

I, Too, Sing America

Langston Hughes

Black History Month Film Festival

February 2023

13 Films | 4 Weekends | Free Admissions

Scottsdale Bahá'í Faith Community Center
6910 E Shea Blvd, Scottsdale, AZ 85254 | (480) 219-3281

Showtimes & Registration @

<https://www.scottsdalebahai.org/blackhistory2023>

SPONSORED BY PUBLIC DISCOURSE & SOCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE OF THE
BAHAIS OF SCOTTSDALE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ARIZONA FAITH NETWORK,
NAACP-MARICOPA COUNTY BRANCH, AND PROJECT HUMANITIES/ASU



ASU Project
Humanities
Arizona State University



Welcome!

The Bahá'ís of Scottsdale, AZ, welcome you to our Community Center and are proud to sponsor with our partners the *I, Too, Sing America* Black History Month Film Festival that celebrates Black History as American History. Dawning in mid-19th century Persia and established in the United States by 1895, the Bahá'í Faith upholds the essential oneness of humankind predicated on justice, education, gender equality, harmony between science and religion, and the elimination of racial prejudice that is notably referred to as America's "most vital and challenging issue." The *Guiding Principles* included in this program – truthfulness, justice, oneness, unity – are taken from the sacred Bahá'í Writings.

I, Too*

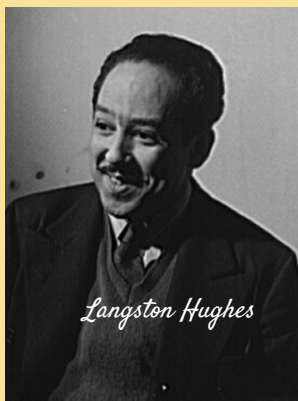
I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.



*He Who is your Lord,
the All-Merciful,
cherisheth in His heart
the desire of beholding
the entire human race
as one soul and one
body. — Bahá'u'lláh*

I, too, sing America captures the aspirations motivating this film festival: That America – as a country, idea, and ideal in waiting – must seat everyone at her table. Building on programming by the Public Discourse & Social Action Task Force of the Bahá'ís of Scottsdale to further human rights, interfaith understanding, and racial unity, the film festival offers the chance to learn about the African American experience through the art of cinema. Today's proliferation of streaming media options makes watching movies at home with those who typically share our experiences and points of view easier than ever. The *I, Too, Sing America* Film Festival creates a space for the meaningful conversations that follow – with people we might not otherwise encounter – as we strive towards realizing a racially just and unified community. The thematic outline underscoring the film selections is inspired by the publication *Dream A World Anew: The African American Experience and the Shaping of America* that accompanied the 2016 opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

*From *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, published by Knopf and Vintage Books. Copyright © 1994 by the Estate of Langston Hughes. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated.

Why does Black History Month occur in February?

Black History Month dates back to 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), established “Negro History Week” during the second week of February because it encompasses the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass – both great American symbols of freedom.



BRIEF TIMELINE:

- **1912:** Dr. Woodson forms ASALH
- **1926:** Dr. Woodson establishes Negro History Week, the precursor to Black History Month.
- **1969:** Black History Month is first proposed by black educators and students at Kent State University.
- **1976:** First federal observance is held when Gerald Ford proclaims, “In the Bicentennial year of our Independence, we can review with admiration the impressive contributions of black Americans to our national life....”
- **1986:** U.S. Congress designates February as “National Black History Month.” Ronald Reagan issues Presidential Proclamation 5443 stating “the foremost purpose of Black History Month is to make all Americans aware of this struggle for freedom and equal opportunity.”

Learn more: <https://asalh.org/about-us/about-black-history-month/>

2023 Theme: Black Resistance

According to ASALH, “African Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms, especially the racial terrorism of lynching, racial pogroms, and police killings since our arrival upon these shores.” In steadfastly resisting, “Black people have achieved triumphs, successes, and progress as seen in the end of chattel slavery, dismantling of Jim and Jane Crow segregation in the South, increased political representation at all levels of government, desegregation of educational institutions, the passage of Civil Rights Act of 1964, the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture in DC and increased and diverse representation of Black experiences in media. Black resistance strategies have served as a model for every other social movement in the country, thus, the legacy and importance of these actions cannot be understated.” Learn more at <https://asalh.org/black-history-themes/>.



