

BCALANEWS

Black Caucus of the American Library Association Inc.



James Weldon Johnson Community Library Workers Andrea McCray (Librarian), Courtney Shannon (Library Assistant), James Randolph (Security), Susan Dickson (Head Librarian), Paulette Calloway (Library Assistant) and Drusella King Baker (Library Assistant) Pose in front of the Library's Marquee Sign. Johnson Library Held Their 8th Annual James Weldon Johnson Literacy Day in March. Read About it and More in this Issue of BCALA News!

VOLUME 45 | ISSUE 1 | WINTER 2018

PARTIAL CONTENTS

NEWS 04

- 5 *Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. BCALA Literary Awards*
- 6 *BCALA Now Accepting Literacy Award Submissions*
- 8 *BCALA Endorses Wanda Brown for ALA President*
- 9 *New York Black Librarians Caucus Announces First Library Support Staff Scholarship*
- 10 *Ismail Abdullahi wins 2018 John Ames Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award*

FEATURED 12

- 13 *2018 Día Grant Winners Announced*
- 14 *8th Annual James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival is Successful*
- 16 *Angela Davis Donates Papers to Schlesinger Library*
- 17 *Dedication Honors Memory of Billy C. Beal*

OP-ED 20

- 21 *Three Unsung Pioneers of the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System*
- 28 *The Tragic Fall of Mike Hanlon: One of American Fiction’s Only Black Male Librarians is Re-Imagined...As a Drug Addict*
- 30 *Book Review: Real Women Do It Standing Up*
- 31 *Book Review: Tahira Ahmad’s Snapshots: Silent thoughts In Words*

Dear BCALA Members,

This summer marks the 24th year the BCALA Literary Awards will recognize excellence in adult fiction and nonfiction by African American authors including an award for Best Poetry and Outstanding Contribution in Publishing Citation for unique books that offer a positive depiction of African Americans.

First presented at the second National Conference of African American Librarians in 1994, the BCALA Literary Awards continue to acknowledge outstanding works of fiction and nonfiction for adult audiences by African American authors. The winners that year were: Fiction, “A Lesson Before Dying” by Ernest J. Gaines; Nonfiction, “W. E. B. DuBois: Biography of a Race, 1858-1919” by David Levering Lewis; and First Novel, “Losing Absalom” by Alexis D. Pate.

In 2015, BCALA partnered with BiblioBoard, a hybrid media/software company located in Charleston, South Carolina. This partnership was the launchpad that instantly created a means to reach existing

self-published authors and create new ones. This award expands the BCALA’s dedication to African American authors, honors the best self-published eBooks in fiction and poetry by an African American author in the U.S., and is the first award from an ALA affiliate to recognize both digital content and self-publishing.

We salute the Literary Award Committee and the Self-Publishing eBook Award Committee chaired by Gladys Smiley Bell and Tiffany Duck respectively for their efforts, successes, and commitment to advancing the work of African American authors.

The recipients of the 24th Annual BCALA Literary Awards and the third BCALA and BiblioBoard Self-Publishing eBook Award will be honored during the 2018 ALA annual conference on June 24 in New Orleans. I invite you to join us as we celebrate another milestone in BCALA history.



Denyvetta Davis,
President, BCALA
2016 - 2018

NEWS

5

Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. BCALA Literary Awards

6

BCALA Now Accepting Literacy Award Submissions

8

BCALA Endorses Wanda Brown for ALA President

9

New York Black Librarians Caucus Announces First Library Support Staff Scholarship

10

Ismail Abdullahi wins 2018 John Ames Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award



Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. BCALA Literary Awards

Press Release
For Immediate Release
February 11, 2018

Contact: Gladys Smiley Bell, 757-727-5185
or gladys.bell@hamptonu.edu
Press Room – The Colorado Convention Center

BCALA ANNOUNCES THE 2018 LITERARY AWARDS WINNERS

The Black Caucus of the American Library Association, Inc. (BCALA) announces the winners of the 2018 BCALA Literary Awards during the Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association in Denver, CO. The awards recognize excellence in adult fiction and nonfiction by African American authors published in 2017, including an award for “Best Poetry” and a citation for “Outstanding Contribution to Publishing”. The recipients will receive awards during the 2018 annual meeting of the American Library Association in New Orleans, LA.

The winner of the 1st Novelist Award is “*A Kind of Freedom: a Novel*” by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton (Counterpoint Press).

The fiction category winner is “*Difficult Women*” by Roxane Gay (Grove/Atlantic, Inc.).

The Honor Books for fiction are “*Sing, Unburied, Sing*” by Jesmyn Ward (Scribner) and “*The Tragedy of Brady Sims: a Novel*” by Ernest J. Gaines (Vintage Books).

The winner in the nonfiction category is “*Chester B. Himes: a Biography*” by Lawrence P. Jackson (Norton W. W. & Company).

The Honor Book for the nonfiction category is “*Defining Moments in Black History: Reading Between the Lies*” by Dick Gregory (HarperCollins).

The winner for BCALA’s Best Poetry Award is “*Incendiary Art: Poems*” by Patricia Smith (Northwestern University Press).

The BCALA Literary Awards Committee presents the Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Citation to “*100 Amazing Facts About the Negro*” by Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Knopf Doubleday).

Members of the BCALA Literary Awards Jury are: Gladys Smiley Bell (Chair), Hampton University, Hampton, VA; Tiffany A. Duck, Suffolk Public Library, Suffolk, VA; Grace M. Jackson-Brown, Missouri State University, Springfield, MO; LeRoy LaFleur, Tufts University, Boston, MA; Dominique Luster, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Ritchie A. Momon, Mid-Continent Public Library, Independence, MO; and John Page, Retired, Washington, D.C.

BCALA Now Accepting Literacy Award Submissions

**LETTER TO PUBLISHERS
AND AUTHORS:**

The Literary Awards Committee of BCALA is now accepting submissions for the annual BCALA Literary Awards. The committee will present four prizes of \$500.00 each for adult books written by African-American authors: a First Novelist Award, a Fiction Award, a Nonfiction Award, and a Poetry Award. The First Novelist Award is given to recognize an outstanding work by a first time African-American fiction writer. Honor Book citations are also awarded in fiction and nonfiction without any accompanying monetary remuneration. Additionally, an Outstanding Contribution to Publishing citation is provided to an author and/or publishing company for unique books that

offer a positive depiction of African-Americans.

First presented at the second National Conference of African-American Librarians in 1994, the BCALA Literary Awards acknowledge outstanding works of fiction and nonfiction for adult audiences by African-American authors. Recipients of these awards offer outstanding depictions of the cultural, historical or sociopolitical aspects of the Black Diaspora and embody the highest quality of writing style and research methodology, if applicable.

Books from small, large and specialty publishers are welcome for review consideration. Titles forwarded for review must be published in 2018. Sets or multi-volume works are eligible. New

editions of previously published works are eligible only if more than 30% of the total content is new or revised material. Inspirational, self-help, and adult graphic novels are ineligible. Only finished, published books should be submitted; galleys (bound or unbound) and chapbooks are unacceptable.

Please send one copy of each title submitted to each member of the Literary Awards Committee. A Committee roster with their addresses can be found at <http://bcala.org/literary-award-committee/>

Supply all available information regarding the submission, including promotional material, author biography and available news articles and reviews.

BCALA Literary Awards Criteria

BCALA presents four (4) \$500.00 awards: one for adult fiction, one for nonfiction, one for a first novelist and one for poetry. These awards acknowledge outstanding achievement in the presentation of the cultural, historical and sociopolitical aspects of the Black Diaspora.

The Fiction Award recognizes depictions of sensitive and authentic personal experience either within the framework of contemporary literary standards and themes or which explore innovative literary formats.

The Nonfiction Award honors cultural, historical, political, or social criticism or academic and/or professional research which significantly advances the body of knowledge currently associated with the people and the legacy of the Black Diaspora. (Categories could include the humanities, science and technology, social and behavioral sciences and reference).

