

Interview with Tamika Newhouse creator of
The 2013 5th Annual AAMBC Literary Awards
By: Michelle Cuttino

In 2008, Tamika Newhouse had a vision – to acknowledge individuals in the book industry who would otherwise go unnoticed. Here we are, five years later and the AAMBC Literary Awards are still gaining momentum.

Black Literature Magazine had the pleasure of speaking with Tamika and others in the industry about their take on AAMBC and its Literary Awards.

Rahiem Brooks, author of *Murder in Germantown* says, “AAMBC is one of the foremost authorities, dedicated to the advancement of African American authors and publishers.”

Shelia M. Goss, National Bestselling author (www.sheliagoss.com) adds, “AAMBC keeps readers informed of the latest book releases and also introduces the audience to new authors.”

Michelle: The AAMBC Literary Awards are now in its fifth year, the first of many milestones. Is the process still exciting for you?

Tamika: I actually do get very excited for this annual event. Because I am a control freak and know firsthand whom the nominees and winners will be, I am always totally geeked.

“Happy 5th Anniversary AAMBC Literary Awards! Congratulations on reaching an important milestone. Five years of supporting, promoting and encouraging African-American authors is no easy feat, but you did it. Your leadership and dedication to authors everywhere is commendable and we are all proud of you. Wishing you continued success and all the best for many years to come.” – **Monica Mathis-Stowe**, author of *Where Did We Go Wrong?*

Michelle: As a book club, why did you decide to take the plunge into the awards arena?

Tamika: I launched it for the main purpose of giving authors who are often times overlooked the chance to win accolades. You often see the same successful authors in bookstores, magazines, and other nationally built platforms. When in all realness there are hundreds of talents that get overlooked. I am doing my part in hopes they get a little shine.

“There are so many that have gone and will go unrecognized for their hard work and achievements. It’s a beautiful thing and it’s important that we recognize our own. The AAMBC Literary Awards have done just that.” – **OOSA Online Book Club**

Michelle: How did you decide which categories to include?

Tamika: They have changed over the years and I am sure it will change as time progresses. I choose what's relevant, popular, lacking, and what will make an impact. Creating the Reader's Choice and the Nate Holmes Honorary Award is most important to me as those are the most meaningful in my book from being considered the public's favorite to being dubbed a philanthropist.

"In a climate where reviews are biased and great literature is buried under sub par work, it's wonderful to have an organization that is real and informative. I salute AAMBC for embarking on their 5th year as one of the best, and this is why being a first time nominee in two different categories means the world to me." – **Fabiola Joseph**, author of *Rebel's Domain*

Michelle: Please explain the process used to select the nominees for each category.

Tamika: I go by a public nomination process. Meaning the public sends in names via email. I go through the nominations and the most popular nominations I research to make sure they qualify for this category. I make sure that people chosen are actually worthy; have great material, and or great potential to be something greater.

"I like AAMBC because they have the latest information on the literary world. They make sure the readers know what's going on. I just want to say congratulations on their 5th anniversary and I wish them many more" – Papaya Wagstaff, Sistahs On Lit

Michelle: How can one vote in the AAMBC Literary awards and when will the winner be announced?

Tamika: There is a direct link on AAMBC's website at www.aambookclub.com and click on AAMBC Literary Awards. You vote on the form there and votes come straight to my email.

"It's great to have a literary group that recognizes the growth of AA authors and other literary geniuses." – **Myss Shan**, author of *Hated by Many, Loved by None*

Michelle: Will there be an actual awards ceremony? If so, when and where?

Tamika: Nope not this year. Maybe in the future again I will have one and its setting will be extravagant, but as of now simplicity is the best key. Winners will be announced on AAMBC Radio Feb 13th at 7pm CST www.BlogTalkRadio.com/aambc.

Michelle: Tamika, this is a personal question, because someone has reached out to me – I know that the Book Club was created to showcase African Americans on the Move,

but with Latinos being in the minority as well, do you think you will be adding a Latino Author of the Year category in 2014 as so many other award shows are beginning to do so? Why or why not?

Tamika: I have been asked to add Latino, Teen, Gay, History, Self Help, and many other categories. I feel that eventually some of these categories will exit but I have to feel there is a large pool of artists to be up for the title. We don't want to create a category just because. We used to have Publicist of the Year, Radio Show of the Year, and so forth and eventually those became nonexistent as the same people were nominated every year.

I think **Treasure E. Blue**, author of *Fly Betty* says it best... *"AAMBC may be the end all say all when it comes to black literature because they are one of the only ones tuned into what's going on, our voice, our struggles, our plight, our pain – if not us, who is? REAL TALK. REAL TIME."*