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HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY TO HOST AUTHOR YAA GYASI FOR AUTHOR TALK AND BOOK SIGNING ON SEPTEMBER 23

Hartford to Read and Celebrate "Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi from September 23 through October 7 as part of the National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant

(Hartford, CT) – Hartford Public Library (HPL) is one of 62 organizations nationwide selected to receive a 2023-2024 NEA Big Read grant. A grant of \$18,757 will support a community reading program focusing on *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi. The Big Read programming series will kick off with an author event with Yaa Gyasi at the 5th Annual Hartford Book Festival on Saturday, September 23, 2023. The event will coincide with HPL's "Our Narratives, Our Power" programming series supporting BIWOC writers in Hartford hosted in partnership with local author group Hartford's L.I.T. (Literary Integrated Trailblazers). This year's festival will include a focus on literary women's groups; and will feature local authors, book stores, workshops, panels, youth activities, open mic, literary highlights, publishers and a vibrant cultural live stage. As an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with Arts Midwest, the NEA Big Read broadens our understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the power of a shared reading experience.

"The NEA Big Read brings the transformative experience of reading to an entire community," said Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. "This year's grantees, including Hartford Public Library, are taking themes off the page and using creative programming to navigate difficult topics, explore new perspectives, and strengthen bonds between neighbors."

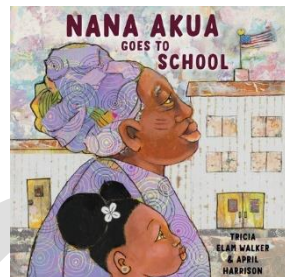
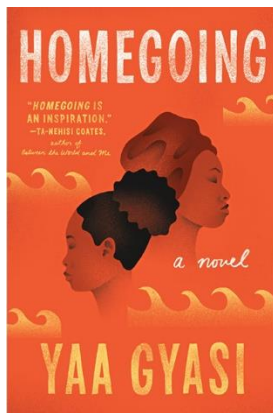
The NEA Big Read offers a range of titles that reflect many different voices and perspectives, aiming to inspire meaningful conversations, artistic responses, and new discoveries and connections in each community. The main feature of the initiative is a grants program, managed by Arts Midwest, which annually supports dynamic community reading programs, each designed around a single NEA Big Read selection. "HPL is thrilled that we were chosen to receive the NEA Big Read grant again this year," said Bridget E. Quinn, Hartford Public Library President and CEO. "Showcasing diversity in literature is so important to us and to our community. HPL is working toward a future where all people are inspired by reading, learning and exploration. We are looking to empower our community by offering programming, resources and diverse voices within our libraries."

HPL's NEA Big Read selection *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi and youth selection *Nana Akua Goes to School* by Tricia Elam Walker will encourage Hartford residents of all ages to deepen their understanding and connections to their ancestors and heritage, while supporting Black Indigenous Women of Color (BIWOC) in writing and publishing their own personal history narratives. Storytime and children's



programming around our youth selection, *Nana Akua Goes to School* will encourage youth to learn about family traditions and heritage in the book and share their own stories. Each HPL library branch will hold adult programming around researching ancestry, creating family portraits, and capturing personal histories.

Free copies of both *Homegoing* and *Nana Akua Goes to School* will be distributed to participants attending the programs as supplies last. HPL plans to deepen efforts around diversity, equity and inclusion through programming by building capacity around continued collaboration and advocacy among BIWOC writers and artists within Connecticut. HPL's supports Hartford area BIWOC in writing and publishing their own narratives, expanding and diversifying Hartford area literary art, bringing awareness around societal and social inequities that affect BIWOC, and fostering balance, mindfulness, and emotional wellness for participants.



To register for the Yaa Gyasi Author talk on September 23rd, please head to the HPL website here <https://programs.hplct.org/event/9066569>

Since 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts has funded more than 1,800 NEA Big Read programs, providing more than \$25 million to organizations nationwide. In addition, NEA Big Read activities have reached every Congressional district in the country. Over the past 15+ years, grantees have leveraged more than \$57 million in local funding to support their NEA Big Read programs. More than 6 million Americans have attended an NEA Big Read event, over 100,000 volunteers have participated at the local level, and over 40,000 community organizations have partnered to make NEA Big Read activities possible. For more information about the NEA Big Read, including book and author information, podcasts, and videos, visit arts.gov/neabigread.

Hartford Public Library boasts seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. www.hplct.org.



Established by Congress in 1965, the **National Endowment for the Arts** is an independent federal agency that is the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide and a catalyst of public and private support for the arts. By advancing equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice, the NEA fosters and sustains an environment in which the arts benefit everyone in the United States. Visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov) to learn more.

Arts Midwest supports, informs, and celebrates Midwestern creativity. We build community and opportunity across Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, the Native Nations that share this geography, and beyond. As one of six nonprofit United States Regional Arts Organizations, Arts Midwest works to strengthen local arts and culture efforts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, state agencies, private funders, and many others. Learn more at [artsmidwest.org](https://www.artsmidwest.org).

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