

## *Murphy's Secret*

*Isaac Murphy*

When folks find out I'm *him*  
they always want to know what I say to 'em.  
If they be white I tell 'em I say

Run an run quick  
or they gone feed you to the niggers.'  
An they usually laugh an leave me be.

If they be black I tell 'em the truth.  
I tell 'em how I cup my hand to a horse's ear  
how I let it catch some wind so they remember

what it sound like to run full out,  
to know you not just a field hand or a work horse  
but beautiful an strong an smart.

I don't never have to ask 'em to honor somethin'  
you can't really see just feel.  
I just nudge 'em like they exhausted mammas do

soon as they are born an licked dry  
until they unfold them wobbly legs an stand.  
When I'm up there I rub my hands against they neck

lean into they ear, pretend I'm the wind an whisper  
Find yo purpose. Find yo purpose' an hold on.

## *Come Sunday It's Derby*

*America Burns*

He might not ever tell it to the papers  
but I'm the first person Isaac ever see ride.

I'm the first person he watch  
get up at dawn  
fill a tub wit scaldin' water, soap an dirty clothes

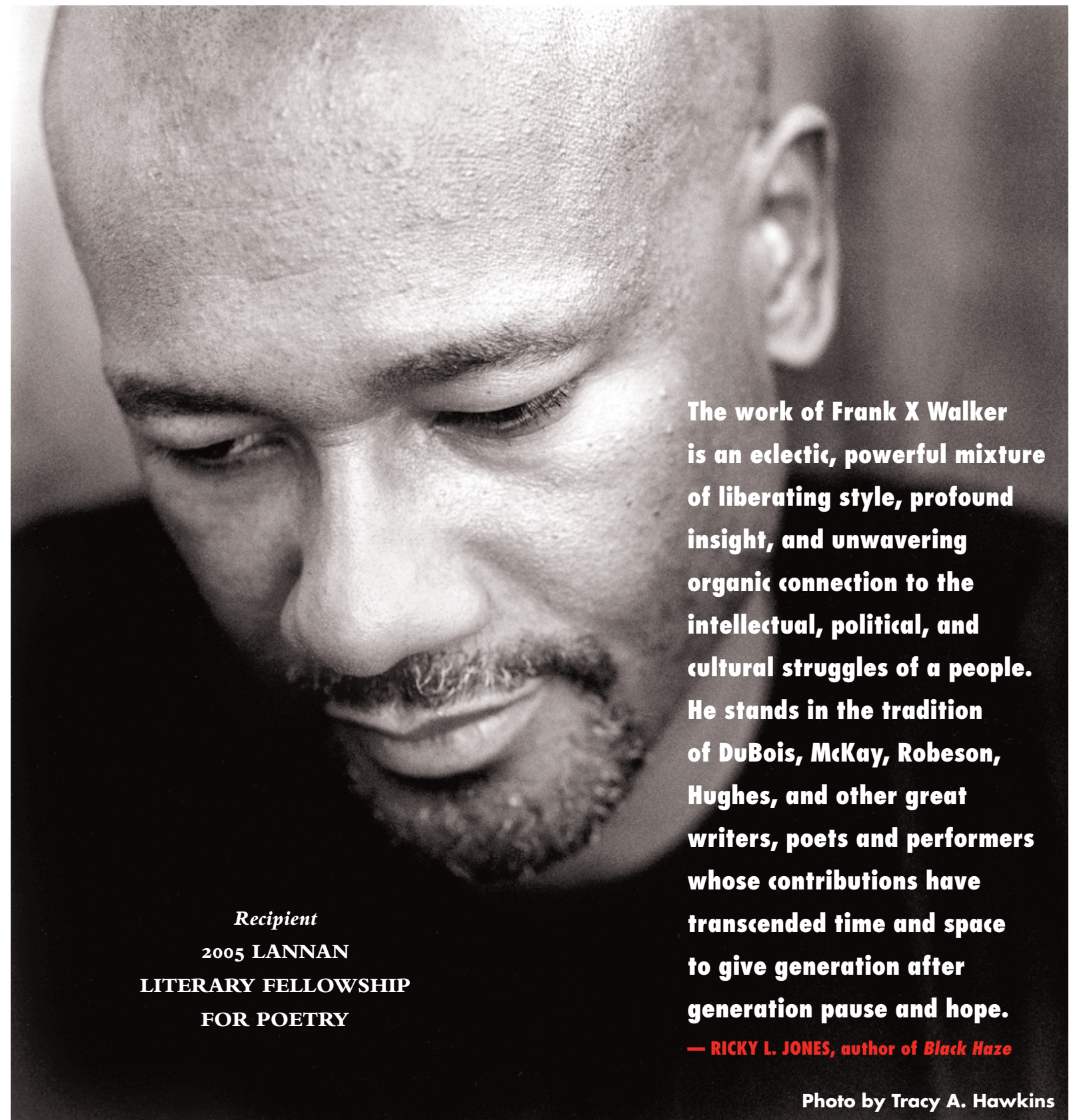
lock everything 'tween my knees  
bend over an grab somethin' by its ears  
race it up an down the washboard  
'til I baptize the dirt right out.

Everybody ride the hell outta somethin'.  
I seen a good preacher ride a church full  
a people with his words alone, have us  
all talkin' back to him while he trot us along  
an teach straight from the word a God.

Then once he work up a rhythm  
some a us gets up on our feets an urge him on  
like our *amens!* is whips  
an our *go ahead on, preacher!* is spurs.

Directly he turn a corner an leave the page  
an when his tongue starts to gallop  
he ride all the way 'til the end a the sermon

'til the whole church is soaked through  
with sweat, more exhausted  
than any horse an rider I ever seen.



**The work of Frank X Walker is an eclectic, powerful mixture of liberating style, profound insight, and unwavering organic connection to the intellectual, political, and cultural struggles of a people. He stands in the tradition of DuBois, McKay, Robeson, Hughes, and other great writers, poets and performers whose contributions have transcended time and space to give generation after generation pause and hope.**

**— RICKY L. JONES, author of *Black Haze***

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