Travel Summary Presentation

Presented by Kelsey Medlin

MAPW Faculty: Tony Grooms, Dr. Sheila Smith McKoy, Molly Brodak, & Anne Corbitt

Fellow MAPW Graduate Student: Valerie Smith
The AWP Conference & Bookfair is an essential annual destination for writers, teachers, students, editors, and publishers. Each year more than 12,000 attendees join the AWP community for four days of insightful dialogue, networking, and unrivaled access to the organizations and opinion-makers that matter most in contemporary literature. The conference features over 2,000 presenters and 550 readings, panels, and craft lectures. The bookfair hosts over 800 presses, journals, and literary organizations from around the world. AWP is now the largest literary conference in North America.

March 7-10, 2018 in Tampa, Florida
After arriving in Tampa, Wednesday March 7th, my fellow graduate student Valerie and I explored the area where the Tampa Convention Center, where the conference would begin the following day. Later that night, we attended an off-site reading, hosted by VIDA Women in the Arts and Little A, for four amazing female writers, including the debuting author Natalia Sylvester and former poet laureate, Rita Dove. We were extremely excited because we got to sit next to Ms. Dove and discuss with her poetry and her writing process.

The next day, Thursday March 8th, we attended out our own off-site reading at Inkwood Books, a independent bookstore five minutes from the convention center. There we presented our own creative writing with our professors from the MAPW faculty. I read a few pages from my short story, *Silence is Golden: The Secret of the Moore’s Ford Lynching*, which I published in the University of West Alabama’s *Sucarnoochee Review*. 
On Friday, March 9th, I attended four panels that focused on my capstone topic: diversity within the children’s publishing industry. At one of the panels, I spoke with two members of the We Need More Diverse Books organization, J. Albert Mann and Leah Henderson, and got their contact information so that I could talk to them about erasure and racism within the industry, specifically when white editors work with authors of color.

Saturday, March 10th, I attended three more panels that discussed feminism in young adult literature, which I am also interested in exploring my future career as an editor for a children’s publisher. Finally, Valerie and I returned back to Georgia, but not without making sure that Valerie got her picture with her favorite poet, Rita!