The Department of Cultural Affairs 2018-2019 Big Read Program in Los Angeles

A catalyst for community participation, civic engagement, and a celebration of Los Angeles culture through literature and art.

The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) designed to restore reading to the center of American popular culture. The NEA presents the Big Read in partnership with Arts Midwest. Generous support is also provided by Sony Pictures Entertainment. The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and the NEA hope to unite communities through literature and intra-cultural connections, as well as to inspire teens to become life-long readers with the Big Read Program in Los Angeles.

The DCA has been awarded a grant from the NEA since the inception of the NEA Big Read Program in 2007/08. DCA will mark its 11th year of programming the NEA Big Read with the 2018-2019 selection of Dinaw Mengestu’s The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears, a fictional account of an Ethiopian immigrant living in Washington, DC, but whose story could relate to any immigrant living in any city. The protagonist deals with the trauma of leaving his homeland, the struggle to find success and love in America, and the adjustment of gentrification to the neighborhood that has been his new home.

The NEA Big Read Program in LA will address several timely topics through its engagement with this award winning literary work. The American dream is a universal ideal shared by many who have immigrated to the United States, leaving an unbearable and bleak situation behind and hoping to find success and prosperity in a new place. Displacement due to gentrification is another core topic that is addressed in the book. Cultural identity, whether self-perception or societal conception, will offer reflection and inform dialogue about belonging. Finally, the theme of memory will explore personal and local history, and how we can learn from the past and be empowered to shape the future. Los Angeles residents experience these issues to various degrees on a daily basis. The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears will remind Angelenos that despite the different reasons and roads that brought us together, we are all companions within this diverse, vast city we call home.

For more information about DCA’s Big Read Program in Los Angeles, please call 213.202.5567, or email elizabeth.morin@lacity.org.

culturela.org
BigReadLA.org
neabigread.org
Civic Ceremony for Proclamation of the Big Read in Los Angeles

CELEBRATING THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
KICK OFF OF THE BIG READ PROGRAM IN LOS ANGELES AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Los Angeles City Hall Council Chamber

When: Wednesday, March 6, 2019
10:00 am to 1:30 pm

Site: Los Angeles City Council Chamber
Los Angeles City Hall Forecourt
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Cost: Free and Open to the Public

Info: Join the Los Angeles City Council at an official ceremony to kick-off and recognize the 2018-2019 Big Read Program in Los Angeles. This year’s book selection of The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, by Dinaw Mengestu, tells the story of an Ethiopian immigrant who arrives in America after the Ethiopian Revolution to discover social tensions in a historically African American neighborhood undergoing rapid gentrification. It is a story with themes that will resonate with the Los Angeles populace.

The event in Council Chambers will be followed by a reception and program at the City Hall Forecourt, featuring a keynote address from empowerment coach, Adenike A. Harris, along with special presentations, and community booths. Guests will be treated to an acoustic performance by Interscope recording artist, Marian Mereba. Mereba is a multifaceted artist of Ethiopian heritage with the life story of a rolling stone. Her unique blend of r&b, folk, and hip hop makes space for a new voice found in this wise young storyteller.

To register your attendance, email, dale.madison@lacity.org by February 28. Reservations taken until space permits. This event is expected to fill up quickly.
On-Line Activities

Social Media Discussion of *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*

**On-line Community**

**When:** September 2018 through June 2019

**Site:** https://www.facebook.com/groups/NEAbigread

**Info:** DCA will invite readers to join the Big Read online community to discuss Dinaw Mengestu's book, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*. Hosted through DCA’s Big Read Program in Los Angeles website, participants will receive a free copy of the book and notices of program events. Through this online portal, readers will exchange postings (to be monitored by DCA), and discuss NEA-provided study guide questions, while also reading and sharing articles related to topics touched upon in the book, such as memory, home, displacement, and gentrification. Through this digital community, Angelenos can participate in the NEA Big Read regardless of geographic limitations.
MAPPING LOS ANGELES CUISINE AND CULTURE

#LookingAtMyLosAngeles

When: February 6 - June 30, 2019

Site: [https://tinyurl.com/LookingAtMyLosAngeles](https://tinyurl.com/LookingAtMyLosAngeles)

Info: The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) invites you to participate in this food appreciation project that chronicles our City's history, by using the Story Map Tour app. The book's themes of memory, home, cultural identity, and displacement are the inspiration for this food mapping project. Help us map what and where Angelenos eat. Nominate your favorite eateries, whether it’s a market that has stood for generations, a hundred-year-old bakery, or a particular street where people emigrated from other lands gather to enjoy holiday meals, through using the hashtag #LookingAtMyLosAngeles on all social media platforms.

Discover the many cultural corridors of Los Angeles and its food through this interactive experience. #LookingAtMyLosAngeles will populate the Story Map Tour. The map will feature a cultural district in Los Angeles and include videos, images and photographs. Users can click sequentially through the Story Map Tour app or create their own tour.

Tag DCA on Instagram (@culture_la). Use the following hashtags to help promote this LA food history project:

#LookingAtMyLosAngeles
#NEABigRead
#TheBeautifulThingsThatHeavenBears
#SharingMyLA

#LookingAtMyLosAngeles is a social-media catalyst for cultural appreciation and an on-going program component of the NEA Big Read Program in Los Angeles that celebrates our city’s art and history.

Note: DCA reserves the right to archive, edit and/or decline all submissions and/or cancel this project at any time.

For more information, please visit culturela.org, BigReadLA.org, and NEABigRead.org. For information about #LookingatMyLosAngeles, call 213.202.5507.
Activities at DCA’s Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Centers include after-school art classes, writing activities, exhibitions, and film screenings. Please contact the respective center for more information at: culturela.org/cultural-centers.

The DCA Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Centers participating in the *Big Read Program in Los Angeles* include:

**DISPLACEMENT IN WORDS AND COMMUNITIES**

**Canoga Park Youth Arts Center**

**Date:** Thursdays, January 10 through March 7, 2019

5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

**Site:** Canoga Park Youth Arts Center
7222 Remmet Avenue
Canoga Park, CA 91303

**Cost:** Free

**Info:** Students will each create a painting that speaks to a time in their lives when home, family, school, or friends were changed and how they experienced it. Canvases will be a uniformed size with a limited pallet and will have a graphic 3D design that the students will paint their idea over. When hung together, they will create a dynamic pattern.

Students will use the themes in the book of home, memory, and change to explore their own version of the challenges of change. The finished art work will resemble apartment units that have both characteristics of isolation and community not unlike the characters of the book.

