

# Black History Month Events

## Portland Author Renée Watson Wins Top Honors for 'Piecing Me Together,' Will Read New Book at North Portland Library Feb. 24

Portland readers interested in Black history will have the chance to meet local author Renée Watson and win copies of her new middle-grade novel, "Betty Before X," co-authored by Ilyasah Shabazz, at an intergenerational tea from 1 to 3 p.m. Feb. 24. The event includes a reading, book discussion, Q&A, and book signing with Renée. Conversations will center on girlhood, women's empowerment, and the inspiring legacy of Dr. Betty Shabazz.

This is a free event open to the public and space is limited. The first 50 guests 18 years old and under will receive a free, signed copy of the book.

"Betty Before X" is a middle-grade, historical fiction novel inspired by the real life of Betty Shabazz, later known as Betty X.

The book illuminates four poignant years in Betty's childhood and paints an inspiring portrait of a girl overcoming the challenges of self-acceptance and belonging that will resonate with young readers today. The book has received starred reviews and high acclaim, including praise from Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who said, "Today is a time when fearless and uncompromising leadership is needed, and this story answers the call. It should be an inspiration and playbook to all women today, both young and old, who, like Betty, are paving their own path of strength."

Earlier this week Watson's previous book, "Piecing Me Together," was named American Library Association's 2018 Coretta Scott King Book Awards "Piecing Me Together" as well a Newbery Honor Book. The awards were announced this week at the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting & Ex-



Renée Watson

hibits, held Feb. 9–13, 2018, in Denver, Colorado, and presented in New Orleans at the ALA Annual Conference & Exhibition in June.

The Coretta Scott King Book Awards are presented annually by the Coretta Scott King Book Awards Committee of the ALA's Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange Round Table (EMIERT) to encourage the artistic expression of the African American experience via literature and the graphic arts; to promote an understanding and appreciation of the Black culture and experience, and to commemorate the life and legacy of Mrs. Coretta Scott King for her courage and determination in supporting the work of her husband, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for peace and world brotherhood.

## August Wilson Monologue Competition Takes Place Feb. 26

The August Wilson Red Door Project presents the fourth August Wilson Monologue Competition showcasing Portland area high school students from 7 to 10 p.m. Feb. 26. This year's theme is "Emerge" and the show at the Newmark Theatre includes emerging and acclaimed performers in theatre, dance, and music. The event takes place at Newmark Theatre, 1111 SW Broadway. It is free but reservations are required. Pre-sale tickets are no longer available, but you can still register for standby tickets. For more information visit [reddoorproject.org/awmc](http://reddoorproject.org/awmc).

The mission of the August Wilson Red Door Project is to change the racial ecology of Portland through the arts.

The monologue competition is one of the ways that the Red Door highlights cultural and ethnic diversity in the next generation of theatre artists and the growing cultural arts movement in Portland.

Following a recruitment campaign that put the Red Door in front of over 1,000 students in Portland area high schools, and a challenging two-day audition process, 12 young women have emerged as this year's semi-finalists.

This talented, diverse cohort has been working in master classes with Kevin Jones and Victor Mack, both award-winning theatre artists and favorites on Portland stages. On the big night, they will bring their newly deepened "acting chops" and understanding of Wilson's themes, characters and lyrical language to the stage.

Professional judges will select two of them to compete nationally at the August Wilson Theatre on Broadway. Former competition participants describe their experiences as life-changing. Portland's finalists have gone on to success ranging from schooling at Julliard to the starring role in a Broadway play.

This year's musical headliners represent a rich cultural mix of style and genre:

- Darrell Grant, *Jazz Pianist, Composer, and Educator*
- Bobby Torres, *Latin Jazz Percussionist*
- Redray Frazier, *Rock and Soul Troubadour*
- Mic Crenshaw, *World class MC and poet*
- DJ David vanOvereem, *Portland's Master of "Turntablism"*
- Oluyinka Akinjiola, *Founder/Artistic Director of Rejoice! Diaspora Dance Theater*

The August Wilson Monologue Competition was founded at True Colors Theatre Company in Atlanta in 2007 by Tony Award winner, Kenny Leon, and Todd Kreidler, August Wilson's dramaturg for many of his plays. Other cities hosting competitions are: Atlanta, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Haven, New York, Pittsburgh, Seattle, Dallas, and Greensboro, North Carolina.



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## Portland Black Panthers: Pioneering health care for all

In fall 1969, the Portland Black Panthers dished up a free daily hot breakfast for children. In January 1970, they opened a free medical clinic for all comers, then a dental clinic, in solidarity with many white groups. With each full tummy, vaccine and fixed tooth, the Portland Black Panthers fought for education, health and social justice.

**This Black History Month, CareOregon recognizes the Portland Black Panthers' historic contribution to health equity.**



[careoregon.org](http://careoregon.org)