



2007 Oscar Micheaux Memorial Celebration
Rising from the Plains:
Black Kansans Telling Their Stories in New Ways

Great Bend, Kansas
October 19-21, 2007

This year we salute Black Kansans who became consummate storytellers, including:

Oscar Micheaux

(novelist, entrepreneur, first African-American filmmaker)

Perry G. Lowery

(cornet player, band leader for Barnum & Bailey sideshows, entrepreneur)

Lorenzo Fuller, Jr.

(Broadway star, first African-American with a TV show on network television)

Gwendolyn Brooks

(first African-American woman to receive Pulitzer Prize for literature)

Langston Hughes

(poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance)

With literacy comes liberation – reading and writing changes and shapes lives in profound ways, whether the learner was an African-American slave 150 years ago or a disadvantaged adult learner today – creativity and self-expression – music, visual arts, literature, drama, etc. – can play a huge role in overturning social, political, and racial boundaries.

In these children of the Exoduster migration, the African-American tradition of storytelling blossomed to express itself in literature, film, music, and theater.

Why Kansas? Why did this farm state with such a small black population pack such a punch in influencing 20th Century entertainment? What filled so many Kansans of African-American descent with the entrepreneurial spirit that led them to fame and recognition across the country? Do the wide-open spaces of Kansas suggest to a child that anything is possible?

The sad fact that all of these artists left Kansas and achieved their greatness elsewhere raises other questions. Why did they leave?

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

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Great Bend, Kansas

Friday, October 19, 2007.....Barton County Arts Center, 1401 Main Street

8:00 p.m..... Opening Reception

Saturday, October 20, 2007.....Crest Theatre, 1905 Lakin Avenue

9:00 a.m..... Prof. Carmaletta Williams: "Langston Hughes, Pioneer Poet & Storyteller"

10:00 a.m..... Prof. Joanne V. Gabbin: "Gwendolyn Brooks, Role Model for Black Writers"

11:00 a.m..... Prof. Clifford Watson: "Perry G. Lowery, Using Music to Entertain & Educate"

12:00 p.m..... Lunch, Jack Kilby Square

1:15 p.m..... Lorenzo Fuller, Jr., with Angela Logan: "Lorenzo Fuller, Black Television Pioneer"

3:10 p.m..... "Within Our Gates," a silent film by Oscar Micheaux

4:00 p.m..... Panel Discussion of "Within Our Gates"

5:00 p.m..... Dinner, Barton County Arts Center

7:00 p.m..... Prof. Kevin Willmott: "Telling Stories Through Film,
From Oscar Micheaux to Today's Independent Filmmakers";
Introduction of Willmott's new film "Bunker Hill";
Panel Discussion

Sunday, October 21, 2007.....Micheaux Gravesite, Great Bend Cemetery

11:00 a.m..... Memorial Ceremony



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Kansas Humanities Council,
a nonprofit cultural organization promoting understanding of the
history, traditions, and ideas that shape our lives and build
community.**

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