The Canoga Park Youth Arts Center is located in a historic building that once served as the first operator-assisted phone company in San Fernando Valley. The exterior of the mission style building has been restored, while the interior has been converted into a contemporary youth arts center.
The facility, which was funded by Prop K Recreation and Parks, includes a gallery, workshops and studios, a computer lab, an exhibition space, and a garden classroom.

The center’s mission is to bring quality innovative arts programming to the community by offering art classes to youth 6-17 years of age. The staff of educators are comprised of professionals from the Los Angeles art community. The center’s philosophy includes creating an environment to encourage interaction between professional artists and youth.

Canoga Park Youth Arts Center is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information please call 818.346.7099 or visit culturela.org/cultural-centers/canoga-park-youth-arts-center
WRITING ABOUT DISPLACEMENT, IMMIGRATION AND GENTRIFICATION

Barnsdall Park

Date: Mondays, January 14 through April 8, 2019

Site: Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Cost: Free

Info: This course invites the curious who wish to write (on any level) to explore their own culture as well as those from the immigrant experience. Students will be given a personal journal to record perceptions that spring from class activities and discussion about Dinaw Mengestu's *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*.

Students will try their hand at music, art, poetry, fiction, or nonfiction. The backdrop will be the powerful novel by Dinaw Mengestu about an Ethiopian immigrant who escaped a revolution and bravely fled to America. Through visits with guests, readings, and a lively field trip, participants will learn how immigrants fare in the face of identity crisis, poverty, trauma, relocation, gentrification, and racial bias. The class will also recognize the joys and achievements of the immigration experience.

Barnsdall Art Park is a city park located in the East Hollywood district of Los Angeles, California. The park is a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument, and a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. This program is produced by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and LAMAG's Museum Education and Tours Program.

Barnsdall Municipal Art Gallery is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information please call 323.644.6269 or visit barnsdall.org/
POETRY IN THE HEIGHTS

Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center

When: Saturdays, February 23, 2019 through Saturday, April 13, 2019

Site: Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center (LHYAC)
2911 Altura Street
Los Angeles, CA 90031

Cost: Free

Info: The Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center presents the 2nd annual Poetry in the Heights workshop series for young adults, in conjunction with the NEA Big Read Program in LA. Students ages 15 to 21 will participate in weekly workshops focused on this year’s Big Read book selection, The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, by Dinaw Mengestu. Participating students will be guided through an in-depth analysis and exploration of their own critical thinking inspired by the socially and politically charged themes presented in the book, which center on race and racial relations, migration and immigration, gentrification and displacement, community, and a sense of home. Students will be invited to analyze these themes and apply them to their own personal experience, interpretations, observations, and perspectives through creative writing exercises. The Big Read workshops will convene for 7 weeks and culminate in a public presentation of the students’ original writing.

The DCA Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center is part of the Lincoln Heights Youth Center complex, which is a renovated two-story church building originally constructed in 1930. The facility is jointly operated by the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Department of Cultural Affairs.

For more information, please call (213) 224-0928 or email at dca.lhyac@lacity.org.
PRINTMAKING, BOOKMAKING, AND WRITING WORKSHOP

LAMAGPlay Museum Education Program

Date: Saturday, April 27, 2019
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Site: Municipal Gallery
Barnsdall Art Park
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Cost: Free


In this three-station workshop, attendees will participate in a writing exercise, create the 8-fold book to incorporate their writing content from the first station, and make a Styrofoam relief print for their book cover. Participants can focus on just one station or complete the three components of this activity based on their interests or time. The themes from The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears will inform the workshop’s activities, with a focus on exploring the ideas, hopes, aspirations, barriers, and elusiveness of the “American Dream.”

Barnsdall Park is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information, please call 323-644-6269 or visit culturela.org/
MODELS OF PRIDE CONFERENCE

A Lifeworks Mentoring Program of the LA LGBT Center

When: Saturday, October 20, 2018

Site: Lifeworks at Cal State LA
5151 State University Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90032

Cost: Free and Open to the Public

Info: In pursuit of young adults and teen readers, the NEA Big Read program will have a booth at the Models of Pride (MOP) Conference produced by Lifeworks, the youth mentoring program of the LA LGBT Center. MOP is the world’s largest FREE conference for LGBTQ youth and allies, including parents and professionals.

The full-day conference includes an Opening Session, over 130 workshops, lunch, a resource fair, college fair, job fair, dinner, entertainment hour, and outdoor dance party. The Models of Pride Resource Fair convenes more than 2,000 attendees from Southern California and beyond to learn about the LGBTQ community.

Event attendees will be invited to participate in the NEA Big Read, a dynamic and culturally inclusive literary program that promotes creative expression, community engagement, and a celebration of Los Angeles culture through literature and art. Event attendees will sign up to participate in an on-line Facebook discussion of the book and receive a copy of this year's book and educational material about DCA’s programs and services in the arts and culture.

For more information about Los Angeles LGBT Center, visit lalgbtcenter.org/social-service-and-housing/youth/homelessness
COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP MODEL: LESSONS FROM THE NEA BIG READ

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

When: Tuesday, October 23, 2018
5:30 pm to 8:30 pm

Site: Deaton Auditorium
100 1st Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Cost: Free

Info: The NEA Big Read will be highlighted as a model program between the arts and local schools. Attendees will receive information about the Big Read program structure, goals, participants, and its impact on students, teachers, and families. Topics covered include strategies for audience participation and cultivation, partnership development, artist-teacher collaboration, program sustainability, evaluation, and fostering community support. Stop by the NEA Big Read table to sign-up to receive a free copy of this year’s featured title and to learn more about the educational services and programs of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. The event is free and open to the public.

The NEA Big Read in Los Angeles marks its 11th year. It is presented by the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the California School Boards Association invite Los Angeles residents to learn about available resources for our youth, share ideas and experiences, network, and meet Neighborhood Council, City, School District, non-profit, school site, and parent leaders as well as elected officials from across Los Angeles. Let’s get it together for the kids!
BECOMING LOS ANGELES | NHMLA’S FREE TUESDAYS

Natural History Museum

Dates: Tuesdays, January 8, February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4, 2019

Site: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLA)
800 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90007

Cost: Free

Info: The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County welcomes schools and community groups participating in the NEA Big Read Program to attend Free Tuesdays at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. On the first Tuesday of every month, visitors receive free entry during museum hours (9:30 am – 5:00 pm).