The First Novelist Award acknowledges outstanding achievement in writing and storytelling by a first time fiction writer.

The Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Citation recognizes the author and/or the publishing company (for their support and publication of) special and unique books that recognize the outstanding achievements and positive depiction of contributions of the people and legacy of the Black Diaspora.

The Poetry Award strives to recognize and promote emerging and established poets that introduce and foster the joys of poetry writing.

Additionally, honor books may be selected in each category.

Purpose: To encourage the artistic expression of the African-American experience via literature and scholarly research including biographical, historical and social history treatments by African-Americans.

CRITERIA:

- 1. *Must portray some aspect of the African-American experience past, present or future.*
- 2. *All authors, editors and contributors must be African-American(s) born in the United States.*
- 3. *Must be published in the United States in the year preceding presentation of the award.*
- 4. *Must be an original work.*

The final submission date to each juror is December 31, 2018. Decisions will be made during the American Library Association’s (ALA) Midwinter Meeting in Seattle, WA in January 2019. The awards will be presented in Washington, DC during ALA’s Annual Conference in June 2019. Publishers and winning authors will be advised of the Literary Award Committee’s decision in advance of the annual conference.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Gladys Smiley Bell at (757) 727-5185 or email: gladys.bell@hamptonu.edu.

Story continues on page 7 with the
BCALA Literary Awards Criteria



BCALA Endorses Wanda Brown for ALA President

From Denyvetta Davis, BCALA President

BCALA Members,

It is my pleasure to formally announce the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA) and its members voted during our midwinter membership meeting in Denver to endorse Wanda Kay Brown for ALA President, 2019-2020.

The vote was supported by the Executive Board and in compliance with the BCALA Bylaws. A petition was signed by 34 current members (verified by Membership Committee), a motion made, seconded and approved by members.

For your review, I have included Article XII: Endorsements of the BCALA Bylaws:

ARTICLE XII: Endorsements

Endorsement is defined as the Black Caucus, as a body, taking a position in support of or in opposition of a candidate for election to an American Library Association or Divisional office.

Section 1: The Black Caucus shall not engage in endorsement of any candidate for the American Library Association elected office, except as follows:

- a) When petitioned by a member of the Black Caucus with 25 current members signatures.
- b) When presented by a member in a motion, and seconded and approved at a membership meeting.

Section 2: A vote of the membership shall be necessary to endorse any candidate meeting the conditions on Article XII, Section 1.

Section 3: Past practices shall not be precedence. Such occasions will be considered on a case-by- case basis.

Wanda has previously contributed to BCALA in many ways, as past president, treasurer, and conference co-chair of a previous BCALA National Conference. The endorsement was recommended by members of our organization after reviewing her responses to our questions, her record of service and her position on issues of importance to librarians. As such, we believe her election will be of benefit to BCALA members. I ask that you encourage your colleagues and friends to support Wanda. I also ask that you reproduce this notice and distribute as best you can.

If you would like to find out more about Wanda Kay Brown, please visit her website at www.wandaforala2019.com

Denyvetta Davis, President
BCALA 2016-2018

New York Black Librarians Caucus Announces First Library Support Staff Scholarship

By NYBLC

The New York Black Librarians Caucus (NYBLC) presented its first Andrew ‘Sekou’ Jackson Library Support Staff Scholarship at their annual librarians’ ball in Harlem, New York. The recipient of the scholarship is Mary Smith, a program planner with Queens Library’s Programs and Services Department since 1997. Smith is earning her undergraduate degree in sociology at York College (CUNY) and expects to graduate in June. Upon graduation, she plans to pursue an MLIS.

In her essay, Smith wrote of her experience at Queens Library, “I’ve acquired a great deal of knowledge and hands-on experience working with amazing library professionals. In fact, I’ve matured professionally under the leadership of many librarians and other library

professionals...I would like to develop programs that will expose youth to ideas they may never have had... outside of libraries. Libraries continue to rise and my goal is to continue to be a part of the magic that happens every day.”

This scholarship is in recognition of Andrew ‘Sekou’ Jackson, who retired in 2016 after a distinguished career as executive director of Queens Library’s Langston Hughes Community Library and Cultural Center. He is also a past president of BCALA (2004-06) and was appointed to Queens Library’s Board of Trustees by Queens Borough President Melinda Katz. He is the first librarian and former staff member to be a member of the board.



Ismail Abdullahi wins 2018 John Ames Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award

By Delin Guerra, OCLC



CHICAGO — Dr. Ismail H. Abdullahi, professor of global library and information science at the School of Library and Information Sciences at North Carolina Central University, has been named the 2018 recipient of the American Library Association (ALA) International

Relations Committee’s John Ames Humphry/OCLC/Forest Press Award, presented to a librarian or person who has made significant contributions to international librarianship.

The award, sponsored by OCLC/Forest Press, consists of \$1,000 and a plaque to be presented at

the International Relations Round Table reception on Monday, June 25, at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. OCLC/Forest Press donated the cash award.

Abdullahi has spent over four decades immersed in the global library and information community, working to improve the profession around the world. His involvement in the international library field began as a student at the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he had the opportunity to attend his first International Federation of International Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Conference in 1979.

Abdullahi started his career at the Danish National Library of Education in the 1970s, and his Ph.D. dissertation was “A Study of Cooperative Programs among University and Special Libraries in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania.”

Today he is still actively engaged in connecting the profession around the globe, especially related to LIS education. He has been a mentor to many LIS programs in the developing world. Most recently, he has been engaged with the library association of Cameroon and Senegal, meeting with their governments on the role of libraries in national development.

Abdullahi has brought forward as editor or co-editor seminal books that enlighten and provide information and insight to library faculty and LIS students all over the world on global librarianship. In 2014 he co-edited “The Future of LIS Education in Developing Countries: The Road Ahead” and edited the second edition of “Global

Library and Information Science,” which was recently published. Both are IFLA publications. He also currently serves on the editorial board of four international journals. As a member of the IFLA Education and Training Section, he established the IFLA LIS Education in Developing Countries Special Interest Group (SIG) and served as its convener 2005-2013. He is known throughout the world for his efforts to adapt and improve LIS education everywhere, and to teach and encourage global librarianship. Abdullahi also created a Study Abroad program for the Royal School of Library and Information Science in Denmark.

An ALA member since 1985, Abdullahi has chaired the

International Relations Committee and other numerous committees. He is currently serving his fourth, three-year term as ALA Councilor-at-Large. He also has been actively involved in IFLA for the past twenty-five years, chairing committees and helping to organize programs and workshops that move the profession forward. Among his accolades and awards is the Harold Lancour Award for Excellence in International and Comparative Study in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh. Abdullahi continues to travel the world to speak, listen, network, and collaborate with his colleagues. In addition, he is faculty advisor for the North Carolina Central University ALA Student Chapter.

11th National Conference of African American Librarians

Tulsa, Oklahoma: Home of
BLACK WALL STREET

Culture Keepers XI | **SANKOFA EXPERIENCE:**
Inspired by Our Past, Igniting Our Future

August 5-9, 2020
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Tulsa, Oklahoma

BLACK CAUCUS
American Library Association
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

For further information, contact conference co-chairs:
Keith Jemison, Tulsa, OK | kjemiso@tulsalibrary.org
Cyndee Landrum, Evansville, IN | cyndeel@evpl.org

F E A T U R E D

13

2018 Día Grant Winners Announced

14

8th Annual James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival is Successful

16

Angela Davis Donates Papers to Schlesinger Library

17

Dedication Honors Memory of Billy C. Beal



2018 Día Grant Winners
Announced

By Claudette S. McLinn, Center for the Study of Multicultural Children’s Literature



The Center for the Study of Multicultural Children’s Literature (CSMCL) is pleased to announce the three winners of the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children’s Literature (CSMCL) 2018 Día Grants with an African American Focus.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, CONNOLLY BRANCH IN JAMAICA PLAIN, MA. The Día event theme is: *"Neighborhood Literacy: Connecting Libraries, Hair Salons, and Barbershops as Literacy and Confidence Centers."* The Día event will be held on April 30, 2018 from 7:30 a.m. - 4p.m.

