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## JOHN W. FOUNTAIN

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A native son of Chicago, John W. Fountain is an award-winning columnist, journalist, professor and author of the memoir, *True Vine: A Young Black Man's Journey of Faith, Hope and Clarity* (Public Affairs, 2003) and *Dear Dad: Reflections on Fatherhood* (WestSide Press, 2011). His essay, "The God Who Embraced Me" appears in National Public Radio's book, *This I Believe* (Henry Holt Books, 2006), as part of the nationally acclaimed series initially started by Edward R. Morrow. Fountain is a professor of journalism at Roosevelt University and a weekly freelance columnist for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. In 2016, 2014 and 2011, Fountain received the Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism for columns published in the *Sun-Times*.

Fountain won the Lisagor Award in the category of news column or commentary among daily newspapers with a circulation of 250,000 or more from the Chicago Headline Club—the largest local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists in the country. In 2014, Fountain was awarded best column by the Illinois Press Association.

In 2015, Fountain was a Lisagor Award finalist for online best Feature for a series on a Little League Baseball team in suburban Chicago: The Sweet Season. In 2013, he was a finalist for the National Association of Black Journalists "Salute to Excellence Award" in the magazine category for his first-person feature "Murder Was the Case" in *Ebony* (July 2012). In 2012, Fountain received the Illinois Associated Press Editors Association Award and the Chicago Journalists Association Sarah Brown Boyden Award for his column in the *Sun-Times*.

In a journalism career that has spanned more than 30 years, Fountain has been a reporter at some of the top newspapers in this country. From 2000 to 2003, he was a national correspondent for *The New York Times*. Based in Chicago, Fountain covered a 12-state region. He also has been a staff writer at the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune*. He has written for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Modesto Bee*, *Pioneer Press Newspapers* in suburban Chicago and the *Champaign News-Gazette*.

He was formerly a tenured full professor at his alma mater, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and visiting scholar at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston. In addition to working as a national correspondent, Fountain has been a crime and courts reporter as well as a general assignment reporter and features writer.

Fountain was a 2009 fellow at the Knight Digital Multimedia Center at the University of California-Berkeley. At Roosevelt, he teaches Media Writing, Personal Journalism/Memoir Writing, Convergence Journalism, News Reporting, Literary Journalism and Special Projects courses.

In 1999, Fountain was one of 12 American journalists selected for the prestigious Michigan Journalism Fellowship for the 1999-2000 class at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Fountain studied inner-city poverty and race. Fountain earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Over his career, Fountain has won numerous honors for feature writing from the National Association of Black Journalists, the Associated Press, and the American Association of University Women, among others. In 2003, he was a finalist in feature writing and sports writing for the Peter Lisagor Award for excellence in journalism. He continues to be an invited guest on local and national radio and television news shows and has appeared on National Public Radio, Chicago Public Radio, WGN-TV, NBC-Channel 5, ABC-Channel-7, WTTW's Chicago Tonight and numerous radio shows.

Fountain frequently speaks across the country to inner-city youths, at schools and other groups. He shares his inspirational story of going from poverty and the urban mean streets of Chicago's West Side to the top of his profession. "True Vine" is his remarkable story—of his childhood in a neighborhood heading south; of his strong-willed grandparents, who founded a church (called True Vine) that sought to bring the word of God to their neighbors; and of his religious awakening that gave him the determination to rebuild his life.

Inspired by Fountain's essay for the acclaimed National Public Radio's *This I Believe* series, "Dear Dad" is a compilation of true narratives written by some of the nation's finest journalists and writers. Fountain's most recent book projects are: "No Place for Me: Letters to the Church in America" and "Son of the Times: Life, Laughter, Love and Coffee," a book of essays.