Free Tuesdays invites visitors to explore the newly renovated Becoming Los Angeles, an exhibit that chronicles how people and the land have affected each other in complex ways over 500 years and transformed a remote pueblo into the Los Angeles (LA) we know today. In the 14,000-square-foot exhibition, visitors will discover stories about LA’s Native Americans, colonists, and settlers; rancheros, citrus growers, and oil barons; captains of industry, boosters, and radicals; filmmakers, innovators, and more.

The Natural History Museum is located in Exposition Park at 900 Exposition Blvd. between Vermont Avenue and Figueroa Street. Parking is available for $12 in the Natural History Museum’s Car Park on the corner of Exposition Blvd. and Bill Robertson Lane. Additional parking is available for $12 (cash only) at the Expo Park Parking Structure. The Natural History Museum is conveniently located off the Metro Expo Line at the Expo Park/Vermont or Expo Park/USC station.

For more information, please call 213.763.DINO or email info@nhm.org.
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

City of Los Angeles

When: Wednesday February 6, 2019 (Opening ceremony)
       Wednesday February 27, 2019 (Closing ceremony)

Site: Los Angeles City Hall
      200 North Spring Street
      Los Angeles, CA 90012

Info: The 2019 City of Los Angeles African American Heritage Month opening
      ceremony welcomes the NEA Big Read program. Event guests will be invited to
      sign up to receive a copy of the featured title, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven
      Bears*, and a listing of the public activities being hosted by cultural and
      community partners throughout the city in conjunction with the 11th program
      of the Big Read in Los Angeles.

The City of Los Angeles African American Heritage Month (AAHM) is an annual
celebration that began in 1949 when Mayor Fletcher Bowron issued the first
proclamation calling for all citizens to celebrate the accomplishments of African
Americans. In 1959, the opening ceremony was moved to City Hall. In 1976, the
entire month of February was officially declared African American History Month
in LA. Every Mayor since then has recognized the month, especially the
late Mayor Tom Bradley.

There are many free programs taking place throughout the month of February.
Visit the AAHM listing online for complete details:

- February 6th  Opening ceremony with the unveiling of the AAHM Guide,
  a free brochure that lists all AAHM events
- February 20th  An evening with African American Authors
- February 10th  A Gospel Worship program
- February 13th  A Roundtable Discussion “Black Migrations”
- February 27th  6:00 pm to 9:00 pm Closing Ceremony

For more information please call 213.978.0254, or access the online calendar,
visit culturela.org/event/African-American-heritage-celebrations/
THE LIVES WE LEFT, THE LIVES WE LIVE

Los Angeles Mission

When: February 23 and March 2, 9, 2019 (Saturdays)
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Site: Anne Douglas Center for Women
310 Winston Street
Los Angeles, CA, 90013

Cost: Free
Advanced registration is strongly encouraged

Info: Participants are invited to actively engage in creative writing, storytelling, visual explorations, and meaningful discussions related to their own cultures as well as those from the immigrant experience. Students will receive a personal journal for recording their perspectives, revelations and recollections. No experience is necessary.

Sepha, the main character in the Big Read title, The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, has constant challenges around his identity, and struggles to arrive at sense of who he is in the midst of his changing circumstances. This same struggle is one residents at the Anne Douglas Center can connect with as they examine the various identities they may have had to assume on their path to the center. Workshop participants are provided opportunities for creative explorations of who they were in the past, and who they are now without its trappings, tragedies and traumas. They can begin to use these perspectives to carve out what identities they may strive for in the future.

Dorothy Randall Gray is a former Poet-in-Residence at Hunter College, NYU faculty member and National Public Radio commentator. Dorothy is also an award winning jewelry designer, certified life coach, and co-founder of Women Writers and Artists Matrix.

The Los Angeles Mission’s Women outreach was named the Anne Douglas Center for Women in recognition of Mrs. Kirk Douglas’ long-standing compassionate generosity to the homeless. The Los Angeles Mission exists to provide help, hope and opportunity to men, women and children in need.

For more information, please call 213.629.1227 or visit losangelesmission.org
YMSM BOOK CLUB

Los Angeles LGBT CENTER

When:       Wednesday and/or Friday

Where:      Los Angeles LGBT Center
            1111 North Las Palmas Avenue
            Los Angeles, CA 90038

Info:       The Los Angeles LGBT Center will host a book club for young men who have sex
            with men (YMSM) 18-29 years of age. This book club will be held once a week in
            the afternoon at the Las Palmas location.

            Examining the theme of rebuilding home and community in a new space is a
            concept that young men of the Los Angeles LGBT Center find familiar. Many
            young men are evicted from their homes after coming out of the closet and find
            refuge at the LA LGBT Center.

            Participants will read and develop an art project themed around the novel. The
            artwork will be displayed at The Village at Ed Gould Plaza 1125 North McCadden
            Place Los Angeles, CA 90038

            The community will be invited to a culmination art exhibition where the youth
            will talk about their art installations and the inspirations from the novel that
            helped them to create their pieces.

            For more information, please call 323. 993.8902 or visit lalgbtcenter.org
COMMUNITY READING AND BOOK GIVE-AWAY

Libros Schmibros Lending Library

When: March – April 2019

Site: Libros Schmibros Lending Library
103 N Boyle Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90033

Cost: Free

Info: Angelenos are invited to stop by Libros Schmibros, a membership lending library, for a free copy of this year’s NEA Big Read title, *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, by Dinaw Megestu.

Libros Schmibros Lending Library seeks to foster the literary and cultural life of Boyle Heights, a once majority-Jewish, now majority-Latino, neighborhood of Los Angeles. Founded in 2010, Libros Schmibros offers low- or no-cost literature and literary events to everybody east of the ocean. Working with local residents, artists, writers, readers, and public officials, Libros Schmibros is dedicated to both the exploration of literature and the study, questioning, celebration, and betterment of Southern California. Libros Schmibros advocates for the literary arts through public presentations, workshops, film series, museum exhibitions, reading groups, symposia, and conferences.

For more information, please call 323.302.9408 or email: info@librosschmibros.org.
COMMUNITY FILM SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

Chinatown - The Reel/Real Story

Dates: Saturday, March 16, 2019
1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Site: Los Angeles Public Library
Mark Taper Auditorium
630 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Cost: Free
Reservations are encouraged

Info: A screening of movie trailers that showcase the themes of the immigrant experience and displacement. An author, a filmmaker, and a critic will guide the audience through the context of the big screen stories and how they relate to Los Angeles as the city continues to reshape itself.