LOGAN HEIGHTS BRANCH LIBRARY OF THE SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY IN SAN DIEGO, CA. The Día event theme is: *"Legacy of Our Community: African American Artists from San Diego."* The event will be held on April 30, 2018.

ZION BENTON PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ZION, IL. The Día event theme is: *"El Día de los Niños/Libros: Yo Soy Afro-Latinx."* The Día event will be held on April 30, 2018 from 4-6 p.m.

The three winning libraries each will be awarded \$500 in selected multicultural children’s books. Congratulations!

This is the seventh year the Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature (CSMCL) has awarded the Día grant and has been in partnership with the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) and Pat Mora. ALSC is a division of the American Library Association. Pat Mora, author and literacy advocate, is the founder of El Día de los Niños/El Día de los Libros (Children’s Day/Book Day); often known as Día.

8th Annual James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival is Successful

By Kevin Johnson, Friends of the James Weldon Johnson Community Library



On Saturday, March 18, 2018, The Friends of Johnson Branch Library held their 8th Annual James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival. It was held in the park area behind the Enoch Davis Center (a community center) and James Weldon Johnson Community Library in St. Petersburg Florida. The library is a part the St. Petersburg Library System.

The principle sponsors for the event were the City of St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg Library System, United Parcel Service, Tampa Bay Times, East West Electric, Petrulli, PostcardMania, and Phil CertaPro Paint. The purpose of the festival is to promote the James Weldon Johnson Community Library and celebrate the life of James Weldon

Johnson, who was the first African American to pass the Florida bar and a field secretary of the NAACP. He was also a lyricist and he wrote the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

The festival had activities throughout the day for the whole family. Activities included: vendors from area businesses and nonprofits, children's inflatables, book giveaways, hula hoop contests for adults and children, trivia questions about James Weldon Johnson, and prizes for adults and children. Our newest activity was the scavenger hunt where middle and high school children search for pictures of famous African-Americans in the library. Children that found pictures participated in a drawing and won door prizes.

Government officials such as Grace Moseley, the assistant for Florida House representative Wengay "Newt" Newton, and Joanne

Lentino, Pinellas County school board member, gave presentations at the festival.

The event was commenced by the Boca Ciega High School ROTC color guard with the singing of The National Anthem. Performances were provided by local artists: St. Marks Missionary Baptist Church's mimes group; HOUSE OF IFA African dance group; James Alderman, who did a Frankie Beverly impersonation; Just Aaron, who performed spoken word; Wilmore Sadika, who performed as a guitarist; the St. Petersburg Main Library puppeteers, who provided a puppet show for the children; the St. Petersburg Police Department K-9 unit; Gibbs High School marching band; and the Sigma Beta Club did a presentation.

The annual community service award was given to the Delta Omicron Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma

Fraternity Inc., who have supported the Friends since the festival was first launched. Furthermore, the Sigmas have supported the spelling, math, and geography bees and other Friends activities over the years.

The highlight of the day was the "Walk For Reading". This is an annual event where the Friends, children, adults, and community members walk through the neighborhood surrounding the library to promote literacy in the community.

For more information about the James Weldon Johnson Literacy Festival, contact Friends vice-president Kevin W. Johnson, BCALA member, at 727-342-2235 or kevinjohnson5370@yahoo.com

BCALA's ALA Annual Meeting Schedule

THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2018

BCALA Service project with NOLA Public Library
Time and locations TBA

FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2018

BCALA Executive Board Meeting
8:30AM - 1:00PM -Sheraton Orpheus

BCALA Joint Committee Meeting
(Membership, Professional Development & Affiliates Committees)
1:00PM - 2:30PM- Sheraton Orpheus

BCALA E.J. Josey Scholarship Committee Meeting
2:30PM - 3:30PM- Sheraton Bacchus

BCALA Literacy Awards Committee
8:00PM - 10:00PM- Sheraton Bacchus

SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2018

BCALA Recruitment & Professional Development Committee Meeting
BCALA International Relations -Two committees share the same room
9:30AM - 10:30AM- Sheraton Rex

BCALA Fundraising Committee
BCALA Marketing & Public Relations Committee- Two committees share the same room
10:30AM - 11:30AM- Sheraton Grand Cousteau

NCAAL X I Conference Planning Committee
1:00PM - 2:30PM- Sheraton Oak Alley

The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South: Civil Rights and Local Activism (author event and panel discussion)
2:00PM - 4:00PM - NOLA Main Library, 219 Loyola Avenue

BCALA Affiliates Panel Discussion
4:30PM - 6:00PM

BCALA Literary Awards Committee
2:00PM - 5:00PM-Sheraton Bacchus

BCALA Social
Time and location TBA

SUNDAY, JUNE 24, 2018

Coretta Scott King Book Awards Breakfast
7:00AM - 9:30AM

BCALA New Members Meet & Greet
6:30PM - 7:00PM- Oak Alley

BCALA Membership Meeting
7:00PM - 8:00PM – Sheraton Anderson Ballroom

BCALA Literary Awards
8:15PM - 10:00PM – Sheraton Anderson Ballroom

Angela Davis Donates Papers to Schlesinger Library

By Sarah J. Hong, *The Harvard Crimson*

(Editor’s note: This story is reprinted with permission from “*The Harvard Crimson*”. The link to the original story is <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2018/2/14/schlesinger-acquires-davis-papers/>)



Angela Y. Davis, a famed political activist and scholar of African American, Marxist, and feminist studies, is donating her papers to the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library.

Davis, a professor emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz,

studies race in the criminal justice system and is an advocate for prison abolition.

She is also famously known for her radical activism in the 1960s as a leader of the Communist Party U.S.A., and for her support of the Soledad Brothers, three prison

inmates charged with killing a guard in Soledad Prison in 1970. Her involvement in the case resulted in her being charged with conspiracy. She was later acquitted.

The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America is a research library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, dedicated to housing archives documenting women’s lives and activities in the United States.

In a statement, Davis wrote that she felt honored her writings would join the work of other women who are “advocates of social transformation” at the library.

“My papers reflect 50 years of involvement in activist and scholarly collaborations seeking to expand the reach of justice in the world,” Davis wrote in a statement.

Faculty specializing in African American Studies believe the library housing Davis’s papers will

help further academic study of her lifetime work.

“Schlesinger's acquisition of her papers will ensure that generations of students, scholars, and activists have access to her body of work and a better understanding of the histories she has helped to shape,” wrote Farah J. Griffin, a professor of English, Comparative Literature, and African American Studies at Columbia University.

Elizabeth Hinton, an assistant

professor of History and African and African American Studies at Harvard, said Davis’s papers will also strengthen the Schlesinger Library’s stature as a center for studying the history of civil oppression.

“The acquisition of Angela Davis’s papers makes the Schlesinger Library even more vital for all those seeking a deeper understanding of the history of oppression and resistance on a global scale.” Hinton wrote in a statement.

The collection of Davis’s work includes letters, photographs, and audio from Davis’s radio show “Angela Speaks,” according to a press release from the library. The library will also host materials related to Davis’s incarceration and trial from the Soledad Prison case, as well as the movement advocating for her release.

Davis’s papers will be available for research by 2020.



Dedication Honors Memory of Billy C. Beal

By Meridian (MS) Community College



Family members Christy Beal, left, Denise Beal, Maria Beal Parker and Andrea Williams pose by the portrait of Billy C. Beal that is now on display in the facility.

Meridian Community College dedicated the L.O. Todd – Billy C. Beal Learning Resources facility on May 10 amid a gathering of family, friends, MCC faculty and staff as well as community members.

Beal, the longtime Meridian educator who worked for MCC for more than three decades, was honored with the naming of the resource center that’s located in the center of the campus. Beal died Dec. 7, 2015.