WEEKEND ONE:

Slavery & Freedom through the Civil War

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: TRUTH

Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtue.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

While race as a biological construct is unequivocally false, the social and economic realities of racism have been a plague on the peace and tranquility of humankind since antiquity. However, the saga of the people of African descent in the Americas represents a form of chattel slavery that is unique in human history, obstructing our inherent nobility as we continue to misunderstand our true reality – that there is only one race, the human race, and we are essentially one people.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: Segments from *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (TV-PG) and *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (TV-PG) followed by audience discussion.
Facilitator: Professor Greg McAllister

BREAK

6:00 - 9:00 pm: *12 Years a Slave* (R) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Professor Greg McAllister

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Harriet* (PG-13) followed by audience discussion.
Facilitator: Professor Greg McAllister

BREAK

6:00 - 8:00 pm: *Glory* (R) followed by audience discussion.
Facilitator: Professor Paul Harasha

About the Facilitators

Greg McAllister – *Power of Illusion, Many Rivers to Cross, 12 Years a Slave and Harriet* | Greg is a historian, musician, and artist who strives to bring greater understanding of race unity through the intellect and the arts. He currently is a faculty in the Ethnic Studies Program at Northern Arizona University teaching courses on African American studies, the history of racial formation in the United States, and race relations in American films. His research has focused on the history of African and Native American relations in the Southwest during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His current teaching and research interests include examining writings and speeches of Hubert Harrison, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King in relation to issues of the 21st century.

Paul Harasha – *Glory* | Paul Harasha has been a professor of sociology at Mesa Community College since 2001. Paul's academic interests include cultural diversity, race relations, gender issues, religious pluralism, social implications of technology and global citizenship. As a professor, Paul's primary goal is to use the sociological perspective to develop and enhance his students' critical thinking skills about the society around them. Paul strives to guide his students in using their own talents to find their path to make a positive impact in their communities. He was named 2017 Mesa Chamber of Commerce Professor of the Year. Residing in Tempe, AZ, Paul has been married 25 years to Lisa, and is father to two sons, Justice, 22 and Noble, 20.

WEEKEND TWO:

The Struggle for Freedom through the Modern Civil Rights Movement

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: JUSTICE

*The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice;
turn not away therefrom if though desirest Me...*
— Bahá'u'lláh

Education at all levels has been embraced as a way for Black people and communities to resist the narrative of intellectual inferiority. Grassroot networks of Black teachers taught students about racial progress and collective responsibility. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) provided a home for the formation of activists, artists, business owners, and educators. HBCU students have been at the forefront of social justice advocacy including the Black Power, Civil Rights, and Black Lives Matter movements.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Free State of Jones* (R) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Ms. Nichet Smith

BREAK

6:00 - 9:00 pm: *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (TV-PG) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Ms. Princess Lucas-Wilson

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Selma* (PG-13) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Dr. Karin Hardin

About the Facilitators

Nichet Smith – *Free State of Jones* | Ms. Smith is Principal of Public Relations, Purchasing and Business Development for Level 3 Design Group in Los Angeles, CA. After graduating from Arizona State University with a Bachelor of Science in Justice Studies and a minor in Spanish, she began her career working closely with Reverend Dr. Leon H. Sullivan, founder of the International Foundation for Education & Self Help (IFESH), an organization dedicated to eradicating poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa, which required Ms. Smith's extensive travel throughout the African continent. Ms. Smith has worked with the White House, Ambassadors, and other Heads of State from all over the world. Her many charitable efforts include traveling to the Middle East on a United Services Organization tour and co-founding R.A.K.E (Random Acts of Kindness) Project Inc., a nonprofit grant making organization.

Princess Lucas-Wilson - *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* | Ms. Lucas-Wilson serves as a Vice President and Chair of the Public Safety Committee for the Maricopa County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) where she conducts quarterly forums on policing/public safety with police departments, reviews law enforcement policies, and works collaboratively with community partners on a range of justice and equity issues. Ms. Lucas-Wilson holds a Master of Social Work and a Certification in Public Management. She has worked as a counselor, practitioner, cultural competency curriculum developer and trainer, and executive in both the public and private sectors. She is currently an instructor in the Mesa Community College Counseling Department and has taught courses in social work, public policy, advocacy, community practice, counseling, and victimology at several community colleges and Arizona State University. She grew up in Phoenix, AZ, and has seen close-up the challenges affecting our communities. Her son is attending law school at Arizona State University.