Contact Mary McCoy or Eileen King at the Central Library mmccoy@lapl.org, eking@lapl.org for more information.

To RSVP, email you name and number of guests to Dale.Madison@lacity.org by March 13th.

For more information about events at Library Branches, please contact the branch by visiting lapl.org.
COMMUNITY FILM SCREENING

*Lamb* (2015) director Yared Zeleke

Dates: Sunday, March 17, 2019
1:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Site: Barnsdall Gallery Theater
Barnsdall Art Park
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Cost: Free
RSVP’s are requested

Info: *Lamb* is the story of Ephraim who is a young Ethiopian boy. His father leaves him and his sheep, from which he is inseparable, to be looked after by distant relatives, far from his drought-ridden homeland. Ephraim isn’t very good at farming, but he has a hidden talent: he is an excellent cook. One day, his uncle tells him that they have to sacrifice his sheep for the next religious feast. The young boy, however, is ready to do anything to save his only friend and return home.

*Lamb* is the first film from Ethiopia to be included in the Official Selection at the Cannes Film Festival and the country’s entry for the Best Foreign Language Oscar. Highly praised in Cannes and Toronto, the film has enjoyed international press attention in the Daily Monitor in Ethiopia, the New York Times, the Guardian, as well as coverage on BBC, CNN, and other media outlets.

Barnsdall Park is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information please contact dale.Madison@lacity.org
SONY PICTURES MEDIA ARTS PROGRAM

When: October 2018 to June 2019 (Afterschool program)
      Saturday, June 8, 2019 (Culminating event - film screening)

Sites:

Banning’s Landing Community Cultural Center
100 East Water Street
Wilmington, CA 91303

Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock
2225 Colorado Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center
10620 Graham Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90002

Pacoima City Hall
Pacoima Public Library
13605 Van Nuys Boulevard
Pacoima, CA 91331

William Reagh Los Angeles Photography Center
2332 West Fourth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90057

Cost: Free

Info: Students from all over Los Angeles participate in this media arts program.
      Students will read Dinaw Mengestu’s The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears
      and create original short films. The program culminates in a public exhibition and
      screening of the artwork produced by the students, to be presented at the
      Gallery Theater, Barnsdall Park.

      This 30-week, tuition-free media arts program, held after-school twice a week, is
      for middle school students aged 10 to 14. Students learn drawing and painting
      techniques and how to draw from a model, animate, put together an art
      portfolio, and create artwork on computers.
This program is part of the Sony Pictures Media Arts Program, a partnership between the CalArts Community Arts Partnership, the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

For more information please call 661.222.2708 or visit calarts.edu/ca
ANIMATED FILM SCREENING

Sony Pictures CalArts CAP Media Arts Program

When: Saturday, June 8, 2019
12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Site: Barnsdall Gallery Theater
Barnsdall Art Park
4800 Hollywood Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Cost: Free and Open to the Public

Info: A curated selection of animated shorts created by students of the Sony Pictures Media Arts Program. The films are inspired by the writing of Dinaw Mengestu, this year’s NEA Big Read featured author. The screening of these animated short films is the culmination of the program.

The films created by middle and high school students who participate in the year-round Sony Pictures Media Arts Program at Banning's Landing Community Center in Wilmington, Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, Pacoima Public Library, Watts Towers Arts Center, and the William Reagh Los Angeles Photography Center near MacArthur Park.

The Sony Pictures Media Arts Program is sponsored by the CalArts Community Arts Partnership (CAP) program, the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

Barnsdall Park is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information, call 661.222.2708 or visit barnsdall.org/
17TH ANNUAL LITTLE ETHIOPIAN CULTURAL STREET FESTIVAL

Little Ethiopia Cultural & Resource Center

When: Sunday, September 9, 2018
10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Site: Little Ethiopia
Fairfax Avenue between Olympic Boulevard and Whitworth Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Cost: Free

Info: Little Ethiopia is the stretch of Fairfax Avenue in the Pico/Robertson neighborhood in the Westside of the city of Los Angeles, California, part of the P.I.C.O. Neighborhood Council, northeast of the Crestview neighborhood, northwest of the Picfair Village district, east of the Carthay Square district and west of Wilshire Vista district. The area has a high concentration of Ethiopian businesses and restaurants, as well as a significant concentration of residents of Ethiopian and Eritrean ancestry.

Little Ethiopia dates back to the early 1990s. This stretch of Fairfax Avenue used to be occupied by Jewish businesses, as the Fairfax District to the north is now. Ethiopian and Eritrean businesses and restaurants have begun appearing on Washington Boulevard between Fairfax Avenue and National Boulevard in Culver City, less than a mile to the south of Little Ethiopia.

For many years, and even by some people to this today, the neighborhood has been known as South Fairfax. In 2004, former Los Angeles Mayor James K. Hahn officially bestowed the name "Little Ethiopia" on the neighborhood.

Distribution of Ethiopian themed Big Read buttons and participant sign up to receive a free book and participate as on line book club members.

For more information please email nlegesse@lecrc-la.com or call 310.633.4830, or visit, littleethio.com
37TH ANNUAL WATTS TOWERS DAY OF THE DRUM FESTIVAL

Watts Towers Arts Center

When: Saturday, September 29, 2019  
10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Site: Watts Towers Arts Center  
1727 East 107th Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90002

Cost: Free

Info: The NEA Big Read Program in LA hosts a pop-up booth at the 37th Annual Drum Festival at the historic Watts Towers. This year’s title by Dinaw Mengestu, The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, explores the topics of migration, memory, displacement, and the pursuit of the American Dream. Visitors to the Big Read booth will receive a free bookmark and information about the NEA Big Read Program. All visitors are invited to sign up to receive a free copy of the book and to join the largest citywide book club in Los Angeles.

A day-long celebration featuring international percussion: Latin, Japanese, African, Jazz, Native American, and other drummers. This year’s event will honor Ndugu Chancler. Tours of the historic Watts Towers will be offered throughout the day.

The Watts Towers is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA).

For more information, call 213.847.4646
GRAND PARK’S OUR LA VOICES

Place It! Workshop

When:          Saturday, April 20, 2019
               Sunday, April 21, 2019

Site:         Grand Park in Downtown LA
               200 North Grand Avenue
               Los Angeles, CA 90012

Cost:         Free and Open to the Public

Info:         The Big Read Program in LA will host an interactive workshop, Place It!, led by urban planner James Rojas. Inspired by this year’s Big Read title, The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears, by Dinaw Mengestu, this dynamic and participatory experience will explore topics such as memory, place, and where we come from and where we settle.

