

This Summer, NYC Belongs to J. Chester Johnson: Billboard Premiere, NYC Poetry Festival Showcase, & Expanded Home

Printed Word Reviews Spotlights Renowned Author J. Chester Johnson with Times Square Billboard Feature, NYC Poetry Festival Showcase, and Expanded Series Home

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Printed Word Reviews has announced a major multi-platform celebration honoring author, poet, and historian J. Chester Johnson, celebrating key literary milestones across public installations, festival presentations, and digital serialization.

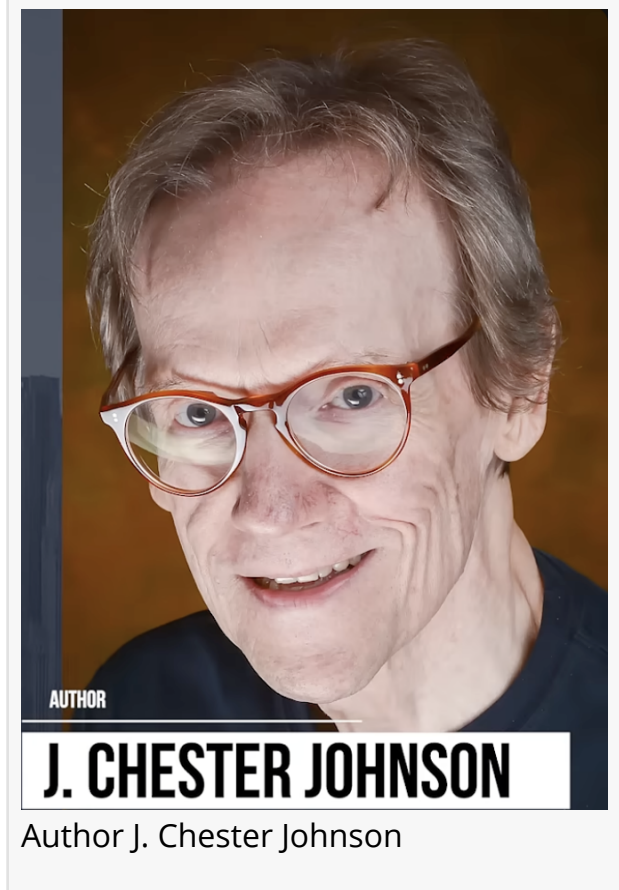
The announcement highlights three distinct milestones bringing Johnson's contributions in poetry, historical narrative, and racial justice to a broad global audience:

NYC Poetry Festival Presentation in July and planned Times Square Billboard Feature in August

On July 19, 2026, Printed Word Reviews featured Johnson's work at the New York City Poetry Festival on Governors Island, showcasing two of his seminal publications.

"Reading Whispers: Book of Triple Haiku," published by BlazeVOX [books], an innovative collection introducing "triple haiku," where three juxtaposed haiku expand the traditional form into layered meditations on love, race, aging, and mortality was on display.

Adding to his media momentum, Johnson's exclusive interview on [GAB TALKS](#), hosted by Gabby Olczak, President of the Independent Press Award & NYC Big Book Award, was featured on the center of the festival table, where attendees were provided scannable QR codes and direct links to listen to the broadcast. During the 50+ minute deep-dive episode, the NYC Big Book Award-winning author discussed the craft behind his innovative "triple haiku" poetic form in Reading



Whispers, his ongoing work in racial reconciliation, and his broader literary career.

Also on display, his NYC Big Book Award-winning book, "Damaged Heritage: The Elaine Race Massacre and A Story of Reconciliation," published by Pegasus Books / Simon & Schuster. The award-winning nonfiction narrative detailing Johnson's discovery of his own family's ties to the 1919 Elaine Race Massacre in Arkansas and his journey of friendship and reconciliation with a descendant of massacre victims.

To expand on J. Chester's Johnson's reach, Printed Word Reviews will feature "Reading Whispers" on a prominent digital billboard near the TKTS booth in Times Square on August 22, 2026, bringing contemporary poetry to the center of New York City. Printed Word Reviews' NYC Times Square billboard showcases are high-visibility book marketing events designed to give independent authors and publishers major brand exposure on the global stage. Curated by Ted Olczak, the publisher of Printed Word Reviews and a driving force behind the Independent Press Award and NYC Big Book Award, these showcases illuminate independent literature in New York City's most iconic location.

