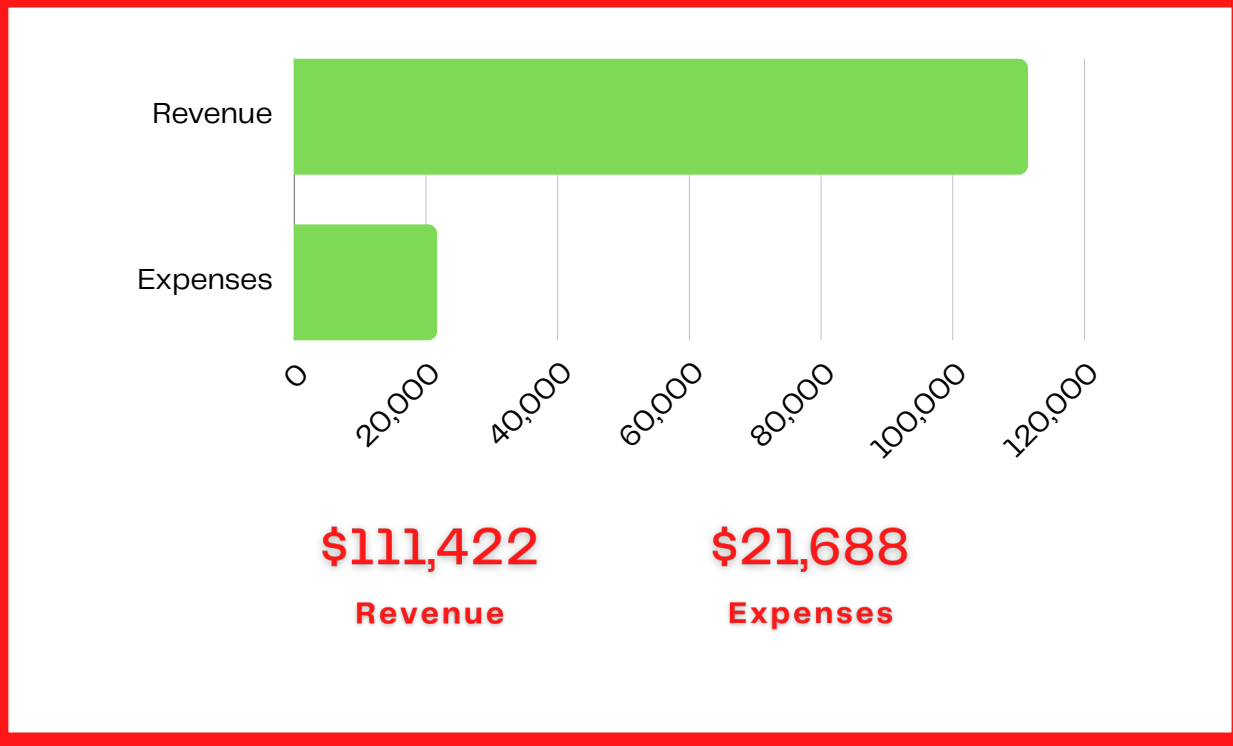
—Kirkus Reviews





# 2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

In 2022, Torch Literary Arts relaunched as a 501(c)3 nonprofit. This allowed the organization to conduct a year-long fundraising campaign, the first in Torch's history, and apply for major foundation and government grants. The support was overwhelming and a financial surplus allowed the organization to plan for institutional growth in 2023 with a full-time executive director, part-time staff, and the launch of a major program, the Torch Retreat.



For more information, you can view our 2022 Form 990.

# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING!

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Please contact us for any edits or additions.



Learn more at [TorchLiteraryArts.org](https://TorchLiteraryArts.org)



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