The workshop uses model-building, storytelling, art making, and play to build community. People of all ages will better understand their physical and emotional connection to our shared built environment.

Grand Park’s Our L.A. Voices – L.A. Arts Festival is a weekend-long arts gathering that focuses exclusively on the diverse and powerful artistic talent in Los Angeles County. This year’s theme is “Origin Stories.” Envisioned as an annual “best of L.A. arts festival,” this free performing and visual arts showcase will bring dance, music and theatre performances as well as visual artwork by L.A. artists to Grand Park every spring. Grand Park’s Our L.A. Voices will serve as a home for L.A. artists, underlining Grand Park’s commitment to L.A.’s creative communities.

For more information about Place It, visit placeit.org

For more information about Grand Park’s OUR LA VOICES, visit grandparkla.org
LOS ANGELES TIMES FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

When: Saturday, April 13, 2019; 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
      Sunday, April 14, 2019: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Site: University of Southern California
      Los Angeles, CA, 90019

Cost: Free and Open to the Public

Info: The NEA Big Read Program in LA returns to the popular Los Angeles Times Festival of Books for its 23rd annual event. Join book lovers to learn, taste, be inspired, make art, shop and explore.

Stop by the Department of Cultural Affairs booth in the popular Family and Children Zone to learn about public, citywide, and culturally diverse Big Read Program in LA activities focused on this year’s book selection of Dinaw Mengestu’s The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears. Visitors will receive a Big Read bookmark and other educational and cultural materials from DCA.

For more information about the Festival of Books, visit:
events.latimes.com/festivalofbooks/

For more information about the Big Read booth at the Festival of Books, call 213.202.5567, or email elizabeth.morin@lacity.org
COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Little Ethiopia Cultural & Resource Center (LECRC)

When: Sunday, April 28, 2019

Site: Little Ethiopia Cultural & Resource Center
1037 South Fairfax Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Cost: Free

Info: The Little Ethiopia Cultural and Resource Center (LECRC) will host a family and community day to cap this year’s NEA Big Read Program in LA. The event will include a walking tour of Little Ethiopia; an exhibition of art by local Ethiopian artists; music; dance; and traditional dishes from Ethiopia. An Ethiopian coffee ceremony and book discussion will also be offered.

LECRC is one of this year’s NEA Big Read Program’s primary partners. Angelenos are invited to visit the LECRC and to check out the center’s many programs, such as the free monthly programs, Second Sundays (sidewalk sales, Ethiopian cuisine, and coffee ceremonies), and First Thursdays (art activities for all ages, free African dance classes, and more).

- 1st Thursdays March 3, 2019 and April 4, 2019
- 2nd Sundays March 10, 2019 and April 14, 2019

The mission of the LECRC is to advance the social, economic and cultural well-being of Ethiopians and other communities in the Greater Los Angeles Region through a comprehensive community development strategy that includes advocacy, self-sufficiency, economic development, affordable housing, promotion of small businesses, neighborhood empowerment, social services and cultural education, and preservation.

For more information visit: lecrc-la.com/
The Los Angeles Public Library provides free and easy access to information, ideas, books and technology that enrich, educate and empower every individual in our city’s diverse communities.

For more information about events at Library Branches, please contact the branch by visiting lapl.org.

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 23, 2019, 4:00 pm
Arroyo Seco Regional Branch Library
6145 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90042

ETHIOPIAN HERITAGE PROGRAM - FOOD AND DANCE- OPEN MIC READINGS AND BOOK DISCUSSIONS
Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 4:00 pm
Ascot Branch Library
120 West Florence Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90003

BOOK CLUB
Tuesday, March 26, 2019, 1:00 pm
Atwater Village Branch Library
3379 Glendale Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90039

ADULT BOOK CLUB - BOOK CLUB SELECTION/DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 23, 2019, 3:00 pm
Cahuenga Branch Library Adult Literacy
4591 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90029

CHINATOWN - THE REEL/REAL STORY
Saturday, March 16, 2019, 1:00 pm
Central Library – Art Music Recreation
630 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071
DISCUSSION PROGRAM: TEENS CAN TALK ABOUT GENTRIFICATION AND THIS BOOK. PARTICIPANTS IN RENTER'S RIGHTS AND FAIR HOUSING AND/OR NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY GROUPS WILL ATTEND AND TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY DO.
Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 4:00 pm
Central Library – Teen'Scape
630 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071

A DISCUSSION OF REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION. PRESENTED IN CONNECTION TO APRIL 24TH “GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE DAY”
Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 4:00 pm
Canoga Park
20939 Sherman Way
Los Angeles, CA 91303

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF THE CHATSWORTH BRANCH BOOK CLUB IN A THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION OF “THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS THAT HEAVEN BEARS”
Wednesday, March 6, 2019; 1:30 pm
Chatsworth Branch Library
21052 Devonshire St
Los Angeles, CA 91311

FILM SCREENING -- “THE LAMB” A CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED ETHIOPIAN FEATURE FILM TELLING THE STORY OF A YOUNG A HALF-JEWISH ETHIOPIAN BOY WHO IS SENT BY HIS FATHER TO LIVE AMONG DISTANT RELATIVES AFTER HIS MOTHER'S DEATH.
Thursday, March 14, 2019; 1:30 pm
Chatsworth Branch Library
21052 Devonshire St
Los Angeles, CA 91311

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 16, 2019, 1:00 pm
Echo Park Branch Library
1410 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90026

BOOK CLUB
Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 10:30 am
Fairfax Branch Library
161 South Gardner Street
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Wednesday, February 27, 2019, 6:00 pm  
**Felipe De Neve Branch Library**  
2820 West Sixth Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90057  

**IT ALL STARTS WITH MOTHER--THE MEMORY BOX**  
Saturday, March 23, 2019, 2:00 pm  
**Granada Hills Branch Library**  
10640 Petit Avenue  
Granada Hills, CA 91344  

FILM SCREENING: “THE GOOD LIE” -- SUDANESE ORPHANS THEO, HIS SIBLINGS AND OTHER SURVIVORS MAKE A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TO A REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA. THIRTEEN YEARS LATER, THE GROUP GETS THE CHANCE TO SETTLE IN THE U.S.  
Saturday, March 9, 2019, 3:15 pm  
**Harbor City – Harbor Gateway Branch Library**  
24000 South Western Avenue  
Harbor City, CA 90710  

