

## Experience Chicago's First Outdoor African American Literary Festival

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In June 2015, author Asadah Kirkland attended Printer's Row Lit Fest, the largest literary festival in the Midwest, and was dismayed by the experience. Of the 100-plus authors in attendance, less than 20 of them were black. She also felt that the focus was more on selling old and used books rather than on the authors themselves.

She approached every black person she saw and told them she was having a Soulful Book Fair in 2016, and asked if they were interested in participating. The unique book fair idea came to Kirkland out of the blue at Printer's Row; it had not occurred to her before then. She went home with the contact information of several interested authors.

Her vision became more vivid as she looked at the size of the streets and empty lots while relaxing at the Greenline Café on 61st and Eberhart. "I just saw opportunity with all that space...I decided to create a venue that would make black authors feel confident enough to take part in something and have a stage," recalls Kirkland.



Kirkland's dream, the Soulful Chicago Book Fair (SCBF), will come to fruition on Saturday, July 16th. This outdoor festival, celebrating literacy and literary arts found throughout the African Diaspora, is the first ever on the South Side and possibly Chicago. Attendees will experience a day filled with stories told through books, spoken word, storytelling, songwriting, playwriting and art! SCBF will be held from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

### Following are several things that are uniquely Soulful:

Seven blocks of 200-plus African American authors from Chicago, New York, Texas, DC and Florida (each block will feature a different genre)

A children's block full of children's authors, family fun shows and activities

Music from DJ Duane Powell, Maggie Brown, David Boykin, and special headliner, Grammy-nominated, neo-soul artist Eric Roberson

The "Taste of Soul" block will provide a variety of food vendors for all appetites

Workshops on book publishing, song writing, playwriting and more

A tribute ceremony for new authors that have published books between June 2015 and July 2016

Literary events leading up to the book fair, including Reading the Black Library

Two historically significant events that can only be experienced at SCBF are: a Centennial Migration processional at 10:00 a.m., in celebration of the Northern Migration to Chicago, and the Timuel D. Black Chicago History Essay contest.

Authors wanting to participate in this historical event can make a \$275 investment for a booth and commercial, which will be posted on SCBF's YouTube channel. "It's all about promoting authors, and people knowing them before they get to the book fair. I'm happy it [SCBF] has evolved and is inspiring so many authors to take part. Black authors are emerging in the city and we're not going to wait for anyone to validate us. We're not going to wait five years to become well known. We're going to make it happen now," adds Kirkland.

To purchase a booth or for detailed information on the activities at the Soulful Chicago Book Fair, visit [www.soulfulchicagobookfair.com](http://www.soulfulchicagobookfair.com). Visit their YouTube channel to watch the authors' commercials; and get updates on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.



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### TAMMY GIBSON

Travel Historian, Entrepreneur, Speaker and Blogger

Phone: 708-606-7380

Email: [sankofatravelher@yahoo.com](mailto:sankofatravelher@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.sankofatravelher.com](http://www.sankofatravelher.com)

Facebook: [facebook.com/SankofaTravelher](https://www.facebook.com/SankofaTravelher)

