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**HARTFORD'S L.I.T. ANNOUNCES THE SIXTH ANNUAL HARTFORD BOOK FESTIVAL IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The two-day event kicks off in person on September 21st, 2024

(Hartford, CT) – Hartford Public Library (HPL) is partnering with Hartford's Literary Integrated Trailblazers (Hartford's L.I.T / H.L.I.T) to co-host the sixth Annual Hartford Book Festival as a free two-day event on Saturday, September 21, and Sunday, September 22, 2024, virtually and in person at Hartford Public Library's Downtown Library, 500 Main Street, Hartford.

This free annual event offers literary activities for the Greater Hartford community. This year's festival theme is "Penning & Reading More in 2024." The Hartford Book Festival's mission is to build a community using literary art, serving all people of the Greater Hartford Area. On Saturday and Sunday, attendees can choose to experience book vendors, unique vendors, literary panels, free workshops, family fun activities, literary networking, live stage performances, raffles, and book giveaways.

The on-site café at HPL, Berkins on Main, will be open on Saturday, September 21, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for attendees to use and enjoy. Berkins on Main frequently collaborates with H.L.I.T. to promote literacy and has a bookshelf for customers.

Hartford's L.I.T. is a group of local authors, artists, and entrepreneurs. They aim to establish a presence and awareness of Greater Hartford's local authors, diverse artists, and entrepreneurs and revitalize literary arts and communication. H.L.I.T. focuses on literacy, literary productions, entrepreneurial building, and networking within our communities, including the underserved and non-traditional communities.

What to expect

Families and book lovers can expect a festival with local and special authors, artists, bookstores, workshops, and panels. Attendees will also have exclusive access to pre-order or purchase limited copies of H.L.I.T.'s second writing prompt and journal, *Penning & Writing More Literary Badassery Writing Prompts & Journal*.

Special thanks to the 224 EcoSpace for hosting the festival finale, United Way, and their Youth initiative programs.

Day One

Hartford Book Festival

Saturday, September 21 | 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Hartford Public Library | 500 Main Street, Hartford



The primary festival day features live stage performances, youth activities, an open mic, literary highlights, workshops, a special presentation by United Way, and awards and giveaways! This multicultural celebration of literature and much more will be fun for the entire family.

Workshops being offered on Saturday

- Penning Poetic Vignettes & Photo Stories with Nzima Hutchings
- Melanted Tales: A Spike Lee Joint with T'challa Williams
- Early Literacy & Reading Confidence with United Way
- Gratitude & Thankfulness Journaling with Miosotys Santiago
- Making it Full Time with RapOet, HipHop Troubadour

Day Two

H.L.I.T. Writing Room - virtual live workshops

Sunday, September 22 | 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Nzima Hutchings and T'challa Williams will lead virtual workshops, including Quick Fire Prompts & Lit Fire Starters, The Makings of an Essay, Literary Art Fusion, and Stranger Than Fiction. The workshops will be followed by Q&A time for all attendees.

Registration is required and opens on September 1. <https://hplct-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rc-GhqTlvGNfZMVeFw8iGvLb8xftRY1d0>

Day Two

An Evening of Poetical Musings - The Festival Finale!

Sunday, September 22 | 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

224 EcoSpace | 224 Farmington Avenue, Hartford

Join us for an intimate evening of poetry and smooth vibes. This festival finale will feature poetry activities and features, as well as an Open Mic. Light refreshments will be available. H.L.I.T. requests a suggestive donation of \$15 (or what you can afford) to support Hartford's L.I.T. programming. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Awards and Spotlights:

Featured Spotlight Literary Artist Author & Poet

Ameerah Shabazz-Bilal – is an award-winning poet from Newark, NJ. Ameerah is the recipient of EvoluCulture's 2024 Women in Poetry Award for Service to the Poetry Community. She is the recipient of the Maria Mazziotti Gillan Literary Service Award and the recipient of the Every Kinda Lady - 'Her Story' award for poetry. She is a member of The Academy of American Poets, and in her career, she has published over 400 student poets and volume one of an anthology of over 60 diverse female poets. She is the author of *Breathing Through Concrete* and the founder and facilitator of a women's poetry group When Women Speak.