FILM SCREENING: “THE GOOD LIE” -- SUDANESE ORPHANS THEO, HIS SIBLINGS AND OTHER SURVIVORS MAKE A DIFFICULT JOURNEY TO A REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA. THIRTEEN YEARS LATER, THE GROUP GETS THE CHANCE TO SETTLE IN THE U.S.  
TO BE FOLLOWED BY BOOK DISCUSSION  
Sunday, February 10, 2019, 12:00 pm  
**Hollywood Regional Branch Library**  
1623 Ivar Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90028  

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION OF THE BOOK LED BY STEPHANIE D. BURRUS, AN INSTRUCTOR AT LA SOUTHWEST COLLEGE  
Friday, April 12, 2019, 12:00 PM  
**Hyde Park Branch Library**  
2205 West Florence Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90043  

BOOK CLUB  
April 9, 2019 6:30 pm  
**John C Fremont Branch Library**  
6121 Melrose Ave  
Los Angeles, CA 90038  

PUZZLE ART
Thursday, April 4, 2019, 4:00 pm
Junipero Serra Branch Library
4607 South Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90037

FILM SCREENING: GOODBYE SOLO -- A SENEGALESE CAB DRIVER NAMED SOLO IS WORKING IN NORTH CAROLINA TO PROVIDE A BETTER LIFE FOR HIS YOUNG FAMILY

Friday, April 19, 2019, 2:00 pm
Little Tokyo Branch Library
203 South Los Angeles Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION FOR ADULTS AND TEENS
Tuesday, March 26, 2019, 4:00 pm
Malabar Branch Library
2801 Wabash Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90033

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Friday, March 1, 2019, 1:00 pm
Memorial Branch Library
4625 West Olympic Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90019

ART WORKSHOP AROUND GENTRIFICATION
Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 3:30 pm
North Hollywood Regional Branch Library
5211 Tujunga Avenue
North Hollywood, CA 91601

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Wednesday, March 13, 2019, 1:00 pm
Northridge Branch Library
9051 Darby Avenue
Northridge, CA 91325

BOOK CLUB
Wednesday, February 13, 2019, 2:00 pm (Book giveaway)
Sunday, March 3, 2019, 2:00 pm (Book discussion)
Pacoima Branch Library
13605 Van Nuys Boulevard
Pacoima, CA 91331
BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 9, 2019, 10:00 am
Palisades Branch Library
861 Alma Real Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90272

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Saturday, April 6, 2019, 10:00 am
Porter Ranch Branch Library
11371 Tampa Avenue
Northridge, CA 91326

COLLAGE WORKSHOP: HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF, YOUR FAMILY, OR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
Friday, April 12, 2019, 2:00 pm
Robertson Branch Library
1719 South Robertson Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90035

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Thursday, March 21, 2019, 12:30 pm
Sunland-Tujunga Branch Library
7771 Foothill Boulevard
Tujunga, CA 91042

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION
Wednesday, March 20, 2019, 6:30 pm
Studio City Branch Library
12511 Moorpark Street
Los Angeles, CA 91604

A FILM SCREENING AND BOOK GIVEAWAY
FILM: “THE LANDLORD” – A YOUNG LANDLORD BUYS AN INNER-CITY TENEMENT IN PARK SLOPE, BROOKLYN, WHICH IS UNDERGOING GENTRIFICATION, PLANNING TO EVICT THE OCCUPANTS AND CONSTRUCT A LUXURY HOME FOR HIMSELF. TO BE FOLLOWED BY A DISCUSSION. BOOK DISSEMINATED THROUGHOUT THE MONTH OF MARCH.
Saturday, April 6, 2019, 2:30 pm
Van Nuys Branch Library
6250 Sylmar Avenue
Van Nuys, CA 91401

PANEL BOOK DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 9, 2019, 12:00 pm
Washington Irving Library Branch Library
4117 West Washington Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90018

ETHIOPIAN CRAFT/ART FOR YOUNG ADULTS
Saturday, March 9, 2019, 2:00 pm
Washington Irving Library Branch Library
4117 West Washington Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90018

BOOK CLUB
Wednesday, March 20, 2019, 11:00 am
Wilmington Branch Library
1300 North Avalon Boulevard
Wilmington, CA 90744

BOOK DISCUSSION
Saturday, March 23, 2019, 3:00 pm
Wilmington Branch Library
1300 North Avalon Boulevard
Wilmington, CA 90744

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS
Wednesday, April 3, 2019, 6:30 pm
Westchester Branch Library
7114 West Manchester Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90045

BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION ON THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE
Wednesday, February 20, 2019, 6:00 pm
Westwood Branch Library
1246 Glendon Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
School partners are key to the success of DCA’s **Big Read Program in Los Angeles** and to fulfilling the mission of the **NEA Big Read**, our nation’s literacy initiative. Since 2008, the program has grown to include new schools and to reach a growing number of students in middle schools and high schools. Books read as part of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) **Big Read Program in Los Angeles** have included: *The Maltese Falcon* by Dashiell Hammett; *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan; *Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Mexican Short Stories; The Thief and The Dogs* by Naguib Mahfouz; *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston; *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri; *Into the Beautiful North* by Luis Alberto Urrea; *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury; and *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankin.

Participating schools receive educational materials for teachers and students, including a Teacher’s Guide, a Reader’s Guide, a Big Read banner, bookmarks, and a copy of this year’s book, for every student. The Big Read title is a part of the curriculum with lessons to further enrich students’ experiences and interpretations of the book. Each school hosts either a related activity or event inspired by the book, such as a community festival, a film screening, an exhibition of artwork, a public reading of creative writing pieces, culinary components, field trips, artmaking sessions, and more.

Schools are part of the larger “Big Read Community” in Los Angeles, and are invited to enjoy a range of public events held throughout the city during the months of March, April, and May.

The Big Read in Schools Program promotes intra-cultural exchange, celebrates cultural connections, and fosters civic engagement. It also places an emphasis on students as catalysts for creativity and interaction.

In 2018-2019, DCA’s **Big Read Program in Los Angeles** partner schools include:

**Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts**
450 North Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sixty-six students from Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts received the title *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu. The school connected with issues of gentrification and immigration and structured a visual arts and literary program around those themes. A Pop-Up Art Exhibit and Workshop entitled *Our Stories: Stories of Displacement* is planned for Thursday, March 14th, 2pm-6pm at Cortines Concert Hall Lobby (1st and 2nd floor). The purpose will be to connect personal narratives of international and/or local displacement with the themes of Dinaw Mengestu’s *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*. Students will create written works.
and 3D/2D art works dealing with their own experiences of displacement or that of someone that they know.

