

Black Author Brings New Voice to Science Fiction and Fantasy.

African American sci-fi/fantasy author R. A. Baker shares his views on the genre, and the future of black speculative fiction.

May 16, 2008 (FPRC) -- CHESTER, VA – With his detailed narrative, gripping plot, and compelling characters, African American author R. A. Baker is a fine newcomer to the literary playing field. However, there is one thing that sets Baker apart from most black writers: he writes science fiction. In 2008, R. A. Baker joined the ranks of black science fiction/fantasy writers like Charles Saunders, Steven Barnes, Octavia Butler, and Nalo Hopkinson, among others. They are part of a small, but growing group of writers, specializing in genres previously the exclusive domain of their white counterparts. It's a trend poised to add a new perspective to fantasy and science fiction storytelling.

Baker, who wrote the sci-fi/fantasy novel, *Rayna of Nightwind*, says that he knew at an early age that he wanted to write sci-fi/fantasy. "I've always loved speculative fiction, which includes both sci-fi and fantasy," he says. "It allows for so much creative freedom—it is the only kind of fiction I would ever want to write."

With the commercial success of the Harry Potter novels, and movies like *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*, there is little doubt of sci-fi and fantasy's appeal. African American writers like Baker believe there is also a demand for a fresh approach to these popular genres. "I believe African Americans can bring a lot to the table and take speculative fiction in exciting directions it has never gone before," he says.

Baker says he does not see himself as a pioneer, but simply as a member of a special, and often misunderstood group. "When I tell people I write sci-fi/fantasy, I sometimes get strange stares, like they are thinking to themselves, 'black people don't write sci-fi'," he says. "It can be a little disheartening, but I know the best way to deal with attitudes like that, is to be as successful in my field as possible. In a way, it has made me a better writer, because I know I can never give up or stop writing. I would never want to give the naysayers that kind of satisfaction."

Additionally, Baker points out that diversity should be sought in all areas. "If Tiger Woods had decided early in his career to abandon golf because it was uncommon for a black person to play that sport, we would have missed out on a phenomenal golf player, and a great role model," he said. "I think it's time we shattered some old stereotypes about black literature, and be open to explore different avenues".

To aspiring African American sci-fi/fantasy authors, Baker offers the following advice: "There is a world of possibilities to explore, so explore it your way. When I wrote *Rayna of Nightwind*, I stayed true to my voice and my particular writing style. Don't let preconceived notions about your race influence how you write, or what you write about—let your imagination decide."

R. A. Baker is the author of "*Rayna of Nightwind*", the first novel in his new Taren series (published by Apollo House Press), which is available for purchase on Amazon.com.

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