Annual Award in Honor of Jamilah T. Muhammad, known on the stage as "HoneyWata"

Jamilah T. Muhammad was a devoted poet and performer for over 30 years, developing her ear for simile from poets like her father, Abdul Rahmaan Muhammad, and from Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni,



and Saul Williams. Raised in a family with 10 children in White Plains, NY, Jamilah drew from her past to place it into your present. She performed in her “Sensu-serious” style in venues along the East Coast. She served as the MC/featured artist during her time in Mississippi, hosting a weekly Open Mic called *Expressyosoul*. As a resident of CT, the mother of two shared her talents in various local venues, allowing them a swig of her HoneyWata words, one sip at a time. She was a multifaceted artist, author, poet, spoken word performer, singer, actress, visual artist, and jewelry maker; she was confident and competent in everything she did. As an open mic host, she knew how to take charge of the audience with her presence, poise, and speech. HoneyWata was an active executive founding member of Hartford's L.I.T. In addition, she was a staple and volunteer at the Annual Indie Soul Festival in Massachusetts.

Jamilah was the epitome of a modern-day Renaissance woman with deep roots in her community. Her presence is unforgettable, and her energy irreplaceable. Through our grief and with much love, we can celebrate and acknowledge all the beauty of HoneyWata and honor her memory with The Jamilah T. Muhammad ‘HoneyWata’ Award. This award will be given to an artist within the New England Region who most potently exemplifies HoneyWata’s confident poetic energy, spiciness, and drive as a multi-talented creative artist.

The Jamilah T. Muhammad HoneyWata Award Recipient

Lanea Collins (Poet, Playwright, Actress, Musician) is an educator and advocate of the arts and is the Creative Director of The Teaching Artist Hub CT. By connecting and providing spaces for teaching artists, Lanea has a passion for mentorship and collaboration in the arts. She is a Goodwin College award-winning poet of *American Baby*. She is the writer, speaker, and author of *My Heart Is Art*, a foundation of workshops, youth services, and speaking engagements that promote creative healing for the inner soul. Lanea has appeared in theater, performing in *For Colored Girls* and *Daisies On Harlem’s Doorstep* for CT Theater Company and Vintage Soul Productions, as well as *Expression Through Color* at the Jamaican Performing Arts Center in Queens, NY, written and produced by her. Along with writing and directing her very own *Agape*, with Oddfellows Playhouse Theater, Lanea has created various workshops, including *Play+Write=Playwright*, *Culture Couture & Life Through Colors*. For the last five years, she has been a teaching artist for grades K-12 and after-school programs working in both school & community settings. She is a Certified Arts Trainer in the principles of nonviolence through the Connecticut Center for Nonviolence (CTCN). Lanea has a passion for social justice and the arts and continues to share her gifts in all spaces.

The Hartford’s L.I.T. Trailblazer Award

The Trailblazer Award is an annual award to individuals who consistently make great strides in their community utilizing their gifts, talents, innovation, and love of creative arts. These individuals are creative and exercise their gifts in Administration to create programming that benefits the community while highlighting literary and creative arts.

The Trailblazer Award Recipient

IfeMichelle Gardin, Kulturally LIT Founder, Community Arts & Culture Organizer, is Executive Director/Founder of Kulturally LIT, a Literary Arts organization created to enhance awareness of the Arts of the African Diaspora, focused on the Literary Arts. Kulturally LIT produces the LITFest (est. 2020),



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DiasporaCON, a conference highlighting opportunities in the Comic and Graphic Novel industry, and 100 Years of Baldwin, commemorating the literary legacy of James Baldwin. IfeMichelle is a New Haven Cultural Affairs Commission and Collective Consciousness Theater Board member.

Hartford's L.I.T. is a group of local authors, artists, and entrepreneurs

Nzima Hutchings's (Visionary/Founder, CEO, and Director) journey from winning a middle school storytelling contest to founding Hartford's L.I.T. and the Hartford Book Festival is extraordinary. Her passion for literature led her to launch Café Sisterhood 4 Girls and Every Kinda Lady, LLC. In 2017, Nzima established The Traveling Poets, which evolved into Hartford's L.I.T. by 2018. With support from friends like T'challa Williams and a dedicated team, Nzima turned her vision into a reality. Starting her book festival dream in 2016 with no budget, Nzima built it from the ground up, rallying support from friends, former professors, and artists. Nzima is the visionary founder of Hartford's Literary Integrated Trailblazers and the Hartford Book Festival, significantly contributing to the Greater Hartford area's cultural landscape since 2019. She promotes whole-person wellness, inclusion, and acceptance through Every Kinda Lady LLC and N'zimah Sensory Essentials.

