

ABSTRACT

A Comparative Study of the Careers of Zora Neale Hurston and Louise Bennett as Cultural Conservators

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This comparative study of the careers and creative writing of two women of the African Diaspora--Zora Neale Hurston, from Eatonville, Florida, and Louise Bennett, from Kingston, Jamaica--explores their respective milieux, chronicles their career development, analyses their productive periods, and describes the legacies they have left in folklore and literature.

They were unique for their respective times and places because they chose to use their educational opportunities and talents to conserve, reinterpret and communicate a denigrated folk culture. Both were independent thinkers who loved their own culture, who saw beauty and survival wisdom in it.

Bennett achieved recognition and a fulfilled life as a Jamaican cultural conservator. Hurston achieved recognition without professional or financial security, which suggests that it is more rewarding to conserve and communicate Black folk culture in a Black nation, even when its leaders do not acknowledge it as such.