

Terry Tempest Williams

The Ecology Hall of Fame, adding Terry Tempest Williams to its honorees, noted that she “combines all the major strains of environmental passion.” Her life has focused on opposing resource destruction, especially that affecting human health; a love for the desert, and other naturally beautiful places; and land stewardship over many generations, which ties her to the region where she was born and still lives.

Williams is a Utah native, descended from five or six generations of Mormon pioneers. “I write through my biases of gender, geography, and culture,” she says. “I am a woman whose ideas have been shaped by the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau.”

Williams is perhaps best known for her book *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (Pantheon, 1991), in which she chronicles the epic rise of Great Salt Lake and the flooding of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in 1983, alongside her mother's diagnosis with ovarian cancer, believed to be caused by radioactive fallout from the nuclear tests in the Nevada desert in the 1950s and 60s. *Refuge* is now regarded as a classic in American nature writing, a testament to loss and the earth's healing grace.

Williams' other books include *Red: Patience and Passion in the Desert*, 2001, a collection of essays, *An Unspoken Hunger* (Pantheon, 1994); *Desert Quartet: An Erotic Landscape* (Pantheon, 1995); *Coyote's Canyon* (Gibbs M. Smith, 1989); and *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984). She is also the author of two children's books: *The Secret Language of Snow* (Sierra Club/Pantheon, 1984); and *Between Cattails* (Little Brown, 1985).

In 2004 Terry Tempest Williams published *The Open Space of Democracy*, in which she tries to define how we can break down the partisanship and polarization in our society so that we can come together to solve the political and environmental problems which threaten our democracy and our land. In it she says, “I do not think we can look for leadership beyond ourselves. I do not think we can wait for someone or something to save us from our global predicaments and obligations. I need to look in the mirror and ask this of myself: If I am committed to seeing the direction of our country change, how must I change myself?”

In 2006, Ms. Williams received the Robert Marshall Award from The Wilderness Society, their highest honor given to an American citizen. She also received the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Western American Literature Association and the Wallace Stegner Award given by The Center for the American West. She is the recipient of a Lannan Literary Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in creative nonfiction.

Terry Tempest Williams is currently the Annie Clark Tanner Scholar in Environmental Humanities at the University of Utah. Her writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Orion Magazine*, and numerous anthologies worldwide as a crucial voice for ecological consciousness and social change. She divides her time between Castle Valley, Utah and Moose, Wyoming.

Biographical notes courtesy: Rob Shetterly, Terry Tempest Williams