James "Library" Brown
1937-1991

James Brown, for whom the James Brown African American Room is named, dedicated his personal and professional life to curating and expanding The Newark Public Library's (NPL) collection of resources on the African American experience and the African Diaspora. He was born in Dillon, SC and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. After his military service, James Brown attended Rutgers University – Newark, earning bachelor's and master's degrees. Mr. Brown served for 29 years at NPL and held the titles of Principal Librarian and head of the African American Room. After his untimely death at the age of 53 in 1991, the African American Room was renamed in his honor.

A beloved member of the community, Mr. Brown was dubbed James "Library" Brown by Newark's playwright/ poet/ activist Amiri Baraka. In addition to spearheading the Library's collection of works by and about African Americans, in 1968, Mr. Brown created the Library's Lorraine Hansberry Lecture Series, which brought to the Library acclaimed African American writers, poets, and scholars. Mr. Brown also organized the Library's pre-Kwanzaa Festival and presided over annual birthday celebrations for Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

Mr. Brown's influence extended beyond the Library and into the community where he was a founding member of Urban Voices, a poet's collective, and a senior member of the Newark Black Film Festival Selection Committee. Mr. Brown was especially committed to urging Newark youth to pursue education and to understand the importance of the Library's role in their academic growth.

2018-2019 Executive Committee

Dr. Anasa Maat, Founding Chair
Linda McDonald Carter, Esq.
Irene Daniels
Dr. Linda Caldwell Epps
Sandra Holmes
Charlotte Munnerlyn
Lisa Hendricks Richardson, Esq.
Trish Morris-Yamba

friends of the James Brown African American Room

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friends of the James Brown African American Room
James Brown African American Room

The Mission of the James Brown African American Room (JBAAR) is to provide a dedicated space for the development, inspiration, and enrichment of all people, to serve as a repository and locale for cultural programming within the main branch of the historic Newark Public Library, and to honor the legacy of principal librarian James Brown (1937-1991), for his insistence of institutional inclusion.

The Friends

The Friends of the James Brown African American Room is a group of community activists, artists and arts administrators, entrepreneurs, teachers, and members of the public founded in 2016 by Dr. Anasa Maat.

The organization raises funds to expand the collections and exhibitions of the JBAAR, and hosts programs and events relative to the African American (and African Diasporan) experience.

Friends of The James Brown African American Room

The Mission of the Friends of the James Brown African American Room (FoJBAAR) is to support the sustainability and development of the JBAAR at The Newark Public Library, named in honor of the principal librarian, whose insistence of inclusion resulted in the creation of a literary collection and programming focused on people of African descent.

Yes, I want to support the work of the Friends of the James Brown African American Room:

Name _________________________
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____ $35 Annual Membership to Friends of JBAAR
____ Additional Donation

Please make checks/money orders payable to:
The Newark Public Library
ATTN: Friends of JBAAR
5 Washington Street
Newark, NJ 07102

Thank you for your support!

African American Genealogy Workshop, June 2017