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NEA BIG READ CLEVELAND ANNOUNCES PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

The county-wide celebration of *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine kicks off 1/23

(Cleveland, OH—January 16, 2019) The NEA Big Read Cleveland announced today its public programming around its celebration of *Citizen: An American Lyric*, beginning with a free public keynote event featuring the book's author, Claudia Rankine, on Wednesday, January 23 from 7-8:30pm at Cuyahoga County Public Library's Parma Snow Branch (2121 Snow Rd, Parma, OH 44134). Managed in Cleveland by the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning (CAL), the NEA Big Read is a nation-wide community reading program that broadens our understanding of the world, our communities and ourselves through sharing a good book.

One of 75 communities nationwide participating in the 2019 NEA Big Read, Cleveland's celebration of *Citizen* includes 50+ events hosted by more than 25 partners throughout Cuyahoga County between January 23 and March 2019.

Attendees of January 23 kickoff will be treated to a conversation between Rankine and Ohio Poet Laureate Dave Lucas, an original poem by CAL resident teaching artist, Kalim Hill, and a book signing. Attendees can reserve a seat to the kickoff [here](#). Several area libraries will livestream the event, including Lakewood Library Main Branch and Heights Library Lee Road Branch.

In addition to the kickoff, the community can participate in Big Read through book discussions, writing and poetry workshops, film screenings, performances, and more. Find the full calendar of events at BigReadCLE.com and check back frequently, as more events are still being added.

"We are thrilled that Claudia Rankine will be here to discuss her book as our programming gets underway," said CAL Executive Director Marsha Dobrzynski. "We can't think of a better way to set the tone for the rest of our read, which aims to break down negative stereotypes while providing opportunities for meaningful self-reflection and productive discussion about the impact of racism and intolerance on our community."

"It is with great excitement that CAL has been able to partner with so many community organizations throughout Cuyahoga County to help our 2019 programming reach a much wider audience – in Cleveland and beyond."

Though public programming continues through the end of March, a county-wide poetry slam on Saturday, March 9 will serve as the official culminating event. Presented by Lake Erie Ink and the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA), the poetry slam will be held at 2:30pm in the CMA Auditorium. Open to Cuyahoga County youth in grades 7-12, up to 20 teens will compete during the three-round slam. Presented poems must be original works and inspired by *Citizen*.

In addition to public programming, CAL's 2019 NEA Big Read grant award also supports in-school programming. Students from 24 participating schools will engage with *Citizen* through poetry or visual art workshops presented by CAL teaching artists that have been customized to complement the classroom work surrounding the reading of the book. Schools are also invited to attend the in-school kick-off – a second, school-only author event to be held on Thursday, January 24 at the Maltz Performing Arts Center.

Rankine's participation during the 2019 NEA Big Read in Cleveland is supported by Ohio Humanities, Cuyahoga County Public Library, and the Baker-Nord Center for the Humanities at Case Western Reserve University.

For media inquiries, contact CAL Marketing Manager, Katie McCullough at katie@arts-inspiredlearning.org. For a calendar of events for the NEA Big Read in Cleveland visit BigReadCLE.com.

Community members can also participate in Cleveland's NEA Big Read via social media by following #BigReadCLE or #CitizenCLE and by joining the conversation [@CenterforArtsInspiredLearning](https://www.facebook.com/CenterforArtsInspiredLearning) on Facebook and [@ArtsInspiredCAL](https://twitter.com/ArtsInspiredCAL) on Twitter.

The Center for Arts-Inspired Learning ignites student learning, creativity, and success through the arts. One of the largest of 32 affiliates in the national Young Audiences Arts for Learning network, the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning works with more than 80 professional teaching artists to bring innovative, arts-integrated learning experiences to Northeast Ohio students in grades Pre-K-12. Reaching nearly 206,000 children annually, CAL's arts education programs, workshops, and residencies close learning gaps, teach creative thinking and problem solving, and help students succeed in school, in their first jobs, and beyond. Learn more at www.arts-inspiredlearning.org

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit arts.gov to learn more about NEA.

Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people's lives. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit artsmidwest.org.

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