



Dear Chester, Dear John: Letters between Chester Himes and John A. Williams

John A. Williams, Lori Williams



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Chester Himes and John A. Williams met in 1961, as Himes was on the cusp of transcontinental celebrity and Williams, sixteen years his junior, was just beginning his writing career. Both men would go on to receive international acclaim for their work, including Himes's Harlem detective novels featuring Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson and Williams's major novels *The Man Who Cried I Am*, *Captain Blackman*, and *Clifford's Blues*. *Dear Chester, Dear John* is a landmark collection of correspondence between these two friends, presenting nearly three decades worth of letters about their lives and loves, their professional and personal challenges, and their reflections on society in the United States and abroad.

Prepared by John A. Williams and his wife, Lori, this collection contains rare and personal glimpses into the lives of Williams and Himes between 1962 and 1987. As the writers find increasing professional success and recognition, they share candid assessments of each others' work and also discuss the numerous pitfalls they faced as African American writers in the publishing world. The letters offer a window into Himes's and Williams's personalities, as the elder writer reveals his notoriously difficult and suspicious streak, and Williams betrays both immense affection and frustration in dealing with his old friend. Despite several rifts in their relationship, Williams's concern for Himes's failing health ensured that the two kept in touch until Himes's death.

Dear Chester, Dear John is a heartfelt and informative collection that allows readers to step behind the scenes of a lifelong friendship between two important literary figures. Students and teachers of African American literature will enjoy this one-of-a-kind volume.



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