



Zora Neale Hurston

January 7, 1891 - January 28, 1960

Died: Fort Pierce, Florida

Interment: Garden of Heavenly Rest, Fort Pierce, Florida

Zora Neale Hurston died at the St. Lucie County Welfare Home in Fort Pierce, Florida, on January 28, 1960, of hypertensive heart disease. She was sixty-nine. Born in Notasulga, Alabama, on January 7, 1891, and raised in Eatonville, the all-Black town that became her stage and her argument, she subtracted years from her age when she needed school and added folklore when New York wanted a mascot.

She studied at Howard and Barnard, trained under Franz Boas, and went south with a pistol, a chrome-plated it, and a notebook to collect lies, sermons, and hoodoo the academy had filed as noise. *Mules and Men* and *Tell My Horse* are field books that still read like visits. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written in Haiti in seven weeks, was dismissed by some of her Harlem peers for not being protest enough. She kept writing in a voice that refused to apologize for pleasure. She worked as a maid, a librarian, and a substitute teacher when the books stopped paying. Eatonville still holds a festival in her name. The porch she invented on the page was a real street before it was a symbol.

Fort Pierce was not exile so much as the last cheap room. She drafted a life of Herod in a public-housing project and kept a garden. The welfare-home death was a fact her later readers have not been allowed to sentimentalize. Alice Walker found the unmarked grave in 1973 and bought a stone.

She is buried in the Garden of Heavenly Rest, Fort Pierce. Eatonville still holds the porch. The novel holds the rest.

Services

Died in Fort Pierce, Florida, on January 28, 1960. Interment at the Garden of Heavenly Rest, Fort Pierce.

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