Catlett-Walker Timeline

1915  Catlett is born on April 15, 1915 in Washington, DC. Walker is born on July 7, 1915 in Birmingham, Alabama.

1932  Walker goes to a Langston Hughes lecture and meets him. He encourages her to write poetry and becomes a mentor.

1934  Walker publishes her first poem in Crisis magazine.

1935  Catlett graduates cum laude from Howard University. Walker graduates from Northwestern University.

1936  Walker begins work for the Federal Writers Project in Chicago. She is a member of the South Side Writers Group.

1937  Walker writes “For My People”, which is then published in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse in November of that year.

1939–40  Catlett and Walker become roommates in Iowa City.

1940  Catlett earns one of the first three MFAs ever awarded, from the University of Iowa. She also wins first prize in sculpture for Mother and Child (1940) at the American Negro Exposition in Chicago.

1942  Walker earns her MFA from the Iowa Writer’s Workshop at the University of Iowa. Her thesis project For My People wins the Yale Series of Younger Poets Award. She is the first black poet to win the award.

1943  Walker is accepted into Yaddo, an artists’ residency in Saratoga Springs, New York. Langston Hughes, one of her mentors, also attends.

1945–46  Catlett receives the Rosenfeld Fellowship and moves to Mexico.

1947  Catlett returns to Mexico permanently and becomes a member of the Taller de Gráfica Popular [People’s Graphic Workshop].
1949 Walker begins working at Jackson College for Negro Teachers (now Jackson State University) in Mississippi, where she remains until she retires in 1979.

1959 Catlett becomes professor of sculpture at the UNAM [National Autonomous University in Mexico].

1962 Catlett renounces her US citizenship and becomes a Mexican citizen; the US State Department declares her an “undesirable alien”.

1965 Walker earns her PhD in English from the University of Iowa; her dissertation, which she researched and wrote over the span of thirty years, builds on memories her maternal grandmother, Elvira Ware Dozier, shared with her.

1966 Walker publishes her dissertation as her first novel, *Jubilee*.

1968 Walker founds the Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People (now the Margaret Walker Center) at Jackson State University.

1998 Walker is inducted into the African American Literary Hall of Fame. She dies on November 30 the same year, in Chicago, IL.

2002 Catlett regains her US citizenship.

2012 Catlett dies on April 2, 2012 in Cuernavaca, Mexico.