

**Toni Morrison Society Panel and Roundtable**  
**American Literature Association Meeting**

**May 25-28, 2017**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**1. Scholarly Panel: “Ideas of Citizenship in Toni Morrison’s Fiction”**

In a May 2015 essay entitled “The New Progressive Agenda: A Return to Citizenship,” Toni Morrison reflects on the meaning of American citizenship and how it has changed over time: “Remember,” she began, “when we used to be called ‘citizens’? There were levels of citizenship, certainly, but we were citizens nonetheless. ‘I am an American citizen’ was our proud boast. Then, following World War II, the prosperous decades began, and we were called ‘consumers’ . . . [N]ow we are identified by a brand-new label, one that floods political speech, pundit themes, and media headlines: ‘taxpayer’. It seems that that definition is all we are. This means our relationship with our country now is not the same as it used to be when being a good citizen was something important. The new Progressive Agenda, she concludes “reimagines citizenship and is far, far more than worthy; it is crucial.” (*Huffington Post Blog*, May 12, 2015)

Morrison’s reflection on the meaning of citizenship and the importance of it being “reimagined” in our time contextualizes the focus of this ALA panel. Papers should consider such questions as: How does Morrison define and critique citizenship in her fiction? How do notions of citizenship in her works change over time? How does she present issues of Black citizenship within Black communities? What are the conflicts and contradictions of citizenship in Morrison’s fiction? Do her characters think primarily about their community or about their own status as “citizens”? Are there models of citizenship in her fiction? How does Morrison handle issues of civilities, civil rights, civil liberties, and immigration?

**Abstracts should be 250 to 300 words and should be sent to the ALA Panel Committee at [tonimorrisonociety@gmail.com](mailto:tonimorrisonociety@gmail.com) by January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**

**2. Teaching Roundtable: “Teaching Citizenship through the Works of Toni Morrison”**

This Teaching Roundtable will explore the relationships between literature and civic education and how Toni Morrison’s fiction brings issues of civic duty into the classroom. What conversations do her works ignite to assist students in assuming the responsibilities of citizenship? Which novels lend themselves particularly to the subject of citizenship? How do ideas of racialized, gendered, sexualized, and class identities intersect with the notions of citizenship?

**Abstracts should be 100-250 words and should be sent to the ALA Panel Committee at [tonimorrisonociety@gmail.com](mailto:tonimorrisonociety@gmail.com) by January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**