

**Her Time Has Come**  
**Writer, folklorist, anthropologist — Zora Neale Hurston played a prominent**  
**role in the Harlem Renaissance**

**By PATRICIA ELAM RUFF**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C., CORRESPONDENT**

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–60) is one of the most powerful and extraordinary literary voices to come out of the Harlem Renaissance. Her career, though sporadic, qualified her also as a folklorist and anthropologist. Sometimes heralded as “before her time” because many of her contemporaries did not understand her genius, Hurston died penniless and was buried in an unmarked grave in a segregated cemetery in Florida.

During the 1970s, however, writers Alice Walker (who erected a tombstone at her gravesite), Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Louis Gates Jr. and others reintroduced Hurston’s work to a grateful world. Her novels *Mules and Men* (1935) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) are now standard reading in many college literature classes.

Recently a book collector purchased a cardboard box of Hurston’s college memorabilia for \$150 and found a battered 1925 issue of her Howard University sorority yearbook that contained three undiscovered early works: a play, an essay and a short story. These works, considered vast treasures, are now being published for the first time.

“She devoted her life to collecting folk material of the Negroes furthest down, even when other black intellectuals were rejecting that culture,” says the director of the association that operates a museum named for Hurston in her hometown of Eatonville, Fla. Plans are now being made to produce her newly discovered play in 1998, and a symposium will be held on her unearthed short story at this year’s annual Eatonville festival celebrating her life and contributions.

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