“

J. Chester Johnson possesses a rare and profound ability to confront the darkest corners of American history with unflinching honesty and poetic grace”

Ted Olczak, Publisher of the Printed Word Reviews magazine

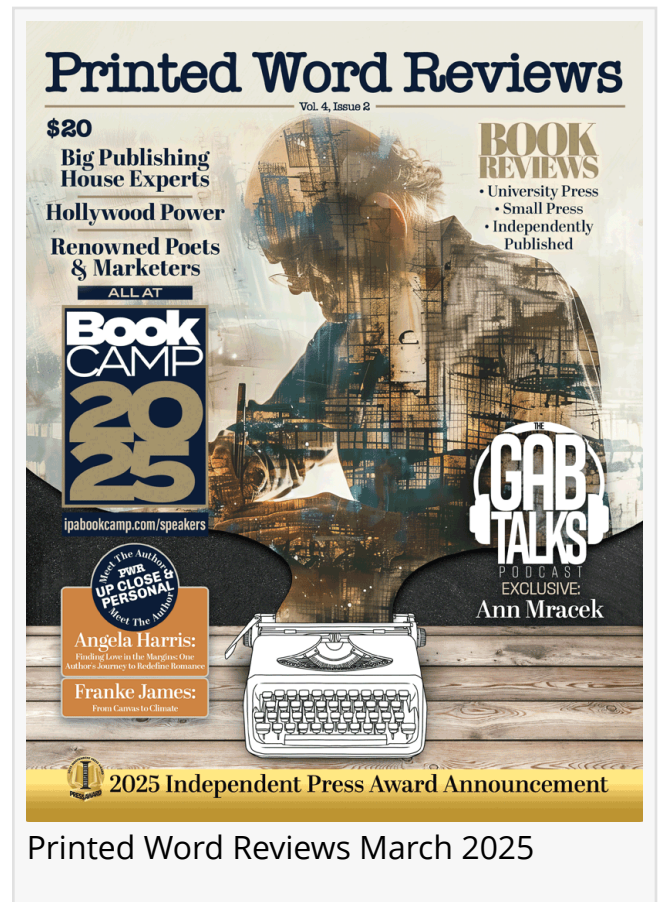
"For Racial Healing" Series Marks First Anniversary & Finds Permanent Home

Printed Word Reviews has officially created a new permanent digital home for Johnson's serialized project, "For Racial Healing". The transition coincides with the one-year anniversary of the series, which provides a blueprint-style framework for truth-telling, personal accountability, and localized racial reconciliation.

Readers can explore the anniversary milestone,

<https://www.printedwordreviews.com/articles/j.-chester-johnsons-for-racial-healing-series-celebrates-its-first-anniversary>, and upcoming installments via the For Racial Healing First Anniversary Announcement, and on <https://www.printedwordreviews.com/articles>.

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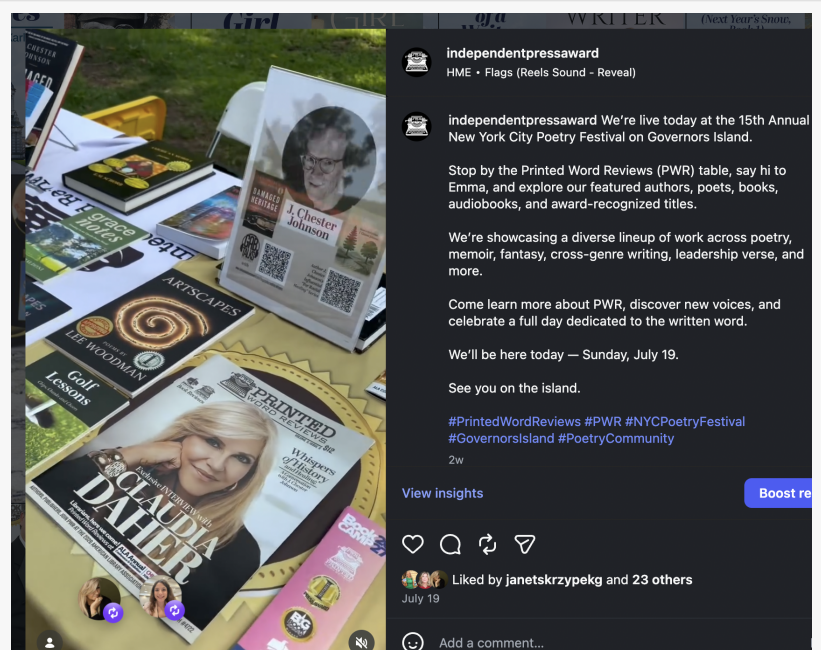
American history with unflinching honesty and poetic grace," said Ted Olczak, Publisher of Printed Word Reviews. "His work on the 1919 Elaine Race Massacre and his subsequent journey toward healing have shown that true racial healing requires personal accountability and direct, human-to-human action. We are honored to host his 'For Racial Healing' series and bring his poetry to Times Square."