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# John W. Fountain

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**Education:**

Master of Science in Journalism, 1988 – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**WORK EXPERIENCE:**

**Roosevelt University, Chicago** – August 2007- Present

*Tenured Full Professor*

- Teaches Journalism 220 (Media Writing); Journalism 319 (News Reporting); Journalism 429 (Personal Journalism/Memoir Writing); Journalism 456 (Literary Journalism); Journalism 392, producing project websites (The Convergence Newsroom); Journalism 390 (Opinion/Editorial Writing); Journalism 390 (Immersion Journalism); Journalism 230 (Telling Social Justice Stories)

**Chicago Sun-Times** – January 2010 – Present

*Award-winning Weekly Columnist*

- Writes a weekly column for the newspaper's Metro section, focusing on social issues, culture and lifestyle and also dealing with such topics as poverty, race and urban violence.

**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** – August 2004 – July 2007

*Tenured Full Professor*

- Taught Journalism 200 (Introduction to Journalism), a course with an enrollment of 200 students each semester and 10 teaching assistants; taught Journalism 415 (Advanced Reporting), the department's flagship course on public affairs reporting; taught Journalism 460 (Personal Journalism/Memoir Writing).

**Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University** – September 2003 – July 2004.

*Visiting Scholar*

- Designed syllabus for second-year undergraduate news writing and reporting course and taught both undergraduate and graduate journalism, instructing graduates in classroom news labs, and also edited in the Medill Chicago Newsroom in Spring 2004.

**THE NEW YORK TIMES, New York, N.Y.** – July 2000 – July 2003.

*National Correspondent – Chicago Bureau*

- Reported general news, politics, education and human-interest stories in 11-state Midwest region while cultivating the national beat for trends and feature stories.

**WASHINGTON POST**, Washington, D.C., January 1995 – June 2000.

***General Assignment Reporter, D.C. Metro***

- Reported general news and features in Washington, D.C., including crime and urban affairs.
- Wrote essays and feature articles for *Style* and *Outlook* sections and *Washington Post Magazine*.

***Fairfax County Police Reporter, VA Metro***

- Reported police and law enforcement issues in Fairfax County and the Washington Metropolitan region. Covered Fairfax County civil and criminal courts.

**CHICAGO TRIBUNE** - Chicago, IL, September 1989 – January 1995.

***Staff Writer - Crime, General Assignment, Features.***

- Reported local, state and national news stories. Specialization in gangs, crime and urban affairs.
- Wrote articles for the Tempo, Perspective and special sections.

**Other Work Experience:**

*Freelance Writer* - London, England, October 1992 to July 1993.

**Internships:**

**Wall Street Journal** Pittsburgh, summer 1989.

**Modesto Bee** - Modesto, CA summer 1988.

**Chicago Sun-Times** -Chicago, IL, summer 1987.

**Pioneer Press**-Wilmette, IL, summer 1986.

**News-Gazette** - Champaign, IL, January to April 1986.

**International Travel:**

- **United Kingdom, Lewes England**, 10 months, August 1992-June 1993; wife was a British Marshall scholar.
- **Buenos Aires, Argentina**, March 2000, 7 days, Knight-Wallace Journalism Fellowship.
- **Johannesburg, South Africa**, Fall 2005, 10 days as Writer for Rev. Jesse L. Jackson
- **Ghana**, March 2007, 7 days as Writer for Rev. Jesse L. Jackson attending “Ghana 50.”
- **Israel; Syria, Jordan; Lebanon**, August/September 2006, **10 days**, as Writer for Rev. Jesse L. Jackson.

**Technology:**

- Produce, shoot and edit video and still photography, creating sound slideshows as well as videos and podcasts. Create websites that feature multimedia work, including numerous websites that showcase work from the Journalism Convergence course at Roosevelt.
- Proficient using Final Cut Pro, iMovie, Adobe Premiere, Soundtrack Pro, Adobe PhotoShop and other video, photo audio editing software.
- Experience using Adobe Flash software.

**Publishing:**

- Writer/Columnist, publishing more than 500 columns and articles in several publications, among them *the Chicago Sun-Times*, *the Chicago Tribune*, *Ebony Magazine*, *the Daily Southtown*, *Illinois Issues Magazine* and other publications.
- Guest on local and national radio and television news shows and has appeared on *National Public Radio*, *Chicago Public Radio*, *WGN-TV*, *NBC-Channel 5*, *ABC-Channel-7*, *WTTW's Chicago Tonight* and numerous radio shows.

