



MEDIA ALERT
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2015

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**DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
CELEBRATES THE 2015
BIG READ PROGRAM IN LOS ANGELES**

**LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL
PROCLAIMS APRIL 2015 AS
LITERACY AND POETRY MONTH
WITH
POET LAUREATE LUIS RODRIGUEZ**

Los Angeles – The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) marks its seventh year of producing the **Big Read Program in LA** in 2015 with **Luis Alberto Urrea’s** novel, **Into the Beautiful North**. As part of this arts education initiative, April 2015 will be proclaimed **Literacy and Poetry Month**, celebrating DCA’s **Big Read Program in Los Angeles** by the Los Angeles City Council during a ceremony at Los Angeles City Hall in Council Chambers on March 25, at 10:00 a.m. The event will include a special reading by **Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez**. A reception will follow in the Spring Street Forecourt at City Hall with live readings by Luis Alberto Urrea and Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez.

The 2015 *Big Read Program in LA* will be officially introduced along with the featured book, *Into the Beautiful North*, a novel set in the present day, in the highly charged world of the U.S. / Mexico border region. It is the story of idealistic nineteen year old Nayeli who embarks on a journey of a lifetime. The characters in the book come into contact with tensions that arise from many kinds of difference. Urrea explores, with compassion and humor, the micro-cultures within the border world and its impact and interaction with the United States. Students, schools, participating organizations, and cultural and community partners will be recognized during the event at City Hall.

"Los Angeles is the creative capital of the world and a city that inspires writers," said **Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti**. "*The Big Read* inspires Angelenos to read and provides a forum for readers to come together with their communities to celebrate the power of the written word."



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"Reading is crucial for the development and advancement of any society," said **Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell**, who chairs the City's Arts, Parks, Health, Aging, and Los Angeles River Committee. "I am reading Luis Alberto Urrea's *Into the Beautiful North* and, like all great pieces of literature, this book gives us a deeper understanding of the universal issues that face humanity. It gives me great pleasure to shine the Council spotlight on the importance of literature in our lives, and I applaud the Department of Cultural Affairs for its work over the last seven years producing the *Big Read Program in LA*."

To culminate the kickoff of literacy and poetry in Los Angeles, **Libros Schimbros Lending Library** will present an engaging, in-shop conversation with Luis Alberto Urrea. Young writers of Boyle Heights and the Eastside will engage this Pulitzer-nominated, New York Times notable member of the Latino Literature Hall of Fame in a conversation on the craft and career of writing, joined by Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez and writer **Marisela Norte**.

The Big Read is an initiative of the **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)** designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents *The Big Read* in partnership with the Arts Midwest. *The Big Read* brings together partners across the county to encourage reading for pleasure and enlightenment.

Since 2008/09, the National Endowment for the Arts has awarded grants to the **Department of Cultural Affairs** each year to produce its extensive ***Big Read Program in LA***. The program consists of a series of free activities through June 2015. DCA has partnered with the Los Angeles Public Library to bring ***The Big Read*** to its local branch locations, serving some 4 million residents. DCA also has been collaborating with other community and cultural organizations including: Community Arts Partnership (CAP), the Craft and Folk Art Museum, the Los Angeles Harbor International Film Festival, Libros Schimbros, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Museum of the San Fernando Valley, The Music Center, the Sony Pictures Media Arts Program, and many more.

Nearly 3,000 students from local high schools in culturally diverse areas of Los Angeles will join community members in reading *Into the Beautiful North* with activities offered for all ages and interests. The public is invited to enjoy the many activities offered by DCA's cultural and community partners including art exhibitions, live performances, art exhibitions, film screenings, discussion panels, book festivals, and visits to cultural landmarks.

DCA's *Big Read Program in LA* official website, **BigReadLA.org**, will go live on March 25, 2015 with a full list of events being organized by DCA and its cultural and community partners for the initiative. All local programs are free unless otherwise indicated. Please call **213.202.5567** or also visit DCA's main website at **culturela.org** for additional information.



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To learn more about *The Big Read* and other NEA sponsored initiatives around the country, please visit: neabigread.org.

About the Los Angeles Poet Laureate

Luis Rodriguez was chosen to be Poet Laureate by Mayor Eric Garcetti in 2014. His poetry book, *My Nature is Hunger*, won the 2005 Paterson Book Award. His 1993 memoir *Always Running, La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.*, with close to half a million copies sold, became one of L.A.'s most checked out in libraries—and one of the most stolen. He is also founding editor of the small press, Tia Chucha Press, now in its 25th year, and co-founder of Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural & Bookstore in the San Fernando Valley.

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

The **Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)** generates and supports high quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles' 4 million residents and 40 million annual visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and ensures access to diverse and enriching cultural activities through: grantmaking, marketing, development, public art, community arts programming, arts education, and building partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles. For more information, please visit culturela.org.

About the Los Angeles Public Library

The Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse population of any library in the nation—more than 4 million people—through its Central Library, its 72 branches, its collection of more than 6 million books, its state-of-the-art technology accessible at lapl.org, and more than 18,000 public programs a year providing everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for life-long learning.

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