“It is a well-deserved honor because of his hard work, his dedication to the college,” said long-time colleague Barbara Jones.

“Knowing that Billy’s name will be a feature of learning resources center on the campus here at Meridian Community College, a place where Billy contributed so much for so long, is a fitting tribute to who he was and what he did,” said Dr. Marie Smith Davidson, Beal’s godmother and the retired chief of staff, president, of the University of Maryland College Park.

Davidson added, “I think Billy C. Beal, during his many years at MCC, helped to make this institution an academic institution built on individualism, creativity and dignity and I know that Billy’s family is pleased that MCC agrees with that assessment.”

Beal mentees, including Joshua Maeda, Thomas Parker II, Cedric Ruffin and Anthony Winston, shared their memories of Beal, often echoing the comments that Beal was an encourager, a teacher

and a friend. “He taught even when he wasn’t in the library ... in the community ... he was going to drop that nugget. In our hearts, he will always be here,” Parker said.

Winston added, “Billy had a way of saying, ‘I will show you, but I will not do this for you.’ Winston said in making a major life decision, he would run it by Beal for his opinion. “Billy served as my mirror.”

MCC president Dr. Scott Elliott, said, “It was my pleasure to work with Billy for 15 years at MCC before his passing. In all my years in higher education, I can honestly say that Billy was one of the most consummate professionals with whom I ever had the pleasure to work. He was widely respect by his colleagues across the state because he knew his discipline inside and out and exhibited impeccable integrity. It is both fitting and proper that Billy’s name forever and formally be associated with this facility.”

A native of Meridian, Beal earned an A.B. from Loyola University

of Chicago and an M.S. in library science from Simmons College in Boston. After his academic studies at Simmons, he returned to Meridian where he became circulation librarian at MCC. During his tenure at the college, he served as Self Study Title III director, acquisitions librarian, ACH/HEMI coordinator, computer assisted instruction supervisor and head librarian, as well as chairman of the Student Appeals Committee.

In September 2014, Beal was promoted to the position of associate vice president for learning resources at MCC. He had served as the dean of the College’s Learning Resources from 1992 until he was named to the associate vice president post.

Also at MCC, Beal was the recipient of the John Johnson, Lamplighter and MCCer of the Month awards as well as installed into the Talon Club, which salutes MCC employees who have served the college for more than 30 years.

An active member of the American Library Association and BCALA, Beal served in leadership roles and on committees focused on community colleges, social responsibility, governance and scholarships. All images accompanying this story are courtesy of Meridian Community College.



BCALANEWS

Black Caucus of the American Library Association Inc.

PRESIDENT
Denyvetta Davis

PUBLISHER BCALA INC.

EDITORIAL
Editor: Jason Alston
Phone: (803) 777-6493
Fax: (803) 777-7938
Email: jasonalston@gmail.com

ADVERTISING
Sales and Marketing: Jason Alston
Phone: (803) 777-6493
Email: jasonalston@gmail.com

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
Jason Alston
Tiffany Duck
Nzinga Holley-Harris
Jason Howard
Ursula Jacobs-Guidry
Michael Mungin
Natasha Smith

DESIGN
Creative Director / Designer:
OPUSSEVEN INC
www.opusseven.com

COPYRIGHT
All material appearing in BCALA News is copyrighted. The BCALA takes care to ensure the information is correct at the time of printing, but responsibility for accuracy of claims and information rests with the author. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the leadership of BCALA

BECOME A BCALA MEMBER!

BCALA MEMBERSHIP FEES

- + CORPORATE \$200
- + INSTITUTIONAL \$60
- + REGULAR \$45
- + INSTITUTIONS \$60
- + STUDENT \$10
- + RETIRED \$25
- + LIBRARY SUPPORT STAFF \$20
- + LIFETIME \$500

Please join online (<http://www.memberize.com/clubportal/ClubStatic.cfm?clubID=2381&pubmenuoptID=25322>) or use the Membership Form (<http://bcala.org/members/memberjoin.pdf>) to mail your membership request and payment to:

BCALA, INC. – MEMBERSHIP
c/o Rudolph Clay Jr.
Box 7493
6985 Snow Way Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63130-4400

For inquiries regarding membership or anything else about BCALA, please submit queries to <http://bcala.org/contacts/>.

O P - E D

21

Three Unsung Pioneers of the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System

28

The Tragic Fall of Mike Hanlon: One of American Fiction’s Only Black Male Librarians is Re-Imagined...As a Drug Addict

30

Book Review: Real Women Do It Standing Up

31

Book Review: Tahira Ahmad’s Snapshots: Silent thoughts In Words



Three Unsung Pioneers of the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System

By Eddie Hughes, Southern University Baton Rouge

The history of the United States of America is saturated with reports of White Americans violating the human and civil rights of African Americans. It is well documented that White Americans used race as a motivating factor to utilize a variety of mechanisms to oppress, exploit, and degrade African Americans for the sole purpose of relegating them to second class citizenship; for instance, White Americans used their dominance to deny African Americans access to professional organizations which led to a denial of opportunities to learn a profession, establish networks, and chances to benefit from prospects of advancement into socioeconomic hierarchy. For example, the denial of African American access to inner circles of the library profession, made it sensible for African Americans to conclude that the profession of librarianship was a direct replica of mainstream America. This report is a brief analysis of three pioneering African American librarians and how they

persevered, in spite of traditional racist practices, to become East Baton Rouge Parish Public library System’s first African American information professionals.

On Tuesday, March 17, 1699, the first Europeans (French explorers) visited the site known today as Baton Rouge (at three o’clock in the afternoon); in addition, this French expedition was headed by Pierre Le Moyne, whose title was Sieur d’Iberville (Carleton 1996). As D’Iberville and his party traveled up the Mississippi River (passing the future locale of New Orleans) they reached a small stream at the right of the river (east bank) in search of food. This small stream separated the hunting grounds of the Bayagoulas and the Houma Indians, living on the Istrouma Bluff (itti humma or istrouma). This location was later renamed Scott’s Bluff for Dr. William Bernard Scott who owned a plantation on that site (Scott’s Bluff is now part of Southern University’s campus). Its banks were separated by a

reddened, 30-foot-high maypole with several heads of fish and bears attached in sacrifice and dripping with blood that natives had sunk there to mark the land line between the two nations (Meyers 1976). The red stick the French saw was probably used both as a boundary marker and for ceremonial purposes. D’Iberville called this area Baton Rouge (French phrase for “The Red Stick”), and hence the region’s name was born.

Baton Rouge was not incorporated until 1817. By 1860, a year before the start of the American Civil War, Baton Rouge had a residency of 16,046 persons; a little more than 5,134 (32%) were Black; all but a small portion were slaves. The American Civil War was from 1861-1865 between 11 southern slave Sates (Confederate States of America) and 23 United States of America. The problem arose when the United States government would not allow southern plantation owners to expand the institution of slavery into the new virgin

territories in the western region of the United States. This refusal to allow the expansion of slavery led wealthy southern planters to manipulate state governments to secede from the Union, causing the American Civil War. In 1865, the Confederate States of America surrendered and in that same year the United States government passed the Thirteenth Amendment to officially abolish slavery and involuntary servitude.

By 1870, five years after the end of slavery, Baton Rouge had a population of 17,816 residents, including 9,264 African Americans. By this time the African American population was 52% of Baton Rouge; consequently, this was due largely to the decline of its white population who chose to abandon the city when the Confederate States of America lost the war. Whites began returning to Baton Rouge in 1909 when Standard Oil (now Exxon) chose to build an oil refinery in Baton Rouge; by 1930 the white population had once again become the majority (Carleton 1996).