"Whether through the short, compressed lines of a triple haiku or the historical weight of a memoir, my work seeks to create space for reflection, truth, and genuine connection," stated J. Chester Johnson. "To see 'Reading Whispers' elevated in Times Square and to have a dedicated home for 'For Racial Healing' through Printed Word Reviews are deeply gratifying."

Critical Acclaim for J. Chester Johnson

In *Reading Whispers*, J. Chester Johnson offers an evocative innovation to the haiku. The Japanese form is one that offers a great spatial experience by presenting images that go beyond a narrative frame. J. Chester Johnson goes further by juxtaposing three haiku and adding a title to allow the images to reverberate even more. His American-style haiku follow in the footsteps of those Japanese writers who wrote linked verse. In this case, he arranges the links. A heartfelt collection!

—Kimiko Hahn



J. Chester Johnson exclusive interview "Reading Whispers" and other works with The GAB TALKS



A celebration of poetry, community and connection – stories shared across borders

In his remarkable new book, "Reading Whispers", J. Chester Johnson has a haiku warn a poet "the longer you try/The smaller I get", but there is nothing small in these pages; in fact, this is a book that shows you how much space there is between these strong, wise and open lines. Enough space to untangle our overloaded days. Enough space to fit a world, once the reader accepts this poet's invitation to sit, take a breath. The closer we get the more we know.



—Cornelius Eady, Co/founder, Cave Canem; Winner, 2025 Wallace Stevens Award

Having written a whole book of Selected Longer Poems, Chester Johnson now shows himself equally adept at a compressed, intense shorter form that, at its frequent best, presents a whole world of emotion, conveys a whole experience, in nine brief lines.

—Edward Mendelson, Columbia University

"J. Chester Johnson's work on racial injustice, primarily the essential *Damaged Heritage*, and the essays on race and racial healing that followed, inform these "triple haiku." Yet, in this new volume, *Reading Whispers, Book of Triple Haiku*, his poetic voice is happily free of real certainties and absolutes; instead, it is playful with a gentle humor and wisdom. Among Johnson's subjects are love, implied politics, mini meditations on race, aging, and mortality. The language, while clear in its feeling, is oblique, full of ambiguities, and enriched by surprising turns. Its truths are "at a slant," as Emily Dickinson put it. Every poem offers an invitation to the reader to come back for a fresh read. A stanza from one of these triple haiku illustrates: To be satisfied/ In little cells of twilight/ Is still heroic. This is heroic poetry beautifully understated."

— Barry Wallenstein's latest poetry books are *Odd Men Out (or In)*, Xanadu Press, March 2025 and *Playing in Overtime*, Ridgeway Press, September 2025. He's emeritus professor of modern literature and writing at the City University of N.Y.

About J. Chester Johnson

J. Chester Johnson is an acclaimed American poet, essayist, and translator. His writings including "Reading Whispers," "Damaged Heritage," and "Now And Then: Selected Longer Poems," have received national acclaim for their poetic rigor and engagement with historical memory. His

archive is housed in the Civil Rights Archives at Queens College in New York City.

About Printed Word Reviews

Printed Word Reviews is a literary platform and publication dedicated to highlighting transformative books, authors, and social impact projects through reviews, features, and public promotional initiatives.

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