•Producer, “Dear Dad: Reflections on Fatherhood,” with veteran television journalist Robert Jordan, of *WGN-TV*, who hosts the television program. “Reflections on Fatherhood” takes the form of an intimate conversation between Fountain and Jordan, with recorded vignettes and members of a live studio audience.

#### **Authored Books:**

***Soul Cries: In Black & White and Shades of Gray,***  
WestSide Press Publishing Chicago, 2019.

***No Place For Me: Letters to the Church in America***  
WestSide Press Books, January 2018

***Son of the Times: Life, Laughter, Love & Coffee***  
WestSide Press Books, May 2017

***Dear Dad: Reflections on Fatherhood***  
Author/Editor  
WestSide Press Books, November 2010.

***True Vine: A Young Black Man’s Journey of Faith, Hope and Clarity***  
Author  
PublicAffairs, June 2003.

***This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women***  
*Contributor*—National Public Radio  
Henry Holt, October 2006.

#### **Awards & Honors:**

**Peter Lisagor Award** for “Chiraq” columns published in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, 2015; in the category of news column or commentary among daily newspapers with a circulation of 250,000 or more from the Chicago Headline Club—the largest local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists in the country.

**Chicago City Club, panelist**, “Chiraq,” 2015. The City Club is a 113-year-old, bipartisan civic organization widely recognized as Illinois’ premier public affairs forum

**Peter Lisagor Award** finalist for online best Feature for a series on a Little League Baseball team in suburban Chicago: “The Sweet Season,” 2015.

**Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism** for columns published in the *Sun-Times*, 2014.

**The Illinois Press Association** “Best Column,” 2014.

**National Association of Black Journalists** “Salute to Excellence Award” finalist, 2013, in magazine category for “Murder Was the Case” *Ebony* magazine July 2012.

**The Illinois Associated Press Editors Association Award** for “Best Column,” 2012.

**The Chicago Journalists Association Sarah Brown Boyden Award**, “Best Column,” 2012.

**Peter Lisagor Award for Exemplary Journalism** for columns published in the *Sun-Times*, 2011.

Inductee, **The HistoryMakers**—Fountain was interviewed by The HistoryMakers, a national archive and project based in Chicago compiling an extensive video and written archive of the lives and stories of thousands of African Americans, from President Barack Obama to the oldest living black cowboy. Their aim: “to educate and enlighten millions worldwide through refashioning a more inclusive record of American history.”

<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/john-wesley-fountain-1>

**Fellow at the Multimedia Workshop at Knight Digital Media Center** at UC-Berkeley, 2009.

**New York Times Publisher’s Award**, for coverage of the 2000 Midwest Floods, May 2000.

**University of Michigan Journalism Fellowship, 1999-2000** to study “inner city poverty and race.”

**Society of Professional Journalists Dateline Award 1st Place** for “excellence in local journalism” for feature series, “Anacostia: A Game of Life” about a season with a high school football team.

**Associated Press Chesapeake “Best Feature Series Award” 1999** for “Anacostia: A Game of Life.”

**Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild Front Page “Distinguished Sports Writing” Award 1999** for “Anacostia: A Game of Life.”

**National Association of Black Journalists Feature Writing Award 1998** for feature article “No Fare,” a story about subtle racism and one black man trying to hail a taxi cab Washington, DC.

**Maryland, Delaware, D.C. Press Association “Best of Show” Award 1997** for spot news story about the impact the Washington Redskins’ move to their new stadium in suburban Maryland had on the Washington, D.C., neighborhood that surrounds the old stadium.

**American Association of University Women Award 1996** for “On the force but not in the club; Many female police officers say their careers are arrested by sexism.” *Wash-Post* Oct. 19, 1995.

**IN PROGRESS**

●“**See Me: A West Side Story.**” Fountain is at work on a photo-documentary that focuses on Chicago’s West Side and that seeks to capture life, love and laughter beyond the stereotypical images of those who live there.

●“**Mornings With Malik: The Journey to Manhood.**” Fountain is currently at work on a book born as a series of letters to his adolescent son as he approaches manhood.

●“**Dear Daughter: Lessons on Life.**” Fountain is currently at work on a book born as a series of letters to his daughter.