In 2000, the City of Baton Rouge was the parish seat and the dominant center of business, culture, education, and finance. Baton Rouge was also the key industrial city in the area and the center of an immense chemical and petroleum complex on the Mississippi River. East Baton Rouge Parish was comprised of

472.1 square miles (350,009 acres) along the Mississippi River, in the southeast part of the state. The parish included three major cities: Baton Rouge, Baker, and Zachary. In 2006, Central became the newest city in East Baton Rouge Parish and the 12th largest city in the state of Louisiana.

Baton Rouge has transformed from an Indian village to a prosperous metropolis. It has the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport (Ryan Field) which serves three major airlines; rail service is provided by five railroads; and the expanding Port of Greater Baton Rouge ranks seventh among major ports of the nation and second in Louisiana.

In 2000, East Baton Rouge Parish school system consisted of 101 public and 49 private schools. Baton Rouge supported 35 libraries. Thirteen of these were parish libraries. Higher education was provided by a community college and two four-year public land-grant universities: Baton Rouge Community College (BRCC), an open admissions, two-year post-secondary public community college; Southern University (SU), recognized as the only Historically Black College and University System in America; and Louisiana State University (LSU), a traditional leader among the nation’s institutions.

2000 Census Population East Baton Rouge Parish

TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS
412,852

WHITE
231,886

BLACK
165,526

OTHERS
15,440

In 2000, African Americans were 40.1% of East Baton Rouge Parish’s total population.

The history of Baton Rouge Public Library service began on Saturday, April 8, 1899, when 22 white women of Baton Rouge were granted a charter by the National Office of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC); thus, the Joanna Waddill Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy was established. The UDC is an association of women who honor those who fought and died to save and preserve the tradition of white leverage and white privilege. The women in the UDC assert descendancy of those whom they honor. Upon applying for the charter these women announced that their organization would be “educational in purpose and chose as its first project the organization of a library for the city.” Pickney Smith of New Orleans, daughter of a Confederate general, laid the original foundation stone when she contributed \$10 for the public library services in East Baton Rouge, during her journey to Baton Rouge, for the purpose of assisting the Joanna Waddill Chapter.

On Tuesday, February 6, 1900, the Washington Fire Company of Baton Rouge passed a resolution to grant permission for the Joanna Waddill Chapter to use the second floor front room of its building as a library; in addition, the Washington Fire Company also donated \$25.00 (Daily Advocate 1900) . On Thursday, May 10, 1900, the Joanna Waddill Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy formally opened the Baton Rouge Public Library at 406 Church Street near the Church Street and Laurel Street intersection (Church St. is now North 4th St.). Because of the social custom in Baton Rouge (and other southern cities) this new library would be off limits to African Americans. The next day the library published the following six rules in the local newspaper:

1. Every member is entitled to one book at a time, and must return it to the library in one week from the time it was taken out, when, if desired, it can be renewed for a like period. The librarian will check the month and day on which a book is taken and returned by a member.
2. Any member who shall retain a book longer than the time permitted, shall be fined one cent per day until the same is returned.
3. A fine of the value of the book will be charged [to] any member losing or injuring (beyond reasonable wear) the same and no other book will be given them

unless the rules and regulations are complied with.

4. Members are not allowed to lend the book to any one, not a member of their own family.
5. Always take your membership ticket to the librarian when you want a book, or it will not be given out.
6. In changing your place of residence, notify the librarian, and give the new address.

Peculiarly, one very important rule was omitted, the ruled that declared “For White Only.” The Baton Rouge Public Library was designed to serve 8,055 people (the white community) which represented only a little more than 25.8% of the total population. The other 75% were not permitted to partake in the library’s public privileges.

In the mean time, the African American community was laboring earnestly to establish, maintain, and preserve, its own culture. In the early nineteen hundreds Baton Rouge’s African Americans had a profound desire to eradicate illiteracy and promote the pomp of middle class attitudes, interests, and values. This striving to “pick themselves up by their boot straps” began immediately after the Civil War ended. As early as 1870, an observant white resident of Baton Rouge testified to the overwhelming number of Blacks in the city and how eager the newly freed ex-

slaves were to uplift themselves by building homes and obtaining an education: “Take the Army out and four-fifths of the Town would be Negroes. They tare down Houses and build for themselves upon Confiscated Ground. The Whole flat Down in Catfish [in south Baton Rouge along the river] is covered with Little Negro Shantyes and the [public] Schools are very full of Negroes” (Carleton 1996). Even as Baton Rouge’s African Americans made progress, by 1890, they met serious opposition from greedy wealthy white “gentlemen” who “bulldozed” industrious Black farmers by harassing, whipping, or killing them if they would not “sell their property cheaply” (Hair 1969). Nevertheless, African Americans of Baton Rouge continued to persevere and make a great effort to fortify their existence.

In 1928, East Baton Rouge Parish metropolitan accommodated two historically Black Colleges and Universities (Southern University relocated from New Orleans in 1914 and Leland College relocated from New Orleans in 1923). By 1928, African Americans in Baton Rouge had organized their own library room (room 300) in the Old Fellow Masonic Temple, on North Boulevard. By Tuesday September 4, 1928, members of the Burroughs-Talbert Club, curators of Library Room 300, dispatched a message soliciting citizens of East

Baton Rouge Parish for financial aid, loans, and gifts of magazines or books. This dispatch is proof that in spite of being locked out of mainstream Baton Rouge, African Americans still sought ways to sustain themselves. In 1920, 23,098 African Americans lived in Baton Rouge, 51.9% of the total population.

In 1900, Baton Rouge’s white population was 8,055. By 1930, Baton Rouge’s white population had risen to 38,784, a 20.7% increase; consequently, this meant the library also experienced at least a 20.7% influx of patrons as well. This influx proved to be a bit much for a makeshift library/fire company and by 1928, the UDC Library had moved twice in response to a need for more space; as a result, librarian Mae Barrow, lobbied the parish for a legitimate public library. On Monday, November 9, 1936, a representative group from 28 civic clubs met with city and parish officials to obtain a public library through federal aid. In just three years (Thursday, September 14, 1939) the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library opened at 700 Laurel Street three blocks from the original UDC Library (although the library faced Laurel St. it was on the corner of 7th St. and Laurel St.), again for “Whites Only.” Since East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library would serve more than just Baton Rouge, plans were conceived, immediately, to build more branches. On

Saturday, December 19, 1942, the eighth Branch (Carver) opened, for African American patrons, above the Eagle Drug Store at 1265 Government Street, on the corner of Government Street and 13th Street (13th St. has been renamed Eddie Robinson Blvd). This new library was four and a half blocks from the library room at Old Fellow Masonic Temple on North Blvd. The Carver Branch was to provide library service for the entire African American community, nearly 33,597 people. In 2000, the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System was composed of one main library and 12 branches which were headed by ten administrators. At least one library was located in each historically or predominately African American neighborhood.

By the end of the first half of the twentieth century, Baton Rouge, like other cities in southern regions of America, was predictably racist. To presume that the white community in Baton Rouge deviated from America’s southern culture, when other southern cities embraced the philosophy of white supremacy, would be inaccurate; on the other hand, it would be logical to assume that Baton Rouge was a typical southern town, especially if one examines the 1953 Bus Boycott staged by the Black community at large and the 1960 sit in staged by SU students. The boycott and the sit-ins were forms of non-violent disobedient protest aimed at the

white power structure of Baton Rouge for violating the Civil Rights of African Americans and for denying them political and social equality which whites vowed to forever prevent.

East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System has since been integrated but the road trotted by African American librarians has indeed been stony. In 2000, East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System was directed by ten administrators; of which, one (Felicia West) was an African American. Likewise, there were 30 professional librarians and seven were African Americans. This segment of the report will be an introduction to the lone administrator Felicia West and two (Elva Jewel Carter & Geralyn Legard Davis) of the seven African American librarians. These two were chosen due to their achievements, hard work, and reputations; also, due to the coordinating efforts and vision of Mrs. Felicia West.

