

Octavia Butler

June 22, 1947 - February 24, 2006

Creativity



“...I wanted to write a novel that would make others feel the history: the pain and fear that black people have had to live through in order to endure.” Octavia Butler

Octavia Estelle Butler was born on June 22, 1947 in Pasadena, California. Although she was dyslexic, she loved creating her own stories. By the age of 10, she had a dream of being an award winning writer. This is a dream that became her life’s work through her masterful use of the **soft skill of creativity**.

Butler’s creativity allowed her to grow to become a force in science fiction. Although the category is dominated by white men, she was not deterred from her dedication to create her own message in that space. Her characters often encountered the difficulties of black humiliations and painful struggles. Her big breakthrough came in 1979 with her novel, *Kindred*, telling the story of an African American woman who travels back in time to save her own ancestor – a white slave owner. Human experiences grounding her works provided depth and intricacy to her stories that often “blurred the lines of distinction between reality and fantasy.” Gregory Hampton remembered in *Callaloo*, stating of Butler’s work, that “she revealed universal truths.” Butler received a “genius” grant in 1995 from the *MacArthur Foundation* as the first science-fiction writer to

receive the grant.

The grant afforded her the opportunity to purchase a home for both herself and her mother — one of her marks of success noted at the young age of 10. Octavia Butler’s creative melding of painful topics and fictitious events provided her a broad audience to engage thoughtfully in difficulties of our time. Currently, her work is more relevant and sought-after today than when her novels were originally published.

In addition to her *MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship*, Butler ultimately received two *Nebula Awards*, two *Hugo Awards*, a lifetime achievement award in writing from *PEN America Literary Awards*. Butler died at her home at the age of 58, leaving the literary world absent of one of its great storytellers. In 2020, *Parable of the Sower* reached the *New York Times* best-seller list — 27 years after the original publication date. Her work has foundationally created a genre of sci-fi called *Afrofuturism*, referencing both sci-fi and African American pride in order to create a brighter future.

Scan the QR Code to learn more.

THE CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

Connect for more



REFLECT:

How are you showing creativity through your work at SSU in preparation for your future?