



MEDIA ALERT
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African American / Chinese American Panel Discussion Culminates the 4th year of the Big Read/Literacy Month Project for the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

Los Angeles -The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) will mark the culmination of its fourth year of programming The Big Read/Literacy Month Project with a panel discussion on Saturday, June 9th. The Panel will be hosted by the Chinese American Museum and will start at 2:00pm at the Pio Pico House at the El Pueblo Historic Monument in China Town.

The 2012 selection of Zora Neale Hurston’s **“Their Eyes Were Watching God”** served as an entry point for the second year to stimulate dialogue, instill creative programming around cultural elements of the book, and the cultivation and bridging of new and long standing alliances between the education sector, the arts, community organizations across Los Angeles, and specific ethnic groups.

The Big Read Los Angeles consisted of a series of activities from February to June 2012. Presented by the Department of Cultural Affairs, and officially launched by the City Council of Los Angeles in April as Big Read/Literacy Month, the project included many community and cultural organizations. These included the California African American Museum, the Los Angeles Public Library, SONY Pictures, the Los Angeles Unified School District, the Chinese American Museum, the Levantine Cultural Center, El Pueblo Historic Monument, KAOS Network, DCA Arts Partners and Centers, and many more.

The program worked with students during school hours and at several after school arts center. It offered a variety of events structured around the reading of **“Their Eyes Were Watching God,”** targeting a multi-ethnic adolescent population. Nearly 1,500 students from local high schools in culturally diverse areas of Los Angeles joined community members in reading “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” The Big Read/Literacy Month Los Angeles offered activities such as film screenings, panel discussion, art workshops, and special events. The program engaged people of all ages and demographics while encouraging them to look at themselves through the eyes of the author’s novel.



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This final panel inspired last year by DCA, successfully presented the first such discussion around Author Amy Tan’s “The Joy Luck Club” at the California African American Museum and was structured around the Chinese American and African American Communities. The June 9th panel discussion will culminate the 2012 Big Read/Literacy Month project with its focus being on Author Zora Neale Hurston’s novel, and address similar events culturally, in family, and in community of these factions of our community. The panel will include participation of the Middle Eastern Community in preparation of the 2013 reading of the “Thief and the Dog” by a Middle Eastern author.

The panel is comprised of distinguished speakers who will explore the themes of cultural connections, identity, women’s issues, and the power of language and voice in books. Panelist include: David Horne, Ph.D., California State University, Northridge; Munashe Furusa, PhD, Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities, California State University, Dominguez Hills; Maythee Rojas, Women’s Studies Department, California State University, Long Beach; Brenda E. Stevenson; Women’s Studies, History Department, University of California, Los Angeles; Linda Vo, Department of Asian American Studies, University of California, Irvine. The panel will be moderated by Jordan Elgrably, Executive Director, Levantine Cultural Center & Inside/Outside Gallery.

The Pico House is located at 424 North Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. For more information please call the Department of Cultural Affairs at 213.202.5500, or go to www.culturela.org.

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

The **Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)** generates and supports high quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles’ 4 million residents and 25 million annual visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and ensures access to diverse and enriching cultural activities through grant making, marketing, public art, community arts programming, arts education, and partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles.

DCA’s operating budget and managed portfolio totaled \$38.2 million in fiscal year 2010/11. It consisted of: \$9.5 million in funds from the Public Works Improvements Arts Program (PWIAP); \$8.9 million in City related and indirect cost allocations; \$8.7 million from the Private Arts Development Fee Program (ADF); \$7.7 million in Transient Occupancy Tax funds; and over \$3.4 million in private and public funds raised from foundation, corporate, government, and individual donors.

DCA significantly supports artists and cultural projects through its Public Art Division by administering a portfolio totaling \$18.2 million in PWIAP and ADF funds in FY10/11. DCA’s Marketing and Development Division raised over \$16.9



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million since FY07/08 to re-grant to LA-based artists and arts and cultural organizations for special grant initiatives and to support DCA's special programming and facilities. DCA also grants approximately \$2.2 million annually to over 280 artists and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations through its long-established Grants Administration Division.

DCA provides arts and cultural programming through its Community Arts Division, managing numerous neighborhood arts and cultural centers, theaters, historic sites, and educational initiatives. DCA's Marketing and Development Division also markets the City's arts and cultural events through development and collaboration with strategic partners, design and production of creative catalogs, publications, and promotional materials, and management of the culturela.org website visited by over 3 million people annually.

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