Felicia West graduated from Capital High School (of Baton Rouge) in 1972. She attended SU and in 1976, she received a bachelor’s of science in secondary math education. From 1974-77, West worked as a page in the East Baton Parish Public Library System. During her sophomore year, she yielded to an enjoyment for librarian work. In 1978, West enrolled in LSU’s library school

and completed the program in 1981. West began her professional librarian career in reference within the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System. Soon West was appointed manager, in 1981, of the Delmont Gardens Branch which is located in an old historically white neighborhood that has become predominantly African American.

In 1993, West was promoted to assistant director which makes her the first African American administrator in the East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System. According to West, she sees life “through rose colored glasses”; for that reason, she does not interpret incidents (as her friends & colleagues do) as racist. The example she gave was in April, of 2000, the director of East Baton Rouge Public Library (John Richard) retired and West applied for the position. The East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System (which is known for promoting from within) hired a director (Lydia Acosta) from without. Many of West’s friends and colleagues tried to convince her that she was skipped over because East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System is racist.

According to West, because there are “not many Blacks in the system” there are not more African American librarians who have become administrators. However, she is proud that she was instrumental in the hiring of

the latest two African American librarians who boosted the African American librarians’ count from five to seven. West says she never really had a mentor although her first supervisor took her under her wing. For other African American Librarians who are aspiring to become administrators, West suggests they “be involved and participate in associations.”

In 1958, Elva Jewel Carter graduated from SU with a bachelor’s of science degree in business education. While at SU, she learned cataloging, because Southern offered nine hours in library studies. It was in these classes that Carter realized she wanted to become a librarian. In 1960, Carter received a scholarship from Atlanta University’s (now known as Clark Atlanta University) School of Library Studies under Virginia Jones (the program closed at the end of the 2004-2005 academic year). Unfortunately, Carter did not have the extra money to defray the cost of living and studying in Atlanta. In the meantime, Carter worked as a library clerk at Capital High School in Baton Rouge.

In 1965 the American Library Association made it mandatory that all librarians have a master’s degree from an accredited institution; consequently, in that same year, LSU opened its doors to admit African American students in response to a federal mandate of

the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibited segregated public facilities and services. In September of 1966, Carter became the second African American to enroll in the masters of library science program at LSU (Ollie H. Burns was the first). Although the MLS program at LSU was only 36 hours all MLS candidates who did not receive their undergraduate degree in library science, from LSU, had to take the additional 18 hours as well. In consequence of these stipulations, Carter did not finish the program until 1972; she eventually took every class in library science that LSU offered.

After her first 18 hours, in 1967, Carter was eligible to do her internship at the integrated Dufrocq Elementary (in 1923 Dufrocq opened as an all white elementary school, today Dufrocq is about 50% African American and 50% white). While at Dufrocq, Carter became known as a children’s specialist. Later in the year of 1967, Carter was promoted to Baton Rouge High School where she became the first Black staff member of the last integrated high school in Baton Rouge. Carter remained at Baton Rouge High until she retired in 1990. Due to her work at Dufrocq, in 1974, Carter was offered a moon lighting job at the Central Library (now referred to as the Main Library). At the Central Library, Carter says she single handily set up the entire young adult children’s

literature area. In 1993, after West was promoted to assistant director, Carter was promoted to head librarian of the Delmont Gardens Branch. Carter said she would remain branch manager until another Black librarian has been trained to take her place. Fortunately for Carter one of the two new Black librarians, hired by West, works at the Delmont Gardens Branch; alas, today the manager of the Delmont Gardens Branch is white.

Carter said her most memorable racist incident occurred in 1973, when she was applying for full-time employment at the East Baton Rouge Parish school board. Her application, for some reason, was lost. Carter submitted two additional applications and those were lost as well. Carter told her story to a classmate who happened to be the sister-in-law of the mayor’s secretary (Mayor Woodrow “Woody” Wilson Dumas). After a speedy but firm message from the mayor’s office, Carter’s initial application was found. As for mentors, Carter says she did not have one; although, she had some friends. One friend was a white woman named Jenny Nia. Nia was her supervisor at Dufrocq and made it possible for Carter to secure employment at Baton Rouge High.

Carter’s Advise to young African Americans who are aspiring to become librarians is “work hard, don’t expect or ask for

anything, pay your way,” but most importantly “use your brain.”

Geralyn Legard Davis attended McKinley High School. At one time McKinley was the only high school in Baton Rouge that African Americans were allowed to attend. Davis earned her bachelor’s degree in social welfare from SU. She also earned a masters in sociology from SU and she earned 15 hours toward a doctorate degree in social work at LSU. After an unfulfilling career in social work, in 1987, Davis worked part time in reference for six months at the Central Library. By 1995, Davis had earned an MLS degree from LSU. In 1996, Davis became the manager of the Carver Branch, which in 1942, became the first parish supported library for African Americans. The Carver Branch is also the neighborhood library Davis used as a child.

Davis said in her opinion the practice of racism is a part of the culture of East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System. Davis also revealed that soon after she and Bobby Burns, a Black man, (library technician) began complaining of the racism, Felicia West was appointed assistant director. Davis was one of West’s friends and colleagues who tried to convince West that she was skipped over for the position of director because East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library System is racist. Davis believes that her branch (Carver) was being denied funding due to

East Baton Rouge Parish Public Library’s method of measuring. Davis says her patrons utilize the material for projects and home work but seldom check items out. Since items are not checked out and checked in there is no way of determining whether or not her patrons are utilizing the items. Davis adds that if her branch had a door counter it would prove the Carver Branch needed more funding but the administration says Carver can only get a door counter when circulation has improved. Davis feels this just an attempt by the administration to keep major funding for libraries in the white neighborhoods.

Davis says she did not have a mentor but she did have a professor who inspired her to go to school. Her professor taught her that the Black community must embrace reading because reading is the last vestige of slavery. To young African Americans aspiring to be librarians, Davis suggests “don’t be traditional, be assertive, be savvy, and sophisticated when dealing with people.” Her philosophy is “service coming in service going out.”

Today, ten years later, only one of the three pioneers, Geralyn Legard Davis, is still employed with the East Baton Rouge Public Library System. The other two has since retired. Davis has transferred twice to (Scotlandville Branch & Greenwell Springs Regional Branch) manage larger libraries

than the Carver Branch; in the same way, the Carver Branch was also relocated to a larger building with “expansive glass walls that frame a spectacular and breathtaking view of the Mississippi River Bridge.” Although the system still has only one African American administrator (Mercedes Cobb) it does have five African American librarians heading branches which is higher than the two they had in the year 2000. When the library system does promote or hire at least one other African American administrator, many librarians, as well as outsider observers, will believe the library system is truly engaged in an effort to integrate itself; as of now, many find it absurd that although the system has successfully become estranged from its Confederate origins it is still steadfast to its outdated “one token Negro at a time” promotion policy.

In 2004, Melvin “Kip” Holden was elected Baton Rouge’s first African American mayor, which can be interpreted as an indication that Baton Rouge, like many cities in America’s southern region, is receptive to a transformation

process that will constitute a city that is responsive to the reality of multiculturalism and equal sharing of political power. Today Baton Rouge has a quasi progressive public library system; due in part, to three pioneering African American librarians who refused to accept this notion that African Americans could not effectively demonstrate the ability to apply practice and perspectives of managing information resources and technology, in a professional library setting.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
<http://brgov.com/dept/planning/facts.htm#Location>

<http://www.ebr.lib.la.us/branch/Carver.htm>

Baton Rouge Daily Advocate
Thursday, November 27, 1890.

Baton Rouge State Time Tuesday, September 4, 1928.

Mark T. Carleton, River Capital: An illustrated history of Baton Rouge, American Historical Press, c1996).

James Sanders Cookston, "Development of Public Library Service In East Baton Rouge

Parish, Louisiana" (Ph. D. diss, Louisiana State University, 1959).

Daily Advocate, May 11, 1900.

William Ivy. Hair, Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics 1877-1900.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1969

Stuart Landry, Louisiana Almanac (New Orleans: Pelican Pub House, 1990).