In addition, a partnership with community organizations will produce a community workshop on current immigration issues. Partners will include the Parent Center, the local community Roman Catholic Church, La Placita, which tends to have a large immigrant and working class population and CHIRLA (Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles).

Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts is a young school dedicated to the idea that students can be both scholars and artists. We provide our students with ample opportunity to develop themselves artistically in one of the four art forms: visual, theater, music, and dance while providing them with the rigor of college preparatory courses.

For more information please call 213.241.1000 or visit central-lausd-ca.schoolloop.com

Franklin High School
820 North Avenue 54
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Two-hundred and ninety-eight students of Franklin High School requested copies of *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu. This school took several approaches to the book through visual art, personal written stories, neighborhood oral history collections, immigration research and dramatic performances.

The Mighty Panthers Book Club of Franklin High School will be working on their own interpretation of what gentrification means to them through art. They will collaborate with the art teacher to submit the art pieces to Studio Satellite Gallery located in Ave 50, Highland Park. Students will create art and writing pieces around some of the issues of the book that also greatly affect them in Los Angeles (particularly in Highland Park): gentrification, immigration, and the American Dream. The final project will be shared via the school newspaper and/or school art exhibition.

Other students will create oral histories of Highland Park by speaking with family, neighbors, and community members, including business owners, with the specific purpose of highlighting ethnic and class shifts in the neighborhood over the last 10-20 years.

The American Literature class will have students do research on immigration and specifically African immigration and the situations that brought them to this country.
They will work in groups and present to class. In addition some theater students will create original scenes based on issues brought up in the book.

Benjamin Franklin High School is a public high school in the Highland Park neighborhood, approximately seven miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles, California, United States. It is part of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

For more information please call 323.550.2000 or visit franklinhs.org

**Lincoln High School**

3501 North Broadway
Los Angeles, CA 90031

Eighty students from Lincoln High School approached *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu through the concept of social justice. Students from VOICE (Victory Over Ignorance through Culture and Education) will read the book as part of their curriculum. Lincoln High School has been a participant of the *Big Read Program in LA* since the initiative’s inception in 2008-2009. Their goal is to create a multi-ethnic festival that addresses the themes of gentrification, immigration and displacement.

Lincoln High School’s vision and mission are to prepare literate, responsible, and thoughtful students. Lincoln strives to graduate all students ready for college and careers.

**Mendez High School**

1200 Plaza Del Sol
Los Angeles, CA 90033

One-hundred and eight students of Mendez High School took the theme of immigration and gentrification of *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu and merged it into its annual festival. In addition the book will be interpreted through art, poetry, and theatrical presentations. Creative Expressions on the Immigration and Gentrification Issue will be one of the featured programs at Mendez Neo-Classic. Approaching its 7th year, Mendez Neo-Classic is a festival of student-inspired, student-produced academic and artistic projects, exhibitions, and performances. The Mendez Book Club, will present an interpretation of *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* by Dinaw Mengestu through visual art; poetry; and an adapted screenplay based on the themes in the book as part of a culminating project. The themes in this novel hit close to home for many students of Boyle Heights dealing with both immigration issues and gentrification. Activities will include poetry readings and blackout poetry. The culmination event will take place Friday May 24, 2019, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Mendez High School opened on September 8, 2009. The fruit of community activism, Mendez is the first high school in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) built in Boyle Heights in 85 years.

For more information, please call 323.981.5400 or visit mendezhs.org.

Verdugo Hills High School
Library and Research Center
10625 Plainview Avenue
Tujunga, CA 91042

One-hundred and forty students of the combined Verdugo Hills Library book club, creative writing club and AP class will read The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears by Dinaw Megenstu through the lenses of open discussions on urban renewal, cultural differences, and memories of home.

The clubs will host a joint program of reading and discussions. It will all culminate in a program to celebrate the themes of the book.

Verdugo Hills High School is a comprehensive four-year public high school located in the scenic twin community of Sunland-Tujunga, a suburban section of northern Los Angeles nestled in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. There are over 1400 students enrolled at Verdugo in grades 9 through 12. They range in age from 14 to 18 years. The school serves the local communities of Sunland, Tujunga, Shadow Hills, Lake View Terrace, La Tuna Canyon and parts of Sun Valley.

For more information please call 818.951.5400 or visit verdugohs.org

Whitman High School
7795 Rosewood Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Seventeen students of Whitman High School examined the book The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears by Dinaw Mengestu by comparing the changing landscape of Los Angeles and comparing it to the changes the characters in the book experienced in their neighborhood of Washington DC. Students will be taking a field trip to the Natural History Museum to see the exhibit Becoming Los Angeles. They will also visit the African American Art Museum. A teaching artist will facilitate an arts project with the students that focus on immigration.

Committed to creating an environment that promotes achievement, pride and individuality. Walt Whitman provides each student with a rigorous individualized
instructional program in accordance with the state standards. Students will be active learners able to demonstrate what they have learned.

For more information please call 323.651.0645 Phone or visit: whitmanhs-lausd-ca.schoolloop.com
Carol Cellucci

Carol Cellucci received her M.A. in English/Poetry from the Creative Writing program at San Francisco State University. While still a student she was a runner up in the Browning Poetry contest and the Academy of American Poets contest. She has taught poetry at Santa Fe Community College where she initiated its Creative Writing program, and at the University of New Mexico/Los Alamos in New Mexico. While in Santa Fe she enjoyed her time with young students teaching Poetry in the Schools. For over 16 years she has taught Creative Writing and Composition at Moorpark College in California. Currently, she is teaching Creative Writing and is in her second year of a new journal course (“Writing for Your Life”) at Barnsdall Art Center.

This winter she looks forward to teaching in NEA the Big Read program. This ten-week course includes a novel and will utilize writing genres such as poetry and journaling as well as techniques in the craft writing. The class will also embrace other arts (dance, music, and painting) as students offer their impressions and appreciation of those who have come from other countries to make their home in and around our beloved Los Angeles.

Her work has appeared in Ms. Magazine, Colorado Quarterly, Kansas Quarterly, Poetry Project Newsletter and The Little Magazine. Her articles have appeared in: Daily Variety, Inside Events (quarterly supplement of the New York Times), 1st Hold Magazine, Fund Raising Management (cover story), and Variety magazine.

