

Connect  
Unite  
Act

# ARJ

**ALLIES for RACIAL JUSTICE**

February 2026



2026 marks the historic centennial, commemorating 100 years since Dr. Carter G. Woodson established Negro History week in 1926. In 1976, Negro History Week was expanded from seven days to a full month-long celebration and recognition of Black history in America. In the words of then President Gerald R. Ford, this was done to “seize the opportunity to honor too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” His words remain as pertinent today as they were 50 years ago.

This month’s newsletter highlights many ways for you to recognize and celebrate the resilience and renaissance within the African American community. Join us for these excellent educational programs, events, and community gatherings.

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## CONNECT

Bringing people together to **CONNECT** through engaging educational events.  
Let’s start a conversation

### UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



#### FEATURING AARON SMALLWOOD

Wednesday, Feb. 11 – 3:30-5:30 PM  
KU Lawrence Campus, 150 Joseph R. Pearson Hall

KU’s Black History Month event offers opportunity for reflection, learning and connection. Guest speaker, Aaron Smallwood, is a passionate advocate for the

transformative power of education. Once told he would never read beyond an eighth-grade level, a teacher's introduction to poetry and a mentor who challenged him to write from his own experience changed the course of his life.

A 2024 graduate of Donnelly College's "College in Prison" program, Aaron now works as a re-entry coordinator with Zephyr Products and Brothers in Blue, teaching Trauma Healing and creative writing, where he encourages others to "tell their story." He hopes to become an English teacher and inspire others to believe in their limitless potential. Mr. Smallwood's talk is "Hope, Change, and Resilience: The Story of Us All." The University of Kansas School of Education & Human Sciences presents this program to honor Black history, culture and contributions to education and society. Individuals interested in attending in person or virtually are encouraged to [RSVP](#). Registrants will receive Zoom login information prior to the event.

[See additional event details.](#)

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## **JOIN ARJ INAUGURAL CLASSIC BLACK LITERATURE MONTHLY BOOK STUDY**

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25, 6:30-8 PM**

**Resurrection Leawood – 13720 Roe Ave, Bldg. B – Rm B152**

Don't miss this literary journey of powerful storytelling by outstanding authors who have lived the experiences of Black Americans for centuries. Together we are reading and discussing classic literature that explores faith, identity, justice, and the human experience—stories that challenge us, broaden our perspective, and help us better understand one another and the world we share. These are masterful books that have shaped conversations about what it means to be human, to struggle, to hope, and to create change. Come and be part of the conversation.

Our first book selection is Zora Neale Hurston's beloved 1937 classic, "Their Eyes Were Watching God." An enduring Southern love story, it sparkles with wit, beauty, and heartfelt wisdom and is recognized as one of the most important works of 20th-century American literature. You can find it online and through bookstores everywhere.

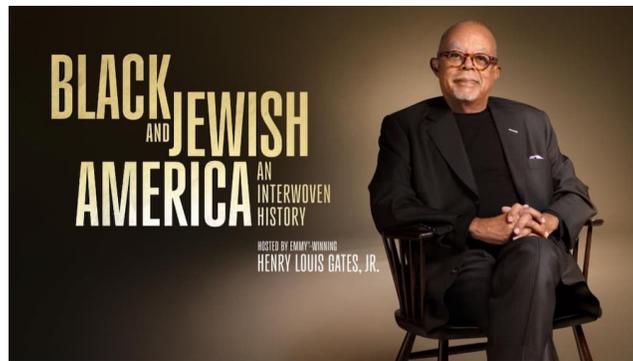
Our first meeting is February 25. Future meetings will be held on the last Wednesday of each month, and the next book title will be announced 4 weeks in advance. Registration is limited to the first 25 people, with option to join the wait list. Childcare is available. If you cannot participate in person, consider reading the book for your own enjoyment and gain insights and understanding one another and the world we share. Check our newsletter and the ARJ and Resurrection Leawood websites.

The March book selection is *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison.

[Register Here](#)

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## NEW PBS SERIES PREMIERS TUESDAY, FEB. 3



This new PBS series is an opportunity to gather a small group, your family, and friends together to examine the rich and complex ties between Black and Jewish Americans. The 4-part series, by Henry Lewis Gates, Jr., explores their interwoven history, their civic and cultural challenges, and the enduring promise of their alliance. We all have something new to learn and share!

Premiers on Kansas City PBS at 8 PM Central.

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**FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE**  
**FEB. 13 - MARCH 1 The Black Box Theatre**  
**1060 Union Ave, KCMO 64101**

Gather your family and friend groups for this feel-good, vibrant, jukebox musical. Meet Nomax – he is broke, his lovely Lorraine has left him, and he's listening to the radio at 5:00 in the morning. Out of his 1930s style radio, five guys named Moe emerge: Big Moe, Four-Eyed Moe, Eat Moe, No Moe, and Little Moe. They are here to help Nomax turn his life around as they sing their way through the hit songs of Louis Jordan (whose new style R&B/jazz opened the door to rock and roll).

