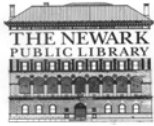


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PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, January 20, 2009
For Immediate Release
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Newark Public Library Explores the Lives and Legacy of its Great African-American Medical Men and Women for Black History Month

The Newark Public Library (NPL) has scheduled an exhibition and several special programs through March 28 to mark its Black History celebration, *Dear & Glorious Physician: The History of Black Doctors, Nurses, and Hospitals in Newark And Places Just Beyond the River*, which centers around the exploration of the lives and legacy of the black doctors and nurses whose pioneering work in the greater metropolitan area opened the doors of the health services industry to the city's African American population as both consumers and providers.

The opening program will be held Thursday, January 29, 5 p.m. in the Main Library's Centennial Hall, 5 Washington Street. At 6 p.m. there will be a panel discussion by author Linda Kenney Miller, granddaughter of Dr. John Kenney, the man who constructed a hospital for people of color in Newark, staffing it with black doctors, nurses, orderlies and support staff. She will be joined by Dr. Clement Alexander Price, director of the Institute on Ethnicity, Culture and the Modern Experience (IECME) at Rutgers-Newark, and Rev. John K. White, pastor of New Salem Baptist Church, which is located in the former Kenney Memorial Hospital.

The speakers will discuss the history of Kenney Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1927 with 30 beds to serve the city's black population who had long been shut out of the city's other health care facilities. They also will discuss the life and legacy of Dr. Kenney who named the hospital after his parents.

Spectrum Afrikans will present traditional drumming as part of the festivities. Kaelaan Cinque Elliott Maynor and Langston Bowles Fulmore from the Bethany Baptist Church Boys Rites of Passage will serve as ushers.

Joining the NPL in co-sponsoring the January 29 program are the Newark History Society, Newark Preservation & Landmarks Committee, New Salem Baptist Church and the IECME.

"The title of this year's Black History exhibition reflects how these professional men and women were viewed by the community. They were both revered and beloved," said Library Director Wilma J. Grey. "Their work was critical in helping African Americans gain access to the medical profession as providers and to healthcare as patients."

Funding for the Library's Black History Celebration and exhibit has been provided by a generous grant from the PNC Foundation.

“At a time when healthcare continues to be a main topic of discussion in communities across New Jersey and the nation, it is especially appropriate to recognize the contributions of medical professionals who were pioneers in the Newark community,” said Daria Placitella, northern New Jersey regional president, PNC Financial Services Group. “We are honored to support the Newark Public Library in highlighting the African-American doctors and nurses whose legacy continues to provide inspiration in and outside of the community they selflessly served.”

The Library has invited three women, all daughters of Newark’s most prominent, ground-breaking doctors, to discuss the lives of their fathers at a special program, Wednesday, February 25 at 6 p.m. in Centennial Hall. The discussion features author Carole Darden-Lloyd, (Dr. Walter Darden) pediatrician Dr. Edwina Verner (Dr. Edward Verner) and retired librarian Ms. Barbara Polk-Riley (Dr. Charles C. Polk) who will explore the lives of the men who practiced medicine in defiance of the accepted norms of the day, insisting that medical care be accessible to all. The discussion will be moderated by journalist Caryl Lucas.

Kenney, Darden, Verner, Dr. Reynolds Burch, Dr. Theodore Inge and Dr. Louis T. Wright and others, whose lives are explored through the exhibit, exercised their medical skills at a time when African Americans were treated as second-class citizens. These medical professionals fought for the right to learn and practice medicine, as well as the right of African Americans for access to medical services in the mainstream of American life and culture.

Darden, the son of a former slave, was an iconic figure in Newark’s Central Ward where he practiced family medicine for 60 years before retiring. Burch delivered hundreds of babies to several generations of Newarkers between 1956 and 1981. He was affiliated with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and had directed the Maternal and Infant Care Project in the department of gynecology and obstetrics at the hospital.

Kenney fled Tuskegee, Alabama, just a few days ahead of a lynch mob after he insisted that a veteran’s hospital constructed to serve the needs of Tuskegee Airmen be staffed by blacks. Upon arriving in Newark, Kenney found that access to area hospitals for black healthcare providers and healthcare for black residents was little different from what he had seen in the South. He used his own money to build a small hospital to serve this population, opening it in 1927 and gifting it to the African-American population of Newark in 1934.

The former hospital now serves Newark residents as the New Salem Baptist Church.

To showcase the importance of these medical men and women to the fabric of Newark and the African-American community, curator Sandra L. West, associate in the James Brown African-American Room, has collected photographs, articles, histories and biographies that depict their lives and accomplishments. This exhibit will be on display through March 28.

This presentation, coupled with several programs, including a recounting of the history of Harlem Hospital, has been designed to illuminate the lives of these dedicated professionals, as well as to convey an understanding of the times in which they lived.

"I remember as a child going to North Carolina for summer vacations, where my mother took my sister and me to visit a distant relative, Uncle Dr. Richard Foy, who was a dentist. His teeth were jagged like fangs," said West. "We prayed that our mother would not make him our dentist! Children can be cruel when they do not know better.

However, she noted, “Dr. Foy was the only black dentist in the area. Growing up he saw the fieldwork that his brothers and sisters did for a living and that there was no black dentist to take care of black folk. His mouth was proof of that! So, my uncle Dr. Richard Foy accessed the situation in Lenoir County and made his life stand for something, as did so many doctors in Newark, Harlem, Chicago, and around the country. In total respect for their sacrifice, lives and commitment, with this exhibition I share their stories for the next generation.”

At noon on Saturday, February 14, Robert Hayden, author of *Mr. Harlem Hospital: Dr. Louis T. Wright*, will discuss his research and work documenting the history of Harlem Hospital and Dr. Wright, its premier black physician. The discussion will take place in the James Brown African-American Room. Copies of his book will be available for purchase.

Wright, a graduate of Harvard Medical School, first practiced in Atlanta, later moving to New York City where he became the first African-American physician on the staff of Harlem Hospital. In 1943, he became the hospital’s director of surgery. He also served as the first African-American chairman of the NAACP Board of Directors, a voluntary position he held until his death in 1952.

The Library has scheduled several other programs to mark Black History through February and March.

The Weequahic Branch Library, at 355 Osborne Terrace, will host a screening of “Say It Loud” a film created by former Nickelodeon actor, Jordan Coleman on Wednesday, February 4 at 4 p.m. The video, which encourages African-American boys to do well in school and in life, features a series of on-camera interviews that Coleman conducted with such role models such as Mayor Cory Booker, Kobe Bryant and Michael Strahan, among others. Following the viewing, Coleman will respond to audience questions and give out prizes.

All other programs listed are at the Main Library, 5 Washington Street.

On Wednesday, February 18, operatic vocalist Gwen Moten sings her tragedy-to-triumph memoir, *From Birmingham to Botswana: The Journey of an African-American International Traveler*. Her piece recounts her journey from the Civil Rights Movement to her rise as a cultural ambassador. The program will be held in the library auditorium at 6 p.m.

On Tuesday, March 10 at 6 p.m. in Centennial Hall, the library presents *With Love, Lorraine*, a one-woman play performed by award-winning actor Elizabeth Van Dyke. It celebrates the 50th anniversary of *A Raisin in the Sun*, the seminal play by Lorraine Hansberry.

The library has also scheduled a Wellness Day, Saturday March 28 from noon to 5 p.m. in the James Brown African-American Room. A chiropractor, yoga instructor and health practitioners will be on hand for demonstrations and discussions of health related topics.

All programs are free and open to the public. For more information call 973-733-5411 or log on to www.npl.org.