Dr. Karen Hardin - *Selma* | Dr. Hardin has served as the President of the Maricopa County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since December 2017. She is Maricopa Community Colleges Faculty Emerita where she served thirty-one years as Counseling Faculty, Career Center Director and Faculty Advisor to the NAACP Student Club. Dr. Hardin was voted Outstanding Teacher of the Year and received the Mesa Community College student government Outstanding Advisor Award. She was selected by the YWCA as Educator of the Year in 2005. In 2011, Dr. Hardin was honored as a Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society faculty mentor. She was the founding President of the Maricopa Council on Black American Affairs (MCBAA) and elected as President again in 2008 and 2010. She was honored with the Dr. Martin Luther King Award by Mesa City Parks and Recreation for her support of students and volunteer work in the community. She created the Saturday Super Scholars program to assist low income elementary students in math and science and the Students Striving Towards Excellent Performance (STEP) program that assists high school students with scholarships and their transition into college. Dr. Hardin holds Master of Science degrees in Psychology and Counseling and a Doctorate in Education from Northern Arizona State University. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Incorporated-Delta Beta Omega Chapter, a Life Member of the National Council of Negro Women and the NAACP, a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success and a member of the Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc. Phoenix Chapter. Dr. Hardin is a Missouri State University Hall of Fame Honoree.

WEEKEND THREE:

Making a Way Out of No Way— Resistance, Resilience, Progress

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: ONENESS

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.

— Bahá'u'lláh

The intellectual development of Black people has preserved Black stories, history, and literature while supporting the quest for civil, social, and human rights. The bonding quality of love and human connectedness that transcends the illusion of race has been demonstrated from the very beginnings of the American experience – even when such unions were deemed illegal until 1967 when *Loving v. Virginia* cemented interracial marriage as a Constitutional right. Likewise, while sports naturally draw people together, they have been used as tools of segregation. In step, black athletes have used their platforms to advocate for social issues – at times at great personal and economic cost – ushering in positive change.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Loving* (PG-13) followed by audience discussion.

Facilitator: Ms. Nancy Peace

BREAK

6:00 - 9:00 pm: *42* (PG-13) followed by audience discussion.

Facilitator: Mr. Khalil Rushdan

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Do the Right Thing* (R) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Dr. Neal Lester

About the Facilitators

Nancy Peace - *Loving* | Ms. Peace holds a Bachelor of Science in nutrition from Arizona State University and a Master of Education from Northern Arizona University with a concentration on human relationships. Her career choices have been in food and nutrition and educational development. For many years, Ms. Peace owned and operated a catering and event planning business in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the second half of her career, she focuses on educating our youth in disadvantaged environments. Ms. Peace has served as a school principal and an ELA teacher in K-12 educational settings.

Khalil Rushdan - *42* | Mr. Rushdan is the Programs and Resource Manager with Arizona Democracy Resource Center. He is a community organizer and is responsible for helping thousands of formerly incarcerated individuals through SAGE Counseling's transitional program. Mr. Rushdan has been a reliable leader for the legal community and the private sector by creating programs that bring "real-time" solutions to the community to help empower individuals upon release from incarceration.

Neal A. Lester, PhD – *Do the Right Thing* | Dr. Lester is Foundation Professor of English and Founding Director of the multiple award-winning Project Humanities Initiative at Arizona State University. With expertise in African American literature and culture, Dr. Lester has authored or edited eight books. His pioneering work on the Nword has led him to be the first professor in the U.S. to teach courses on this topic. His expertise on cultural appropriation, humanities, and entrepreneurship is nationally and internationally recognized. An award-winning teacher and popular radio, television, and press guest, Dr. Lester has lectured in Ghana, Pakistan, China, Mexico, Italy, and Korea.

WEEKEND FOUR:

African American Influence on American Culture

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: UNITY

*So powerful is the light of unity
that it can illuminate the whole earth.*

— Bahá'u'lláh

Black artists, writers, photographers, and musicians were the soundtrack and visual representation of resistance movements. These artists used poetry, fiction, short stories, plays, films, and television to counter stereotypes and to envision a present and future with Black people in it. African American spirituals, gospel, folk music, hip-hop, and rap have been used to express struggle, hope, and solidarity in the face of racial oppression. In addition, music has been used to illustrate societal issues, including white and state-sanctioned violence, and sexual politics, as motivation for strength against harassment and to experience freedom.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *A Raisin in the Sun, 1961* (PG) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Dr. Angelita Reyes

BREAK

6:00 - 9:00 pm: *Hidden Figures* (PG) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Ms. Betty Denson

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26th

2:00 - 5:00 pm: *Summer of Soul* (PG-13) followed by audience discussion. Facilitator: Mr. Ramiro Russell