Rosa Mae Miller Meyers, A History of Baton Rouge: 1699-1812 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, c1976).

Morning Advocate, September 14, 1939.

United States. Bureau of the Census, Negroes in the United States: 1920-1932 (Washington: U. S. govt. print. off., 1935).

The Tragic Fall of Mike Hanlon: One of American Fiction’s Only Black Male Librarians is Re-Imagined...As a Drug Addict

By Jason Alston, Coastal Carolina University

(Author’s note: I typically do not read fiction, and I have not read the novel “IT” by Stephen King. Therefore, any descriptions of the novel itself are derived from online summaries of the novel and admittedly may miss key details. I have watched the 1990 made-for-television miniseries of “IT”, as well as the 2017 film “IT”, which is the first of a two-part film adaptation of the novel.)

When I was hired to my first professional librarian job in 2008 at the age of 25, I was told at the time that I was quite possibly one of the ten youngest practicing Black male librarians in the United States who had an ALA-accredited masters degree in library science. Then again, at the time there were believed to only be about 600 practicing Black male librarians total in the country; Black men therefore made up about 0.5 percent of the professional American librarian workforce.

My hope is that when the next round of “Diversity Counts” figures are released by the American Library Association, those figures will reveal that the number of Black male librarians in this country will have increased significantly since last decade. But in the meantime, I have tried to do my part by recruiting Black

men into this field through formal and informal methods, including speaking to Black male students who are preparing to graduate from college about careers in librarianship, and introducing my Phi Beta Sigma fraternity brothers – young and old – to potential careers in my field.

Though I’d never wish to be overly-reliant on fictional depictions of librarianship to sell Black men on the idea of becoming librarians, I do believe that seeing images – real life or fictional – of relatable Black men working as librarians may deconstruct some barriers that prevent Black men from viewing librarianship as a viable and respectable career choice. However, because Black male librarians are so hard to find in real life, fictional depictions of cool Black male librarians doing positive things would be very welcome by myself and

likely by others in my field.

That’s why I was so excited about part two of the movie adaptation of Stephen King’s “IT” hitting theaters in 2019. Fans of the novel and/or the 1990 made-for-television miniseries know that Mike Hanlon, one of Derry, Maine’s few Black residents and the only Black member of “The Losers’ Club” (the group of children who serve as protagonists in the story), grows up to become the town librarian and uses his knowledge and skills as a librarian to contribute to the battle between The Losers’ Club as adults and “IT/Pennywise”, the shapeshifting, malevolent entity that terrorizes and feeds upon the people of Derry roughly every 27 years. Mike happens to be the only fictional Black male librarian I am aware of, and I was very excited to see some new Black male librarian badass supply

information and knowledge to the Losers as they battled IT/Pennywise, the same way highly-decorated actor Tim Reid did when he starred as Mike in the made-for-television miniseries 28 years ago. With the first chapter of the film making over \$700 million at the box office and becoming a smash hit in 2017, I was nearly salivating at the idea of audiences seeing a Black male librarian doing big things in a big movie next year.

My excitement has officially been quelled, however, as I guess the developers of the new adaptations of “IT” thought the progressive idea of the Black character being educated and using knowledge and information as power wasn’t cliché enough. So, they’ve resorted to a common trope for fictional Black characters and reimagined Mike – the story’s most prominent Black character – in the film adaptation... as a drug addict.

Andy Muschietti, director of the new film adaptations of King’s work, revealed to “Entertainment Weekly” that in the 2019 continuation of the story, Mike will be “a librarian junkie.” Mike will apparently still grow up to be a librarian just as he does in the novel and the 1990 miniseries, but while the rest of The Losers’ Club will still become successful as adults, Mike will struggle with drug addiction. I presume this will mean he will not come across as being as successful as his white counterparts in The Losers’ Club, and it also likely means his addiction will play a large role in how the story unfolds, while his occupation as town librarian will play a smaller role in the story’s unfolding.

Kudos, Mr. Muschietti. Kudos. In the

miniseries at least, there was nothing to not like about Mike. He was an all-around positive character. He was successful, intelligent, and lived a clean life. He was the one who brought The Losers’ Club back together to hold them to their promise to defeat the fear and flesh-gobbling monster. And he was something exceptionally rare in American fiction AND REALITY: a Black male librarian.

And now Mike will be a fictional Black male junkie. Did we really need any more of those? Has this not been done to death already?

As I mentioned in my author’s note above, I have not read the novel, so what I am sharing in this paragraph is based on summaries of the novel and second-hand information from friends and acquaintances that have read the novel. But it is my understanding that Mike’s intellectual side was already downplayed in the 2017 film. Mike was apparently well-versed in the local history of Derry even as a child in the novel; in the 1990 miniseries, the child version of Mike does have a strong grasp on local Derry history and even delivers a presentation on the history of Derry in school one day. However, in the 2017 film, Mike’s character does not flash his intellectual side very much, and fellow Loser’s Club member Ben Hanscom becomes the resident local history expert for The Losers’ Club.

Also clearly downplayed in the 2017 film adaptation of “IT” is the racial element to the bullying that Mike endures at the hands of the deranged juvenile degenerate Henry Bowers and his friends. In the 1990 miniseries, Henry and his friends direct racial

slurs toward Mike during an encounter with him, and it is explicitly conveyed that Henry’s hatred of Mike is racially motivated. In the 2017 film, audiences can likely infer that Henry’s hatred of Mike is racially-based, but it is not blatantly obvious.

Given that I am lamenting the loss of uniqueness in Mike’s character in this column, I could normally forgive the downplaying of the racial elements of the conflict between Mike and Henry. After all, depictions of racial conflict in American fiction certainly are not hard to find elsewhere. But what was striking in the 1990 miniseries was that Mike overcame the struggles and strife of being hated as one of the lone Black residents of a nearly all-white New England town and that his strength and resolve – versus geekiness, nerdiness or social awkwardness – paved his path toward becoming the town librarian. It seemed like the novel and 1990 miniseries versions of Mike Hanlon defied every trope typically tacked on to librarians in fiction.

And now, Mike will simply join the legions of fictional Black characters who abuse drugs and show an inability to cope with the realities they face in life.

Please allow me to clarify that I’m not calling for fiction writers to cease and desist with creating Black characters who struggle with drugs. Drug abuse among Black Americans – as well as Americans of all races – is unfortunately a real issue and I have no desire to pretend that this real issue does not exist and does not complicate the lives of many great families in our nation. However,

reimagining this positive Black male character as a junkie just seems wholly inappropriate and unnecessary. Just this once, I wanted to have my fictional Black male librarian hero on the big screen in a hit movie. Stephen King created a truly unique character

when he created Mike. And now Mike is reduced to a stereotype. The adult Mike Hanlon of the 2019 part-two of “IT” will not be a character that I can present to other Black males as the badass librarian whose handle on information and knowledge helps

a community overcome its threats and challenges. All the same, my quest to bring more Black males into librarianship will continue. It just stings a bit that I’ve lost a key ally in this quest.

practical. If you’re wearing heels and suddenly have to run for your life... you’re dead.” The reason I enjoy this quote is because as a librarian I enjoy dressing professionally for work, but finding a good pair of shoes is equally as important. Because I am on my feet a lot, high-heels are not the most practical shoes to wear for me. As for Lord doing stand-up comedy, it is as equally as important to be comfortable in performing.

