

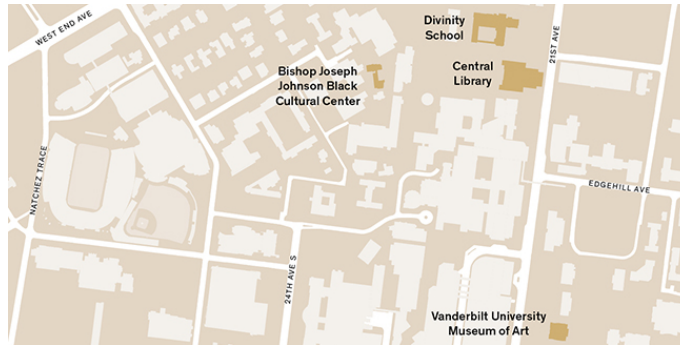
The acclaimed multimedia art exhibit ***Dark Testament: A Century of Black Writers on Justice*** comes to Vanderbilt University from February through May 2025. This exhibition and its related

programs celebrate more than 100 years of influential Black writers, from the end of the Civil War through the Civil Rights era, at several campus galleries.

Dark Testament: A Century of Black Writers on Justice, which debuted in September 2022 at Chicago's [American Writers Museum](#), highlights 20 prominent authors including Frederick Douglass, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou with [original portraits](#) created for the exhibit by contemporary Black artists Omari Booker, Dorothy Burge, Lakesha Calvin, Dayo Johnson, Damon Reed, Dorian Sylvain, Bernard Williams.

Vanderbilt's Office of the Vice Provost for Arts, Libraries and Global Engagement is organizing the campus exhibit and programs, which is made possible by the American Writers Museum as well as generous support from The Efroymson Family Fund and Lilly Endowment Inc. through its Religion and Cultural Institutions Initiative.

[Read More](#)[View the American Writers Museum Exhibit](#)[View the Special Collections Exhibit](#)



The exhibition is spread across campus with the art featured at Vanderbilt University Museum of Art (Cohen Memorial Hall atrium), the Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries (Central Library second-floor gallery), the Divinity School (lobby), and the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center (hallway).

Literary Figures on Display

Vanderbilt University Museum of Art



Frederick Douglass
Ida B. Wells
Paul Laurence Dunbar
Frances Ellen Watkins
Harper
Harriet Jacobs
James Weldon Johnson

Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center

Ma Rainey
Nella Larsen
Langston Hughes
Zora Neale Hurston
W.E.B. Du Bois
Nikki Giovanni

Jean & Alexander Heard Libraries

Maya Angelou
James Baldwin
Ralph Ellison
Ethel Payne
Richard Wright
Malcolm X

Divinity School

Pauli Murray

Programs & Events

Pauli Murray Discussions with the DIV6846 Queer Theology Course - Feb.11

The film screening of *I Am Pauli Murray* has been canceled, but people are invited to still join Dr. Ellen Armour's DIV6848 Queer Theology Course for a discussion on the life and works of Pauli Murray.

Tuesday, Feb. 11

6–8 p.m.

Divinity School, The Space (Room G29)

Keidrick Roy Book Talk - Feb. 13

Keidrick Roy, lead curator of the *Dark Testament* exhibit, will discuss his book *American Dark Age: Racial Feudalism and the Rise of Black Liberalism*. Brandon Byrd, associate professor of history and African American and diaspora studies, will serve as moderator.

Thursday, Feb. 13

4:10–5 p.m.

Central Library, Community Room

Opening Reception - Feb. 14

A moderated discussion and Q&A will feature lead curator Keidrick Roy, who will discuss his collaboration with the American Writers Museum to assemble the *Dark Testament* exhibit, followed by a film trailer focused on the dialogue between past and contemporary Black writers. A reception featuring live music by the Blair Jazz Band will follow.

Friday, Feb. 14

Noon–1:30 p.m.

Alumni Hall, Room 206 (film screening and talk) and Memorial Room (reception)

Sight, Sound and Conversation: Malcolm X @ 100 panels - Feb. 21

A pair of panel discussions on the legacy and evolution of Malcolm X will feature live music. Refreshments will be provided.

Friday, Feb. 21

2–5 p.m.

Divinity School, The Space (Room G29)

Ma Rainey Virtual Panel - Feb. 26

Columbia University Distinguished Professor Farah Jasmine Griffin will lead a virtual discussion on the history and musical significance of seminal American blues singer Ma Rainey.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

Noon–1 p.m.

Virtual

[Register in Advance](#)

The Fire Next Time Book Talk - March 3

Vanderbilt University Distinguished Professor of African American and Diaspora Studies Michael Eric Dyson and Jean-Paul Rocchi, professor of American literature and culture at the Université Gustave Eiffel in Paris, will discuss James Baldwin's acclaimed essay collection *The Fire Next Time*. Participants will receive a copy of the book in advance, and lunch will be provided.

Monday, March 3

Noon–1 p.m.

Black Cultural Center

[Registration Required](#)

Pauli Murray and the Arc of Justice Panel - March 19 —

Vanderbilt Divinity School Dean Yolanda Pierce and Dr. Carol E. Henderson, vice provost for diversity and inclusion at Emory University, will lead a discussion of Murray's *Dark Testament: and Other Poems*. Participants will receive a copy of the book in advance. Lunch will be provided.

Wednesday, March 19

12:10–1 p.m.

Central Library, Community Room

[Registration Required](#)

Harriet Jacobs virtual discussion - April 7 —

Principal Senior Lecturer of African American and Diaspora Studies Claudine Taaffe will moderate a discussion with Boston University Professor Koritha Mitchell, editor of a new edition of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), the first book-length autobiography by a formerly enslaved African American woman.

Monday, April 7

Noon–1 p.m.

Virtual

[Register in Advance](#)

Nate Marshall Virtual Panel - April 11 —

Nate Marshall, BA'12, a poet and member of the *Dark Testament* curating team, will discuss spoken word poetry and give a sampling of his work.

April 11

Noon - 1 p.m.

Virtual

[Register in Advance](#)

Dark Testament Closing Reception - April 14



Local Artists

In bringing *Dark Testament* to Vanderbilt, the American Writers Museum commissioned five new artworks by Nashville artists Omari Booker, Lakesha Calvin, and Dayo Johnson.



Omari Booker
His painting of
Pauli Murray as
the poet is on
view in the
Divinity School.

Lakesha Calvin
Her painting of
Pauli Murray as
the Episcopal
priest is on view
in the Divinity
School

Her painting of
poet and Fisk
University
alumna **Nikki**
Giovanni is on
view at the Black
Cultural Center.

Dayo Johnson
Her multimedia
artworks of
Harriet Jacobs
and **James**
Weldon Johnson
are on view at
the Vanderbilt
University
Museum of Art.



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