~Stay for celebratory festival closing with food & music.~

About the Facilitators

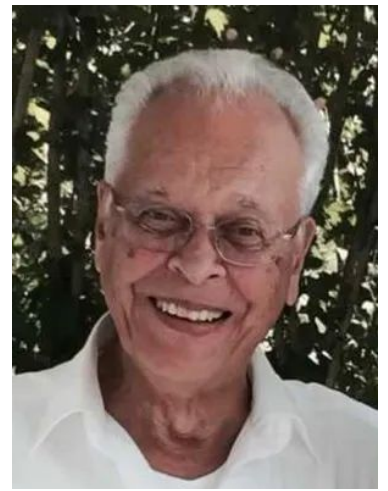
Dr. Angelita Reyes – *A Raisin in the Sun* | Dr. Reyes is Professor Emerita in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. An award-winning author, teacher, and education consultant, Dr. Reyes is a distinct voice in today's national and global arena advocating new approaches for social and organizational transformation. She is the founder and CEO of Literacy InterActives, Inc. (LIA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) through its community engagement and historic preservation initiatives in southern Virginia. Dr. Reyes is the author and producer of numerous articles, digital media presentations, and curated exhibits. She received a Leadership in History Award from the American Association of State and Local Historians (AASLH) for the video conferencing series on preserving African American church histories. Responding to the national reckoning about systemic racism following the killing of George Floyd, she was a commentator on NPR's "Weekend Edition." Dr. Reyes was a Diversity Scholar with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Currently, she is a grant recipient of the renowned National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom initiative supporting the right for all people to self-determination and freedom from oppression.

Betty Denson – *Hidden Figures* | Ms. Denson has dedicated her life to promoting professionalism and excellence through her extensive work in uplifting the lives of others. She has served her community as an instructor promoting the importance of health and wellness to diabetic patients, conducting aerobic exercise programs to patients recovering from heart attacks, and teaching pre/post natal classes. Ms. Denson's passion does not stop at fitness, however. She heads Heritage Africana Travel, a travel agency dedicated to cultural unity by supporting people in the African Diaspora to reconnect with their history. Currently, Ms. Denson is also pursuing her lifelong dream to be a screenwriter. She is motivated and inspired by the numerous people and situations she has encountered throughout her life experiences.

Ramiro Russell – *Summer of Soul* | Mr. Russell is a former trainer to NBA players, athletes and celebrities, and former executive at FOX and NBC TV. He was CEO of JustClickMedia USA, a Southeast Asian Media Firm headquartered in Singapore with offices in India, Malaysia, and the United States. A seasoned motivational speaker and host on R2fact TV, he has been featured several times for his women empowerment and anti-bullying seminars. Mr. Russell is author of *Johnny Wolf*, a children's book on diversity and inclusiveness, and *Domestic Silence*, his personal memoirs on child abuse, surviving domestic violence, and vindication from a wrongful prison conviction. Mr. Russell serves on several nonprofit boards and will be the face of Street of Joy. He will soon graduate with a degree in sociology and pre med minor. He is preparing to take the MCAT and apply to medical school. Mr. Russell has resided in Scottsdale, AZ, for six years with his wife of 19 years, Azuin, and two teenage daughters.

In Memoriam ~ Dr. Donald T. Street

As an African American educator, author, scholar, and Bahá'í since his youth, Don Streets made significant contributions to building race unity in Scottsdale, AZ, and beyond. He worked for 14 years as the associate director of the Bahá'í-inspired Anisa Educational Program and supported the Townsend International School in the Czech Republic. He served as the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies at National University and was a beloved principal in the Mesa Public Schools (AZ). Don received his doctorate at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His legacy is felt worldwide, and this film festival honors his memory.



Film Festival Planning Group: L-R John Dugas, Nicolas Mentha, Angelita Reyes, Nancy Peace, Paulette Smith, Jerome Johnson, Sheila Afnan-Manns, Tess Ridgway and Willie Manns. Not pictured: Greg McAllister and Nichet Smith.

Artwork: Growing up in 1970s East Harlem, NYC, William "Spray" Manns is a progenitor of Hip Hop culture, break dancing in venues around New York City with his crew, the *High Voltage Rockers*, and garnering a reputation as a top graffiti artist whose work influenced everyone from kids in the community to Keith Haring. Willie attended the Fashion Institute of Technology and has used his craft to inspire young people in schools, the Boys & Girls Clubs, and in the Bahá'í community. He holds a Master of Occupational Therapy and resides in Scottsdale, AZ, with his wife of 27 years, Sheila, and their 19 year old son, Liam.



ASU Project Humanities
Arizona State University

Sponsored By: The Public Discourse & Social Action Task Force of the Bahá'ís of Scottsdale in partnership with the Arizona Faith Network, NAACP – Maricopa County Branch, and Project Humanities/ASU.

