



MEDIA ADVISORY
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We Read Frederick Douglass: Topeka Poets & Community Leaders to Perform Online Reading of "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July"

TOPEKA, KAN. — ArtsConnect will host a community reading of the speech by Frederick Douglass entitled "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July." The event – featuring more than 30 readers from Topeka who will read the speech from start to finish – will be broadcast online on July 5th, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. Following this, the video will be made available to any organizations or individuals who wish to replay the performance.

Readers who are participating in this event include poets, musicians, visual artists and community activists: Annette Billings, James Bugg, Veronica Byrd, Ariane Davis, Lisa Davis, William Domme, Gary E. Douglas, Glenda DuBoise, Sue Edgerton-Johnson, Dennis Etzel, Jr., Erica Garcia, Anastasia Glover, Rodney Harmon, Tara Hartley, SJ Hazim, Marty Hillard, Councilwoman Karen Hiller, Sara Hoyer, Lorna Jarrett, Raymond Jarrett, Jr., Kara Kendall-Morwick, Michelle Kirk, Louise Krug, Community Advocate Shampayne Lloyd, Kansas Poet Laureate Huascar Medina, Oshara Meesha, William Naeger, Councilwoman Hannah Naeger, Dr. Beryl A. New, Dané Shobe, Ashanti Spears, Matt Spezia, Maren Turner, Kamahra Walker, and Glenda Washington.

"ArtsConnect is excited to have an opportunity to continue to do work that fosters important conversations, creates connection and uses the arts as a tool for social change," said Sarah Fizell, ArtsConnect Executive Director. "This reading helps strangers become friends, our community become stronger and artists become activists for social justice. The issues that Douglass so eloquently addresses in this speech reflect a continued struggle for equality and justice in the United States."

"Humanities Kansas values opportunities for community members to come together and reexamine our histories, values, and aspirations for the future," said Julie Mulvihill, Humanities

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Kansas Executive Director. "Douglass' words powerfully shape a better understanding of America, the legacy of slavery, and the promise of democracy."

All participating artists will read a section of the speech until the speech is complete. The combined recordings will be used not only for the broadcast on July 5 but the speech will be made available for free to any organizations who wish to use the reading as a catalyst for conversation and to move us forward in the fight for civil rights.

This project has been made possible with a \$1,500 grant from Humanities Kansas. Most of the funding will be used to offer stipends to artists for their participation in the event. More information can be found on the ArtsConnect website at <https://artstopeka.org/frederickdouglass> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/events/633974130534341/>.

ArtsConnect recognizes the following partners for their assistance with this event: seveneightfive Magazine is assisting with video editing and broadcasting. Speak Easy Poets & Kansas Poet Laureate Huascar Medina helped to identify readers to participate. Mass Humanities, who pioneered this program, offered resources and support that make this program possible.

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About ArtsConnect

ArtsConnect promotes the arts through building community connections and broadening the understanding of how the arts enhance our quality of life. We are focused on developing activities and programs that support individuals engaged in the production of art & the creative industries and connecting audiences, artists and arts experiences in all disciplines. Visit <http://www.artstopeka.org> for more information.

About Humanities Kansas

Humanities Kansas is an independent nonprofit spearheading a movement of ideas to empower the people of Kansas to strengthen their communities and our democracy. Since 1972, our pioneering programming, grants, and partnerships have documented and shared stories to spark conversations and generate insights. Together with our partners and supporters, we inspire all Kansans to draw on history, literature, ethics, and culture to enrich their lives and serve the communities and state we all proudly call home. Visit <http://www.humanitieskansas.org> for more information.