

Reknowned author, activist eulogized

Julian Hudson Mayfield, a black writer, political activist, actor and advisory editor of the journal *Sagala*, died of heart complications on Oct. 20 at the age of 56. He was a resident of Washington, D.C.

Born in Greer, S.C., Mayfield grew up in Washington and graduated from Dunbar High School. He attended Lincoln University and served in the Army immediately after World War II.

Mayfield was the author of three critically acclaimed novels, "The Hit" (1957), "The Long Night" (1958) and "The Grand Parade" (1961). A prolific essayist on black themes, Mayfield was writer-in-residence at Howard University for the last six years. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Black World*, *Freedomways*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Nation*, and *Commentary*.

As an actor, Mayfield created the role of the son of Absalom Kumalo in the Maxwell Anderson-Kurt Weill musical, "Lost in the Stars," which was produced on Broadway in 1950 by the Playwright's Company. The play was based on Alan Paton's novel, "Cry, the Beloved Country," about apartheid in South Africa.

Mayfield also played Tank in the 1969 motion picture, "Uptight," a contemporary black version of "The Informer," which he co-authored with director Jules Dassen and actress Ruby Dee.

A member of the Harlem Writers Guild, Mayfield wrote two plays -- "417" and "The Other Foot" -- and co-produced Ossie Davis's first play, "Alice in Wonder."

In the late 1950s, Mayfield was involved with Robert Williams in the civil rights movement in Monroe. The issues underlying the movement brought Mayfield and Williams into contact with the NAACP.

In the late 1960s, Mayfield's advocacy of black nationalism led to a self-imposed exile in Ghana, where he lived from 1961 to 1966 and wrote speeches for President Kwame Nkrumah. In the early 1970s he lived in Guyana, where he was an advisor to Prime Minister Forbes Burnham.

Before going to Howard University as writer-in-residence, Mayfield was a visiting fellow at Cornell and New York universities and lectured in West Germany under a Fulbright Fellowship. From 1975 to 1978, he was a visiting professor at the University of Maryland. At the time of his death, he was working on his political memoirs.

Mayfield's survivors include his wife, Joan Cambridge of Washington and Guyana; two sons by his first marriage, Rafael and Emiliano, both of Puerto Rico; his mother, Mrs. Annie Mae Mayfield, and a sister, Mrs. Dorothy Mayfield Barkley, both of Washington; and extended family members.

Funeral services were held at the Andrew Rankin Chapel at Howard University on Friday, Oct. 26.

From Julian Mayfield's "You, Touch My Black Aesthetic and I'll Touch Yours," published in Addison Gayle Jr.'s *The Black Aesthetic*:

For those who must create, there is a Black Aesthetic which cannot be stolen from us, and it rests on something much more substantial than hip talk, African dress, natural hair and endless, fruitless discussions of "soul." It is our racial memory, and the unshakable knowledge of who we are, where we have been, and where we are going that the Black Aesthetic, if it is anything, is the search for a new program, because all the old programs ... have failed us.

It is the search for a new quality, or the recapture of an old one, lost and buried

deep in our African past ... but succeeding from all that, beautiful, relevant, and immediate, is a new breed of clean young Black men and women who know they have been programmed by the white world and who reject the program ... This new breed does search for a deity, a new pattern of spiritual values, perhaps because they suspect that their passage through this life will be all too swift and they want it to have meaning. They wake up each morning knowing that no day is a good day to die, but that one day is as good as any other as long as they do not die alone.

I cannot -- will not -- define my Black Aesthetic, nor will I allow it to be defined for me, but I know that somehow it revolves around this new breed of man and woman who have leaped out of the loins of all those slaves and semi-slaves, who survived so that we might survive.



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