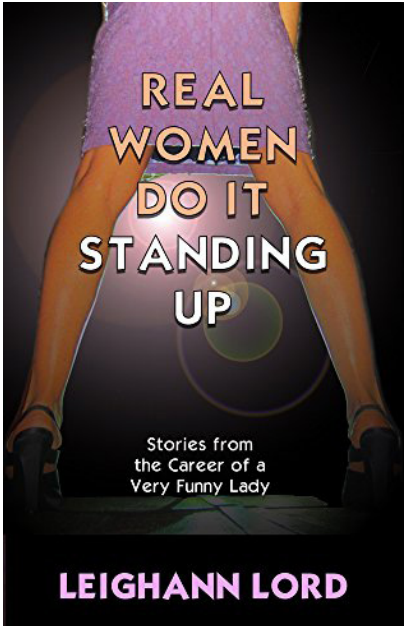
Another practical quote that was memorable is, “It’s very important to travel. You have to get out of your

zip code, go to a different Wal-Mart. It really broadens you.” In this particular opener to a section “On the road,” she tells her experience of traveling around the world for shows. Lord had traveled graciously abroad and domestically while bringing her stand-up to the Navy and Armed Forces. Essentially, Lord’s stories in this chapter give the reader a sense of appreciation for not taking life for granted, and by traveling it will broaden your horizons. Throughout the book, Leighann Lord kept true to herself. She mentions in many places in the memoir how she gives

advice about life as a comedienne. Lord is honest about the comedy profession. Also, in the memoir, she mentioned how some gigs are a bit questionable to one’s morals or affects their freedom of speech. Most important, Leighann Lord debunked the typical stereotype of an African American woman and comedienne. This talented woman had a way in combating those challenges of being a comedian.

Book Review: Real Women Do It Standing Up

By Tasha Martinez



Lord, Leighann. Real Women Do It Standing Up. New York, NY: Leighann Lord; 2016.

286p.
\$15.00 Paperback.
ISBN: 978-0-9862093

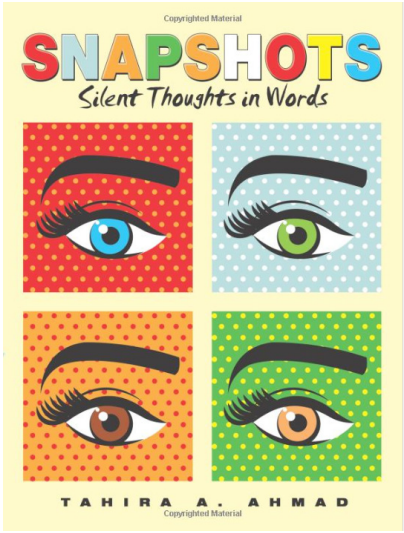
The book that I had selected to review for the BCALA publication was “Real Women Do It Standing Up: Stories from the Career of a Very Funny Lady.” Leighann Lord is a comedienne, author, and radio/TV co-host. This memoir shares stories of Lord’s life and career as a comedienne in a humorist way. Lord begins her book by explaining how she got into comedy after getting an undergraduate degree in journalism and getting a regular nine to five. By finding her niche, Lord goes to tell her tales in a chronological way. As the book progresses, Lord explains some difficult questions such as: how do you balance content of being an artist, how can you relate to them with your content, and how do you stick to your true person without conforming to the stereotype of being an African American woman in comedy. With Lord’s words, the reader can read the passion of her profession while

learning some lifelong lessons. The book is organized in a creative way. The book itself is 286 pages long. The book is divided into seven sections, and within the sections are short stories that fit the overall theme of the section. At the beginning of each short story, there is a quote or a clue per se about what the reader will read next. Those quotes definitely set the tone for the next section, but don’t be surprised if while you’re reading you flip back to the quote. Finally, the book has a lot of whitespace which doesn’t hinder the eyes of the reader.

My overall impression of the book was great. As a person who does not enjoy humor books much, this was the first one that I have enjoyed. Throughout the book, Lord gave practical advice about life with the quotes she made in many situations. The first quote that I will share is, “I love high-heeled shoes but they’re not

Book Review: Tahira Ahmad’s Snapshots: Silent thoughts In Words

By Linda Jolivet, Laney Community College.



Over 30 “free verse” poems share the inner thoughts of the author, family woman, and poet. These inner reflections echo universal thoughts and concerns of a mother, daughter, and thoughtful human. A few of the poems are prayerful expressions, others are thoughts on love, life, earth, community, and hopes and dreams.

The work “Who Am I?” reflects upon the oneness of all humanity, as does “The Earth – Like a Home” and “A Wish”. “For All Little Girls and Boys”, and “Girls and Boys Who Rocked Our World” are inspirational poems which are certain to be appreciated by young

people. I recommend this title for young adult and adult collections.

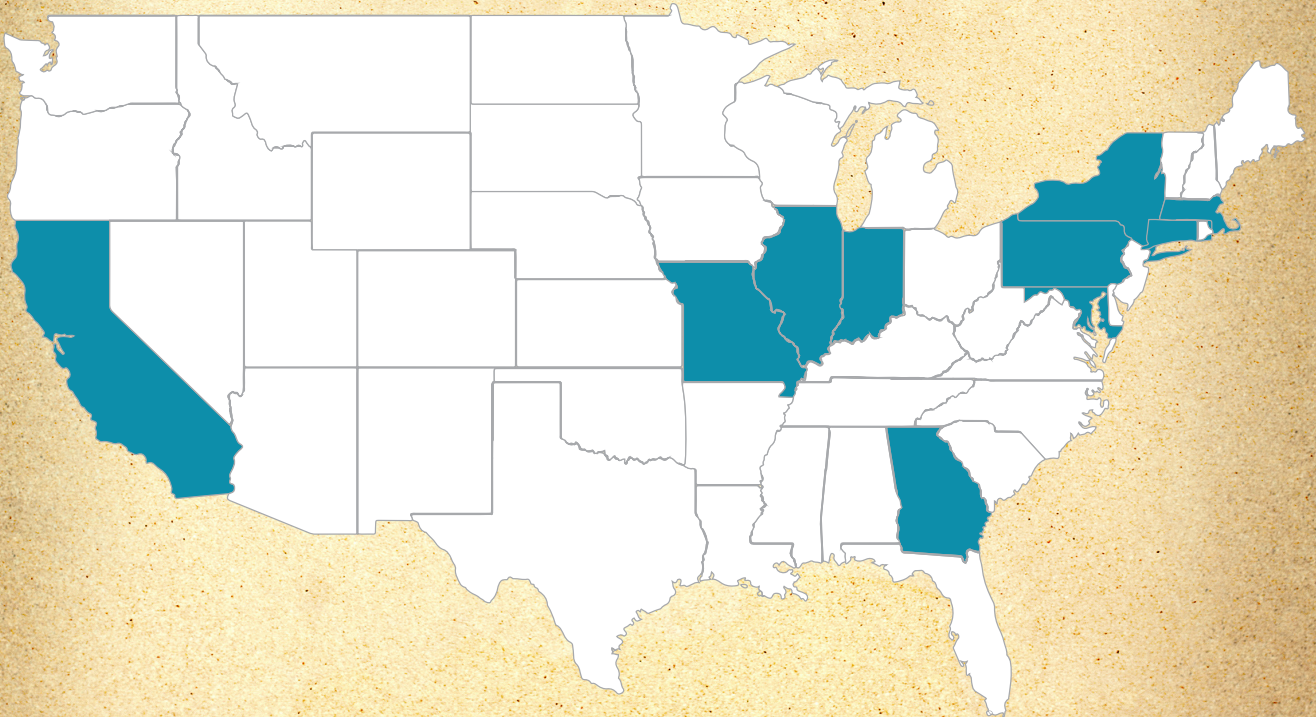
(Editor’s note: Ahmad is a member of BCALA. Purchasing and other information is available at <https://www.amazon.com/Snapshots-Silent-Thoughts-Tahira-Ahmad/dp/1480858153>)

Jason Alston
BCALA News
Kimbel Library
376 University Blvd
Conway, SC 29528
www.bcala.org

PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

DON'T SEE YOUR STATE REPRESENTED?

***CHARTER/ RE-ACTIVATE OR JOIN AN AFFILIATE
IN YOUR STATE TODAY!***



***CONTACT YOUR LOCAL AFFILIATE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GETTING
INVOLVED OR VISIT WWW.BCALA.ORG FOR MORE INFORMATION.***