

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Orange County Library Participates in 26<sup>th</sup> Annual African-American Read-In



The Orange County Library System is pleased to announce its participation in the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual African-American Read-In. This nationally recognized event encourages host sites to promote literacy as an important part in celebrating Black History Month. Central Floridians are invited to take part in the library's efforts to recognize African-American literature in poetry, story and song performed by local luminaries. The free event will take place on Sunday, February 21 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Orlando Public Library. Guests include library storytellers, scholars, musicians, public officials, and special dignitaries. To learn more about the event and the scheduled performers, please visit [ocls.info/readin](http://ocls.info/readin).

### Scheduled Performers:



**Crystal Sullivan** has amazed and entertained audiences for the past 22 years as a storyteller with the Orange County Library System.



**Julian Chambliss** is Associate Professor of History and Coordinator of the Africa and African-American Studies Program at Rollins College in Winter Park.



**Don Harrell with OrisiRisi African Folklore** is co-director with his wife Adetutu Harrell of OrisiRisi African Folklore, a performing arts company created in 1986 to share the beauty and poignancy of African life and culture. Harrell is a music scholar and performing artist and a life-long veteran of state and screen who completed his M.A. in African Studies at UCLA and studied at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in Legon.



**Kevin Meehan** is Professor of English at the University of Central Florida and the author of *People Get Ready: African American and Caribbean Cultural Exchange* (2009). He is a multi-instrumental musician and performs regularly with several local groups as well as his own original roots rock project, Sugar City.



**Obi Nwakanma** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Central Florida. He is author of the critically acclaimed biography *Christopher Okigbo 1930-67: Thirsting for Sunlight* and author of three volumes of poetry, including *Birthcry* and *The Horsemen and Other Poems*.



The **Florida Youth Opera Theatre** is an all-inclusive singer/actor training program that focuses on developing the young singer / actor, under the direction of Robin Jensen. The chorus has performed with the Orlando Philharmonic productions of *Home for the Holidays*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Barber of Seville*, and *Tosca*.



**Fire Chief Roderick Williams** was named Chief of the Fire Department for the City of Orlando in February 2015. Roderick Williams is a 19-year veteran of the fire department and a graduate of Jones High School.



**Renita Hunt** is the 2015-16 Board President of Dress for Success Greater Orlando. Through her 15-year career in marketing communications, she has worked with such brands as Home Depot, Ford, Coca-Cola, and McDonald's. She is a member of the Central Florida Employment Council, National Black MBA Association, and Adcolor.



**Margarete Talbert-Irving and Students of Orange Center Elementary School** - Under the direction of music teacher Preben Hoegh, students at Orange Center Elementary School won the 2015 Macy's A Cappella Challenge with their video of *I Want You Back* by the Jackson 5. Margarete Talbert-Irving is the principal of Orange Center Elementary, which is located just southwest of downtown Orlando.



**Sheriff Jerry Demings** was elected on November 4, 2008 as the first African American Sheriff and Constitutional Officer of Orange County Florida. Prior to becoming sheriff, he served as Director of Public Safety for Orange County and Orlando Police Chief. Demings has received honorary degrees from City College and Florida Metropolitan University, where he also received his MBA. He is married to former Orlando Police Chief Val Demings.



**Valada Flewellyn** is a writer, poet and storyteller and author of *Yours Truly*, *The Mosquito*, *African-Americans in Sanford*, and *Poetically, Just Us*. She co-produced documentaries on Jesse Leroy Brown, the first African-American naval fighter pilot, and on the African-American community of Goldsboro and curated the related exhibits "A Pilot Lights the Way" and "Enter Colored Hats".



**Knightro** is the official mascot of the University of Central Florida Knights athletic teams. His major in college is "Spirit." In his spare time, when he is not cheering on the Knights, he enjoys reading and listening to the UCF marching band.



**Myles Thoroughgood** is a choreographer/director who has created movement locally and globally for theme parks, theater, film, and television. Credits include The Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, PBS, The Orlando Repertory Theater, Mad Cow Theater, and more. Myles is currently a proud Storyteller for the Orange County Library System.



**Reverend, Dr. Margo A. Blake** has a 46-year multifaceted career as a dancer, teacher, writer, director, and choreographer nationally and internationally. Dr. Blake holds 6 degrees and 2 certifications and trained in Ghana, West Africa. Dr. Blake was a performer at Walt Disney World, African Dance Choreography for the Festival of *The Lion King Show* and the first African American female Associate Show Director. Reverend Blake is a Teaching Artist, choreographs and ministers in the flags and dance at her church, teaches dance at The Center for Contemporary Dance, and is also an instructor at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts.



**Adam Alexander Vernier** is the on air producer of The Morning MIX on Mix 105.1 weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. He is also an actor having speaking parts in hundreds of films, TV shows, and commercials. Most recently, Adam has been on *BALLERS*, *GI Joe 2*, and many commercials available at **[adamvernier.com](http://adamvernier.com)**.

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