

NEWS RELEASE

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SUFFOLK PUBLIC LIBRARY TO HOST LIFT EVERY VOICE: WHY AFRICAN AMERICAN POETRY MATTERS VIRTUAL EVENT

SUFFOLK, VA (October 2, 2020) Suffolk Public Library invites community members to join them for Open Your Eyes, an evening of Poetic Reflections with local talent, Nathan Richardson, Sylvia Bond and Kween Yakini. Panelists will talk about the Black experience and how that has been reflected in poetry and beyond with a focus on *Malcolm X* by Gwendolyn Brooks, and *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* by Langston Hughes. The virtual event will take place through Facebook Live on the Library's Facebook Page on Friday, October 16, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. A recorded version will be posted to Facebook and YouTube following the event for those unable to attend.

"With the current state of the country, it is important to provide platforms for folks to have conversations about the Black American experience," says Tiffany A. Duck, Manager of Library Locations. "In communities of color, poetry has always served as an important vehicle for self-expression, to communicate, to educate, and share ideas."

This program is part of *Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters*, a national public humanities initiative of Library of America presented in partnership with The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, with generous support from

The National Endowment for the Humanities, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Emerson Collective.

Open Your Eyes is funded by the *Lift Every Voice: Why African American Poetry Matters* grant which Suffolk Public Library received in the spring from Library of America Foundation. The total grant amount of \$1,200 was awarded to the Library to initiate two programs that explore the African American poetry tradition. The primary objectives are to explore that tradition, the perspectives it offers on American history, and the response to African Americans over three centuries. As part of the grant, the Library will also receive a copy of *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song*, an anthology published by Library of America in September.

About the Panelists:

Nathan M. Richardson is a published author, performance poet, and Douglass Historian. His poetry collections include "Likeness of Being", "Twenty-one Imaginary T-shirts", and "Voices from the Wombs of Wisdom." His work has been widely re-published in anthologies, magazines, and newspapers such as the Channel Marker, The Cupola, Coastal Virginia Magazine, and the Washington Post. Nathan teaches a variety of workshops for emerging writers, and is the creator and host of the Poetry, Prose & Pizza Open Mic series. Nathan is a former coach and current ambassador-at-large for the Hampton Roads Youth Poets.

Sylvia Bond is a retired school teacher from the Suffolk Public School System. After her 37 years of service in 2016, she began to substitute throughout the schools on all levels. She is the published author of a book of inspirational poems, "Verses from the Heart," and a children's book, "Robbie's First Trip to the Zoo." Ms. Bond is also an inspirational speaker, gospel minister, and a dramatist. A recipient of many awards, including the NAACP ACT-SO award, Ms. Bond has helped many youth find and express their voices in the Black Experience through poetry, easy writing, and drama. In addition, Ms. Bond volunteers for many charitable groups.

Sharran C. Taylor, also known as Kween Yakini, is an Indie Author and a seasoned Spoken Word Artist. Her published collections are “Woke: A Poetric Journey”, and “Ode To The Punani: Sensual Rising.” She is also the recipient of the revered “Nat Turner Library” book award for her “Woke” collection. Sharran stands ready to support the performing arts community by giving her time to elevate the stature of poetry and using her voice to inspire others.

To learn more about the Suffolk Public Library, visit www.suffolkpubliclibrary.com. Follow the Library on Twitter @SufPubLib, and check for updates on Facebook at Facebook.com/SuffolkPublicLibrary. Subscribe to Suffolk Public Library’s YouTube Channel to access a collection of digital classes.

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