●“**Spirit of Cain.**” (original working title: “**Steel Rain: Life in the Shadow of Death**” Documentary film and book, chronicling, life and death in Chicago, America’s murder capital, during the deadliest months in the city’s deadliest police district—Harrison—on the city’s West Side, where Fountain grew up and later returned as the *Tribune’s* chief crime reporter. Also examines homicide among black men, who account for a disproportionate number of U.S. homicide victims each year—in the thousands over the last two decades in Chicago alone, despite a dip in violent crime nationally in recent years, and by the tens of thousands across the nation. In the entire Vietnam conflict, 58,168 U.S. military personnel were killed. Yet from 1985 to 1991, at the height of the crack cocaine wars, there were more black males murdered in America. Their toll: 59,579.

**TRUE VINE:**

TRUE VINE: A YOUNG BLACK MAN’S JOURNEY OF FAITH, HOPE & CLARITY is John Fountain’s remarkable story—of Fountain’s childhood in a rapidly decaying neighborhood on Chicago’s West Side; of his strong-willed grandparents, who founded the True Vine church and sought to bring the word of God to their neighbors; of his mother, herself a teenage parent, whose unfulfilled dreams helped nurture bigger dreams in him; of his friends and cousins, whose youthful exuberance was extinguished by the burdens they faced; and of his religious awakening that gave him the determination to rebuild his life. Public Affairs, 2003, hardcover. Paperback released in March 2005.

- **True Vine** was reviewed in the Washington Post, the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Dallas Morning News, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Library Journal, Booklist, North Lawndale Community News, Pioneer Press Newspaper, The Huntington News and The Chicago Crusader among other publications.

- **Blurbs:**

“Sometimes incredible insights on the challenges and harshness of inner-city poverty can be gained from reading about the experiences of remarkable individuals who defy overwhelming odds and escaped to a better life. No account more powerfully demonstrates the soundness of this view than John W. Fountain’s moving memoir, *True Vine*.”

**William Julius Wilson, Lewis P. and Linda L. Geyser University  
Professor, Harvard University**

“*True Vine* is a book about a certain black experience in the USA—John Fountain’s life. But it’s more. It’s a handbook and a guide to what is possible in this country. It says, ‘You can do it.’ It says there are doors you can open but you have to put your own shoulder to them. This is the kind of book you’d like to place on every desk in every classroom in America. It is a hymn of a book, showing us the necessity of finding ourselves and being true to ourselves. Of all the books written in the last decade about struggle and triumph this is just about the best.”

**Frank McCourt,**

**Author of Pulitzer Prize winning *Angela’s Ashes* and *’Tis***

- **Chicago Tribune**, March 25, 2004 Thursday, *In writer’s memoirs, teens find inspiration; North Lawndale neighborhood rallies around native’s tale of how he overcame hardships*, By Gina Kim, Tribune staff reporter.
- **Chicago Tribune**, December 1, 2003 Monday, *These 2 books give wisdom, hope to readers*, Dawn Turner Trice.
- **The Wichita Eagle**, August 30, 2003 Saturday, (Reviews of recent books on faith and values) "True Vine: A Young Black Man’s Journey of Faith Hope and Clarity."
- **The Dallas Morning News**, August 2, 2003, RELIGION; BOOKS.
- **Alameda Times-Star (Alameda, CA)**, July 31, 2003 Thursday, New crop of memoirs reveal authors' concepts of home.
- **The Washington Post**, July 13, 2003 Sunday, BOOK WORLD; Breaking Away, Reviewed by Darryl Cox.
- **The New York Times**, June 29, 2003 Sunday, BOOKS IN BRIEF: NONFICTION , By Roberta Bernstein.

#### OTHER EDUCATION:

- **Post Graduate work** – *Political Science*, University of Illinois,
- **Bachelor of Science**, 1986 – *News Editorial Journalism*, University of Illinois.
- **Associate in Arts**, 1983 – *High School Teaching*, Wilbur Wright College.
- **Diploma in Arts, 1983** – Journalism, Wilbur Wright College.

**(Full CV Available Upon Request)**