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PRESS RELEASE

August Wilson Center hosts 2nd annual Harambee Read Aloud to celebrate The Big Read in Pittsburgh

United States Postal Service to unveil latest African American legend immortalized in Black Heritage stamp series

Pittsburgh, PA—February 12, 2008—The August Wilson Center continues its city-wide Big Read celebration of renowned author Zora Neale Hurston with the second annual Harambee Read Aloud on Wednesday, February 20, from 5 to 7 pm at the Homewood branch of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, 7101 Hamilton Ave.

This family event, a co-presentation with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, is an energetic and interactive **celebration of Black History Month through reading**. Participants will hear one man's story to find three people more foolish than his fiancée and her parents in Hurston's fantastic tall tale, *The Six Fools*. Ann Tanksley, a native of Homewood and the illustrator of this wonderful children's book, will be the special guest narrator. Bring the whole family to this event, as there will be puppets, painting, music, prizes and activities for everyone.

"In an age where society is becoming immersed in television, computers and other electronic media, we are hoping to further engage everyone—especially children—in the art of reading," said Shay Wafer, the Center's vice president of programs. "This is a fantastic way the entire family can celebrate both The Big Read and Black History Month."

Guests attending the Harambee Read Aloud will be further treated to a special **unveiling of the new Charles W. Chesnutt stamp** by the United States Postal Service. Chesnutt, considered to be the first African-American writer to receive major acclaim, is the 31st person to be honored in the distinguished Black Heritage stamp series, which began in 1978. Pittsburgh Postmaster Jim Johnston II will be on hand to help unveil the stamp artwork to the public.

"The Postal Service is proud to unveil the Charles Chesnutt stamp as part of the Harambee Read Aloud and Carnegie Library's Black History Month program," said Johnston.

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August Wilson Center Hosts 2nd Annual Harambee Read Aloud/Page 2

"We are also excited that this year's Harambee Read Aloud selection is from the works of Zora Neale Hurston, who was a great Harlem renaissance novelist and, herself, honored on a stamp among our popular Literary Arts series," Johnston added.

Pittsburgh is one of 127 communities nationwide participating in The Big Read, a nationally known program designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The region will celebrate Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* with a full calendar of events through June. The events are designed to motivate the entire region to read the novel.

The August Wilson Center partnered with United Black Book Clubs of Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) to bring The Big Read to Pittsburgh.

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

For more information on The Big Read events and to learn how you can participate, please contact Bekezela Mguni, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator for the August Wilson Center, at 412.258.2665.

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About the August Wilson Center for African American Culture

The August Wilson Center for African American Culture preserves, presents and interprets the art, culture and history of African Americans in western Pennsylvania and people of African descent throughout the world. The Center realizes its mission through an engaging schedule of visual and performing arts presentations as well as education and public programs.

The Center is involved in a \$35.9 million Capital Campaign to build a new facility located at Liberty Avenue, Tenth Street and William Penn Place in Pittsburgh's Downtown. More than a museum, the multidisciplinary arts center will be reflective of all aspects of African American culture. Opening in early 2009, the Center's striking, two-story, green building will house exhibition galleries, a 479-seat theater for performances in all disciplines, an education center, a café and gift shop, and multipurpose spaces for community programs and events.

More information is available on the Center's Web site at www.AugustWilsonCenter.org and by calling 412.258.2700.

About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

"Free to the People" since 1895

Established as a public trust in 1895, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh serves the citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County with a distinguished history of leadership among the country's great public libraries. Through its 19 neighborhood locations, including Main Library and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region's most visited asset. Each year the Library provides more than 8,000 free programs, classes and other learning and training opportunities that are tailored to meet the dynamic and diverse needs of people living in Western Pennsylvania.