

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

1/7/08

Mark Wilson, 334/844-4948 (wilsom3@auburn.edu)

Mike Clardy, 334/844-9999 (clardch@auburn.edu)

**NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED SCHOLAR JOHN CALLAHAN TO SPEAK ON  
ALBERT MURRAY AND RALPH ELLISON**

Nationally acclaimed literary scholar John F. Callahan will give a talk on the lifelong friendship of Alabama literary treasures Albert Murray and Ralph Ellison at Auburn University's Dixon Conference Center on the campus of Auburn University at 7 p.m. on Jan. 23, 2008.

Dr. Callahan's talk, "*It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing*": *Albert Murray, Omni-American*, is the keynote event of a day-long symposium titled *Albert Murray and the Aesthetic Imagination of a Nation*, a gathering of scholars, protégés and friends of Mr. Murray's who will deliver papers related to his life and works. According to symposium organizers Barbara A. Baker (Tuskegee University) and Jay Lamar (Auburn University), the symposium is a celebration of Murray's achievements, including the groundbreaking cultural criticism which he developed with Ellison.

Dr. Callahan, who refers to himself as "a son of Ellison and Murray," served as the literary executor of Ellison's estate and edited *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray*. The publication sheds light on the two men's long intellectual relationship, begun at Tuskegee Institute in the 1930s, and the parts that each played in developing their blues-oriented theory of American identity which illustrates the profound impact of southern and black influence on the national character.

Callahan, a long-time friend of both authors, will discuss his personal knowledge of their relationship, their differences and the ways that each inspired the other to achieve national and lasting recognition for their intellectual achievements. Murray has written thirteen books of cultural criticism, fiction and poetry, and Ellison won a National Book Award for *Invisible Man*, which is often counted among the most important novels of the twentieth century.

Ellison's widow, Fannie Ellison, selected Callahan to address the mountain of material that Ellison left on his death. From four decades' worth of scribbled notes, thousands of typed pages and over eighty computer disks, Callahan edited part of Ellison's unfinished novel into *Juneteenth*. He also edited *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* and *Flying Home and Other Stories*. Callahan is the Morgan S. Odell professor of humanities at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, OR. His first novel, *A Man You Could Love*, was recently published. He is also a political activist and an exciting speaker who brings a wealth of information and enthusiasm to his discussions of his literary ancestors Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray.

John Callahan's keynote and the symposium itself are free and open to the public. Please visit [www.auburn.edu/cah](http://www.auburn.edu/cah) or call (334) 844-4946 to register for symposium sessions which will run from 9 a.m. until 4:15 p.m. on January 23. The symposium is sponsored by the Dean's office in the College of Liberal Arts, CLA's Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities and English Department in partnership with Tuskegee University.

---end---