Today, Hartford's L.I.T. and the Hartford Book Festival are more than just events—they are dynamic spaces that celebrate the transformative power of literature. They attest to Nzima's dedication to fostering community and creativity, offering a thriving platform for storytellers and creatives. Through these festivals, Nzima's legacy of nurturing and celebrating literary arts continues to flourish in her community. Nzima Hutchings is a distinguished literary figure and Enfield, CT Poet Laureate, 2023-2025. A bestselling author and award-winning poet, Nzima's commitment to the arts and education spans a diverse range of students, from elementary children to adults. She has held prominent teaching roles at institutions such as the Art Academy in Hartford, Wheeler Clinic, Toivo Holistic Wellness Center, Mount Holyoke College Actup Theater Arts Academy, Asnuntuck Community College's Children's Reading Room, and Wesleyan University. As an affiliate and facilitator leader with Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA), Nzima uses the AWA method to create dynamic and empowering spaces for writers. She focuses on supporting women from various backgrounds in publishing their narratives and enhancing their literary wellness through poetic exploration and expressive writing. Nzima has authored several books and journals to inspire self-expression and personal growth. Through her role as the host and curator of NPC's (Nzima's Poetry Cafe Show) on Cox Public Access, she continues to promote artistic expression and community engagement.

Nzima earned her bachelor's degree from Springfield College and twice received the Independent Artist Grant. She has also received the 100 Women of Color Award and the I Am Women Award. As an international teaching artist, Nzima facilitates writing and poetry workshops in diverse locations, including Cuba and Florida, advocating for self-acceptance and personal growth. Nzima also serves on the board of the Enfield Cultural Arts Commission and as a Cultural Literary Arts Advisor for the Ujima African American Alliance. Her extensive roles as a Certified Sexual Assault Counselor and Recovery Support Specialist underscore her dedication to holistic wellness and community support.

Instagram @Every Kinda Lady | <https://www.amazon.com/author/nzimahutchings>

T'challa Williams (Chief Advisor and Project Manager) is an award-winning creative advocate, poet, actress, and bestselling author from Hartford, Connecticut. As the Executive Co-Founder of Hartford's



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L.I.T., now in its sixth year of hosting the Hartford Book Festival, and a Greater Hartford Arts Council board member, T'challa consistently advocates for her community. Recognized with the 2021 100 Women of Color Award, the 2023 Hartford Public Schools Impact Award, and the 2024 I Am Woman Award, T'challa is known for her dedication to craft and culture.

T'challa Williams is the sister of Nzima Hutchings, and together, they are building a vision of loving literary arts. It is their goal to provide the Hartford community with literary events to celebrate all that Hartford creatives have to offer, and we shine a light on them always. That's what it means to keep the focus LIT! T'challa also has a deep passion for nurturing bonds among Black women, evident in her work featured in the anthology *Heavy is the Crown*, a collaboration with A Queen's Narrative. It also shines through in her recent poetry collection, *Captured Thoughts*, dedicated to her grandmother, highlighting her powerful voice and heartfelt dedication. She passionately inspires future writers, poets, and performers, embodying her moniker, The Lover & The Revolutionary.

Miosotys Santiago (Public Relations & Hospitality) is the founder of Exemplify to Edify, LLC, a Women's Inspirational organization that focuses on Healing and a faith-driven walk with purpose. She is an Inspirational Speaker, Domestic violence Survivor, advocate, and Amazon's best-selling author of a Memoir, *God's Diamond*. She speaks of surviving several life-traumatic experiences and explains how, through her Faith in God, she walks in victory. Santiago's mission statement is "Your pain becomes your purpose." She has a passion, and mission to use her victories, perseverance, and resilience as a tool to help others heal.

Other Hartford's L.I.T. Team and Committee Members

Barbara McClane
Alphonso McGriff III
Rosa M. Bailey
Lorraine Nahabedian

**For questions or more information please contact Hartford L.I.T. at Hartfordslitfestival@gmail.com
Hartfordslit.com or on Instagram [@Hartfordslit](https://www.instagram.com/Hartfordslit)**

About Hartford Public Library

Founded as the Library Company in 1774, and over its 250 years, Hartford Public Library has remained at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21st century. The Library has seven locations throughout the city and annually provides education, intellectual enrichment, and cultural development for thousands of children, youth, and adults. 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. For more information, visit hplct.org, and follow us on social media ([Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/hplct), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/hplct), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/hplct), [X \(Twitter\)](https://twitter.com/hplct)).

About H.L.I.T.

Hartford's L.I.T. (Literary Integrated Trailblazers) is a group of local authors, artists, and entrepreneurs. Our mission is to establish a presence and awareness of Greater Hartford's diverse artists and small business owners, as well as to revitalize literary art. H.L.I.T. focuses on literacy, literary productions, entrepreneurial building, and networking within our communities and non-traditional communities. Our goal is to lend opportunity to all, including the underserved community.