



BROWARD COUNTY COMMISSION
NEWS RELEASE
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Broward County Commission Libraries Division Presents
"Voices of the Harlem Renaissance"
at the African-American Research Library on October 25 at 7 p.m.

BROWARD COUNTY, FL – As part of The African-American Research Library and Cultural Center's (AARLCC) 4th Anniversary Celebration, three literary figures will be stepping out of the past and onto the Fort Lauderdale stage on October 25—transporting local residents to a razzmatazz era of some 80 years ago when black writers, artists and musicians unleashed a creative whirlwind called the Harlem Renaissance.

Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson and **Langston Hughes** will bring history to life by telling their stories and discussing their lives, their work and each other. These literary greats—three of the leading lights in 1920s Harlem— will be portrayed by actors Phyllis McEwen, LeRoy Mitchell, Jr. and Bob Devin Jones in **"Voices of the Harlem Renaissance."**

The performance is scheduled for 7 p.m. at AARLCC, 2650 Sistrunk Blvd., and is free and open to the public. It is one of numerous public performances around the state, all developed and sponsored by the Florida Humanities Council (FHC) and funded through a "We The People" grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Community partners in Fort Lauderdale are the Florida Center for the Book, Broward County Library and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee, Inc.

All three literary figures had Florida connections. Hurston, a novelist, folklorist and anthropologist, grew up in Eatonville, the historically all-black city just outside of Orlando. Described as witty, brash, wise and vivacious, Hurston became one of the most famous writers of the 20th century. She also traveled throughout Florida collecting folklore and folk music.

Actor/scholar Phyllis McEwen has portrayed Hurston in FHC programs throughout Florida for more than a decade.

Actor LeRoy Mitchell, Jr. will play Johnson, a Jacksonville native who went on to become a poet, diplomat and composer. Johnson founded the first black high school in Florida, was the first black man admitted to the Florida bar and was field secretary for the NAACP. Mitchell, himself a Florida native who was born in Mount Dora, has portrayed Johnson for years as part of the FHC Speakers Bureau. Mitchell has also acted in numerous productions on stage and screen.

Actor/writer/director Bob Devin Jones will portray Hughes, the prolific poet, essayist and playwright who was a friend and occasional collaborator of Hurston's and spent time in Florida. Jones, co-founder of the multidisciplinary arts venue The Studio@620 in St. Petersburg, has trained at the American Conservatory Theatre of San Francisco and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art of London.

The Harlem Renaissance, first known as The New Negro Movement, occurred between World War I and the Great Depression in the Harlem area of New York City. This is thought to be one of the most fertile cultural movements in America, a time of literary, musical and artistic achievements that brought about a rebirth for Africans in America.

Founded in 1974, the award-winning Broward County Libraries Division, www.broward.org/library, provides essential quality of life community service as well as outstanding customer service throughout Broward County. The library consists of 37 branches, more than three million items for public use, 970 permanent staff, 114 part-time staff and \$4.6 million in grants with 41 grant-supported positions. Broward County Library is the ninth largest library system in the United States serving 10 million customers annually.

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