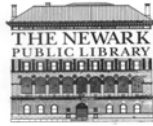


THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
5 WASHINGTON STREET, NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102



P R E S S R E L E A S E

Wednesday, January 19, 2011

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### **Newark Library Marks Black History Month** **Exploring the Impact of Black Dance**

The Newark Public Library will commemorate Black History Month 2011 with two exhibits, a teach-in and performances that celebrate the exuberance, grace and innovation of black dance, from its origins in African villages to its incorporation into mass culture and Broadway musicals.

The Limbo, Cakewalk, Georgia Grind, Lindy Hop and the Shimmy -- some of the most famous and enduring dance steps in America -- can trace their roots to tribal rites such as *Sowu*, the Ghanese "dance of life," and the *Focodaba* initiation dance from Guinea. These dance styles were carried over in slave ships, became fused with European influences in the South, and flowered into new and unexpected variations. That progression is explored in this year's Black History Month salute, *We Are a Dancing People: The History of Black Dance From Then Until Now*.

Curated by Sandra L. West, an associate in the Library's James Brown African-American Room, the exhibit is paired with a photographic display, *The Art of Dance*, by photographer/collagist Mansa K. Mussa. Both shows open January 26 in the Main Library, 5 Washington Street, and will run through March 15. To schedule guided tours of the exhibition, please call 973-733-5411.

"The cultural contributions of African Americans to this country, broad and deep as they are, are not always fully acknowledged," said Library Director Wilma J. Grey. "This exhibit provides some welcome recognition -- and what a joyful theme to explore!"

The opening night celebration for the Library's Black History Month activities will take place on February 10 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Main Library and will feature jazz by the Sherry Winston Trio and an African dance performance by the 7th Principle Dance & Drum Ensemble. Curator of the photographic display, Mansa Mussa, also will speak and East Orange author Cheryl Willis Hudson will offer a reading from her new book, "My Friend Maya Loves to Dance."

Funding for the Library's Black History Month activities and exhibits has been provided by a generous grant from the PNC Foundation. The exhibition and opening night program will take place at the Main Library, 5 Washington Street, downtown Newark.

"Each year we look forward to supporting the Newark Public Library in celebrating the rich cultural history of the African-American community during Black History Month," said Linda Bowden, northern New Jersey regional president for PNC. "The focus of this year's exhibit on the history of black dance highlights the influence of global styles on the art of dance. The Newark community and its international neighborhoods are the perfect backdrop to showcase that history and the influence of black dance on our national and global communities today."

In addition to opening night, Black History Month celebrations include:

- **Saturday, February 5, noon-2 p.m., Main Library**  
A talk by Dr. Antoinette Ellis-Williams of New Jersey City University on Dr. Lee Hagan, for whom the college's Africana Studies Center is named.
- **Wednesday, February 9, 6-8 p.m., Weequahic Branch, 355 Osborne Terrace, 973-733-7752**  
Annual African-American Read-In, featuring South Ward leaders reading some of their favorite poems and short essays. For ages 8 to adult.
- **Wednesday, February 16, 6-8 p.m., Main Library**  
A performance of *Egypt* and other dances by the Daughters of Hetheru, who will talk about the African roots of belly dancing.
- **Wednesday, February 23, 6-8 p.m., Main Library**  
The inaugural meeting of the W.E.B. DuBois Reading Circle, which will meet quarterly to discuss nonfiction works. The first session will focus on "The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations," by Ira Berlin.
- **Wednesday, February 23, 4 p.m., Weequahic Branch and Friday, February 25, 3:30 p.m., Springfield Branch, 50 Hayes Street, 973-733-7736**  
The Okra Dance Company will present *Journey Into Africa*, a performance of songs and dances from Senegal to Soweto.
- **Saturday, March 5, 12 noon-2 p.m., Main Library**  
An afternoon of liturgical dance, *Armor Bearers for Christ*, sponsored by St. James AME Church in Newark.
- **Saturday, March 12, 12 noon-2 p.m. Main Library**  
A reading by poet Sonia Sanchez, author of "Homegirls and Hand Grenades," "Morning Haiku," and other acclaimed works.
- **Wednesday, March 23, 6 -8 p.m. Main Library**  
A talk by Principal Baruti Kafele, principal of Newark Technical School, about how to motivate young African American males.

All programs are free and open to the public. For more information or to arrange a tour of the exhibits, please call (973) 733-5411. In case of inclement weather, please call (973) 733-7800 to determine whether the Library is open.