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**Dr. Carla Hayden, author Beverly Jenkins to give keynote presentations during
2021 African American Read-In**

ORLANDO, Fla. (February 1, 2021) – The Orange County Library System will host the African American Read-In, a celebration of African American literature in poetry, story, and performance through virtual format on Sunday, February 28. Keynote presentations will be given by Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden and bestselling author Beverly Jenkins.

Orange County Library System's African American Read-In is hosted annually in conjunction with the National African American Read-In, the nation's first and oldest event dedicated to diversity in literature. Orange County Library System joins libraries, schools and bookstores across the world in hosting African-American Read-In events, which feature readings and performances of works created by African American authors, poets and musicians. The goal is to highlight contributions Black authors have made

to our culture and to make literacy a symbolic part of Black History Month. Since its beginnings in 1989, the Read-In has reached more than 6 million participants around the world.

Kicking off the Read-In with an opening keynote presentation will be NAACP Image Award nominee and *USA Today* bestselling author Beverly Jenkins. Her works include historical and contemporary romance novels that focus on African American life in the 19th century. Jenkins has received multiple awards for her work, including the 2017 Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award from Romance Writers of America.

“I decided to participate in the OCLS’s 2021 African American Read-In because I wouldn’t be the author I am today were it not for the Mark Twain Library on Detroit’s eastside,” says Jenkins. “It fed my love for reading. To a young person who has yet to discover the library, I’d tell them to think of their card as a free ticket to travel to far off places, meet fascinating people and go on amazing adventures, all without leaving home.”

This year’s African American Read-In lineup includes:

WESH 2 news anchor Jazmin Bailey
90.7 WMFE President and CEO Erika Pulley-Hayes
Congresswoman Val B. Demings
Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings
Johnny Magic of XL 106.7 Johnny’s House
Commissioner Bakari F. Burns
Channel 6 news anchor Ginger Gadsden
Actor and musician Carl MaultsBy
WMFE Morning Edition host Talia Blake
Director of Public Relations at Moxē and OCLS Friends of the Library member Jaylen Christie
Host of Nerd Nite Orlando, Ricardo Williams,
Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Nathi Gcabashe

Closing the ceremony will be Dr. Carla Hayden, the 14th Librarian of Congress and the first woman and African-American to serve as the Librarian of Congress.

The African-American Read-In takes place on [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube Live](#) on Sunday, February 28 at 2 p.m. For more information, visit ocls.info/readin.

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