



Lynn Nottage, Playwright



Playwright Lynn Nottage has won acclaim for her original and thought-provoking treatment of complex social issues. © AP Images

The female characters created by playwright Lynn Nottage populate a vast expanse in terms of social class, time and place: a teenager in the 1950s, a pretentious businesswoman, a New York seamstress in the early 1900s, women brutalized during the war in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). When Nottage received a MacArthur “genius” grant in 2007, she was hailed as “an original voice in American theater.” At the time, her best-known play was *Intimate Apparel*, an exploration of race and class in America. Just two years later, a very different

play by Nottage won the Pulitzer Prize for drama: *Ruined*, set in a brothel in the war-ravaged DRC.

The Pulitzer board praised *Ruined* as “a searing drama” that “compels audiences to face the horror of wartime rape and brutality while still finding affirmation of life amid hopelessness.”



Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage poses in her New York home. © AP Images

During her research for *Ruined*, Nottage interviewed Congolese women who had been victims of violence. “I thought I was going to find broken women, but I found women who had been brutalized but were determined to move on,” Nottage said. She donated part of her \$10,000 Pulitzer Prize award

to the Panzi Hospital in the DRC, which does reconstructive surgery for women.

By the Way, Meet Vera Stark is her latest play. A humorous look at racial stereotypes in Hollywood, it tells the fictional history of an aspiring African-American actress who works as a maid for

a white actress in the 1930s. The main character was inspired by the black actresses of the era who were cast mostly as maids, slaves or children’s nannies.

Born in Brooklyn in 1964, Nottage attended Brown University and the Yale School of Drama.