



# The Times

## Writing journey begins

Tuesday, April 24, 2007

**BY NORA O'DOWD**

W. Ivan Wright is ready for the reaction to the title of his first novel, "Black People: For Entertainment Purposes Only."

But, just like the protagonist of his book, he's hoping people will get beyond the title to the story, and the philosophy, he's been thinking about setting down for a decade.

There are definite parallels between the life of the character Wright has created and his own. Both grew up in Trenton, both graduated from Trenton Central High School. (Wright was in the Class of 1976.)

Both believe the grounding of family and community cannot be underestimated, both have written a book called "Black People: For Entertainment Purposes Only," and neither is afraid of ruffling feathers in order to get his point across.

Wright, who is black, clearly relishes discussion. That appreciation began after he moved from his Trenton neighborhood, "90 percent black," to study respiratory therapy at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, which was "99 percent white."

"The learning continued well beyond the classroom," he says. "It gave me the chance to open different dialogues."

In a sense, that's the mission of his book. Just about every segment of society comes in for criticism in the story of a successful writer, Jur ney Swiftwood, who must face some issues from his past as he is stalked by a demented killer.

While he's threaded the book with social commentary, Wright also was intent on delivering a riveting story.

To do that, he took a page from his hero's playbook of making his own success and started a publishing company, Able Journey Press, in Ewing. Wright, who has another novel coming out in October, is the only writer in its stable so far, but he's looking forward to helping other writers. The business, he says, "is one way to help realize accomplishments, whatever journey you're on. We all face different diffi culties, but we all can be successful."

"As we segue from the established publishing houses, the Internet and blogs have changed the way we read," says Wright. "Technology has given us more access to more information, but we tend to spend less time with that information. But a book can be embraced. There is strength in words ... people can be moved, either positively or negatively."

A few whose words have moved Wright are playwright August Wil son and novelists James Michener and Richard Wright.

"It was some of Richard Wright's work that I read between dollops of elementary school's 'We are Neighbors.' He helped to elevate my antennae relating to societal perspectives," says Wright.

"Michener had an excellent way 'painting' the pages as he allowed you to almost feel the crisp winds of a mountain's perch. August Wilson was a superb writer in that his characters were formed in a cauldron of memories that gave eloquent speech to voices long gone."

### **Current events**

Wright, who lives in Ewing with his wife, Lillian, is troubled by the gang violence in parts of Trenton. The key to disenfranchising the gangs, he believes, is accountability and education.

"I mean education before the schools, in the household, when the children are 2, 3, 4 years old," he says. Wright believes there has been a dissolution of respect -- children don't show respect to their parents, and parents don't respect their children. By the time the children reach school, the teachers must try to impart all the life lessons never learned at home in addition to math and spelling.

"I realize this is not an easy thing," he says. "But technology has become our baby-sitter. And what they're watching on television, the cartoons are almost porn. We're leaving our kids plastered to the silver screen."

As for the gangs on the streets, Wright says he is not hopeless.

"I don't think they're completely lost," he says. "They have other desires, other skills," but they're ground out of them by the easy notoriety of belonging to a gang.

"But I know there are young men out there striving to do better. I know one who realized he'd made a bad decision, he was trying to turn it around. But he was killed before he could."

Discussing the recent controversy over talk-radio host Don Imus' offensive remarks concerning the Rutgers University women's basketball team, Wright says, "He was blatantly wrong."

He also was unimpressed with Imus' apology. "He turned it back around on the rappers. He used that device to make an apology and that was weak."

"My greatest hope from all is this is that a young girl, 12 or 13 years old, will be inspired by the dignity and grace of the Rutgers players, that she'll be impressed with them, and realize to follow that example would be a great thing, an awesome thing."

*W. Ivan Wright will host a book release reception Sunday from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Ewing Courtyard by Marriott, 360 Scotch Road and I-95 (exit 3A) in Ewing. For more information, call 771-8100. The book is available on Amazon.com and through [www.ablejourneypress.com](http://www.ablejourneypress.com)*

© 2007 The Times of Trenton

© 2007 NJ.com All Rights Reserved.