Carol is currently working on a book entitled Raw Writing that features the work of students who have taken part in her journal and creative writing classes. By responding to prompts in a short period of 15-20 minutes, she has discovered these results yield power, authenticity, and often surpass highly crafted work that can hold its place in the arena of the written word.

Dorothy Randall Gray: Poet, Author, Advocate
dorothyrandallgray.com

Dorothy Randall Gray is this year’s poet in residence, leading creative writing workshops.

From Brooklyn to Bombay, Iceland to India Dorothy enthralls audiences with her dramatic poetry performances, spellbinding stories and captivating humor. Writers rave about her inspiring workshops, and insightful professional guidance. Nikki Giovanni, Luisah Teish, and Larry Dossey have all lauded her transformational work.

She has facilitated creative writing, personal development, and empowerment sessions for women's groups, incarcerated youth, homeless populations, professional writing associations, HIV positive men, cancer survivors, university students, and business executives. Countless
radio and TV programs, cafes, colleges and conferences have featured Dorothy's work. She has presented her dynamic workshops, inspiring seminars and keynote speeches at spiritual, cultural business and health establishments.

Dorothy is author of the acclaimed bestseller, Soul Between the Lines: Freeing Your Creative Spirit Through Writing (Avon/HarperCollins.) Her other published works include Muse Blues, Woman, Creative Rituals for Daily Living, Family, The Passion Collection, and A Taste of Tamarinda. She has been a contributor to the NY Times, Conditions, Personal Journaling, Heart & Soul, Drum Voices, SisterFire, HealthQuest and many other anthologies and periodicals.

Countless radio and TV programs, cafes, colleges and conferences have featured Dorothy's work. She has presented her dynamic workshops, inspiring seminars and keynote speeches at spiritual, cultural, business and health establishments. She is a former Poet-in-Residence at Hunter College, NYU faculty member and National Public Radio commentator. Dorothy is also an award winning jewelry designer, certified life coach, and co-founder of Women Writers and Artists Matrix.

For years Dorothy has been an advocate for spiritual activism, personal empowerment, transformational creativity, and global healing. To implement this passion she founded the Heartland Institute for Transformation. She has since shared the dais with the Dalai Lama, served as a UNESCO delegate, and supplied African schools with writing implements.

Among the numerous venues that have enjoyed Dorothy's creative works are Columbia University, Carnegie Mellon Institute, Claremont Colleges, Huntington Women's Studies Association, the United Nations, PEN America, Nuyorican Poets Café, The Center for Policy Studies, The Kitchen, International Center for Cultural Studies, Open Center, Yari Yari Pamberi, and NYC Museum of Natural History.

Adenike Harris: Speaker, Writer, Empowerment Coach

Adenike A. Harris is the Creative Pathways Manager for artworxLA, a model arts education organization serving underserved youth in Los Angeles. After graduating in 2015, from New Ventures West in San Francisco, she became a Certified Professional Integral Empowerment Coach. She earned her Master’s Degree in Women’s Studies in 2011 at Georgia State University, and graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology from Mount St. Mary’s University in Maryland. Her Master’s thesis, illustrates how she initiated a ‘call-and-response’ dialogue with her biological father, as a healing strategy. In September 2018 Adenike was a TEDx Pasadena Speaker and in November 2018 a Guest on The Rock Newman Show, on WHUT a PBS affiliated channel. Adenike was a contributing writer to the #LoveWITHAccountability, Forum, and the Atlanta Abusive Relationships Examiner column. She has also been published by J’Adore Magazine and Pasadena Weekly Online. Adenike A. Harris has passionately helped to
protect, heal and guide individuals towards success in their lives despite their circumstances and experiences.

**Miriam Mereba: Musician, Storyteller, Performer**

Mereba is a multifaceted musician with the life story of a young rolling stone. Her unique blend of styles sets the stage for a new take on alternative R&B that Mereba has handcrafted as a standout vocalist, songwriter, rapper, guitarist, producer, and all around storyteller. Moving around as an adolescent, living up and down the east coast of the United States and in the capital city of her father's native Ethiopia, the “rolling stoner” found a home in creation and observing her ever-changing surroundings. As an artist, she blossomed in Atlanta, Georgia as an honorary member of Spillage Village, alongside frequent collaborators J.I.D., 6lack, and Earthgang. She eventually made her way to Los Angeles and is in the process of recording her next collection of music, which will be her debut release through Interscope Records. The diverse influences she credits, ranging from Stevie Wonder to Lauryn Hill, from Bob Dylan to Lil Wayne help her blend her craft into an introspective take on current music, made from a millennial state of mind.

**James Rojas: Urban Planner, Community Activist, and Artist**

James Rojas has developed an innovative public-engagement and community-visioning method that uses art-making as its medium. Through this method he has engaged thousands of people by facilitating over four hundred workshops and building over fifty interactive models around the world - from the streets of New York and San Francisco, to Mexico, Canada, Europe, and South America. He has collaborated with municipalities, non-profits, community groups, educational institutions, and museums, to engage, educate, and empower the public on transportation, housing, open space, and health issues.

Rojas is also one of the few nationally recognized urban planners to examine U.S. Latino cultural influences on urban design and sustainability. He has written and lectured extensively on how culture and immigration are transforming the American front yard and landscape. He is the founder of the Latino Urban Forum, an advocacy group dedicated to increasing awareness around planning and design issues facing low-income Latinos.

Rojas has lectured and facilitated workshops at MIT, Berkeley, Harvard, Cornell, and numerous other colleges and universities. His installation work has been shown at the Los Museum of Contemporary Art, The Institute of Contemporary Art / Boston, the Venice Biennale, the Exploratorium, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Bronx Museum of Art, and the Getty. His research has appeared in The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times, Dwell, Places, and in numerous books.
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Los Angeles Times Festival of Books
Los Angeles Unified School District:
  Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts
  Franklin High School
  Lincoln High School
  Mendez High School
  Verdugo Hills High School
  Walt Whitman High School
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County (NHMLA)
Sony Pictures Media Arts Program at:
  Banning’s Landing Community Cultural Center
  Center for the Arts, Eagle Rock
  Pacoima City Hall
  Watts Towers Arts Center / Charles Mingus Youth Arts Center
  William Reagh Los Angeles Photography Center
The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears is very much about America - it just happens to have African and Ethiopian characters, and in fact, it happens to have more characters who are not Ethiopian than who are.

— Dinesh D'Souza —

The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest.

Generous support provided by SONY Pictures Entertainment.