Don't miss this uplifting hit play by writer-actor Peter Clarke and saxophonist, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, and band leader Louis Jordan. It's an enriching view of the Black experience. +

<https://www.brkrc.org/tickets/p/five-guys-named-moe>

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## **BLACK HISTORY FOR YOUNG KIDS**

These events are designed to introduce young children to Black History. Parents and grandparents will also enjoy the programs.

**Folly Theatre Kids Series – Meet Dr. King**  
**Wednesday, Feb. 18 9:45 & 11:30 AM Performances**  
**300 W. 12th Street, KCMO 64105**

This play introduces K-2nd grade students to major concepts of Black History like freedom, integration and equality. Designed to help young people begin to understand the importance of Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement as it takes them from Dr. King's life as just a young boy experiencing racism for the first time to becoming a pastor and finally a national inspiration. 60-minutes, no intermission. For tickets and more information go to

[Folly Kids Series – Folly Theater.](https://follytheater.org/event/meet-dr-king/)  
<https://follytheater.org/event/meet-dr-king/>

**Kansas City, KS Public Library – West African Music & Dance Lessons**  
**Monday, Feb. 2 6-7 PM**

## West Wyandotte Library Auditorium

1737 N. 82nd Street. KCK 66112

A delightful evening of dancing and music with KCK Library and the Esoke Cultural Arts Center. They will demonstrate and teach young children traditional West African dances with drum accompaniment.

<https://www.kckpl.org/event/esoke-cultural-arts-center-west-african-dance-lessons-88021>

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## WICHITA CELEBRATES AFRICAN AMERICAN SCIENTISTS

How about a road trip with friends to Wichita this month? Exploration Place and The Kansas African American Museum are celebrating Black History Month by honoring the contributions of Black scientists with an outdoor display. Each week in February the image of an African American pioneer in science is projected on Exploration Place's iconic island building. Use this opportunity to visit both the Kansas African American Museum and Exploration Place to learn about and discuss the impact these individuals have made on science, technology engineering, and math (STEM).

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## MISSION POSSIBLE ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY LUNCHEON

**SATURDAY, FEB. 21 – 11:30-1:30 PM**  
**Marriott Hotel – 200 W. 12th Street, KCMO**

Honor and celebrate the rich legacy, achievements, and cultural contributions of African Americans at this inspiring Kansas City metro event. This year's theme is Mission Possible – Our Story, Our Strength, Our Future. Speakers will pay tribute to the past and look forward to a future of unity, justice, and progress. For more information call 816-221-1600. [Purchase tickets at Annual Black History Luncheon](#)

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## 57th NAACP IMAGE AWARDS

**SATURDAY, FEB. 28, 7 PM Central**  
**Live on [BET](#) and Simulcast on [CBS](#).**

How in tune are you with contemporary Black arts and entertainment? Get up to speed by watching the 57th NAACP Image Awards. Hosted by comedian Deon Cole from the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, the event celebrates Black excellence in arts and entertainment. *Sinners* leads film nominations and *Bel-Air* tops TV. Nominees were announced in January 2026, with public voting for some categories running until February 7, 2026.

Visit [www.naacpimageawards.net](http://www.naacpimageawards.net) to vote in select categories. Voting closes on February 7, 2026, at 12:00 midnight (ET.) NAACP will also recognize winners in non-televised Image Awards categories at the Creative Honors celebrations on Thursday,

February 26 and virtually on YouTube/NAACPPlus Monday, February 23-Wednesday, February 25.



Bringing people together to **ACT** by supporting racial justice activities throughout our churches and communities.

Let's act together

## ST. JAMES CHURCH BLACK HISTORY MONTH SUNDAYS

**Worship at 9 AM**  
**5540 Wayne Ave. KCMO 64110**

If you've never experienced the uplifting, exhilarating, meaningful joy of "Black Church," ARJ invites you to join our brothers and sisters at St. James Church UMC on any Sunday — but especially so during Black History Month this February. St. James has special activities planned that celebrate Black culture, community, and history. We want you to be a part of it. See listings below.



**CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE**  
Black History Month 2026

- ▶ **February 1 • Rooted in Africa**  
Celebrating the fashion and beat of the motherland. Wear your African garments.
- ▶ **February 8 • Sunday Best**  
Celebrating the freedom enslaved people found in church, dressing in clean, beautiful clothes - giving God their best.
- ▶ **February 15 • Black People United**  
Celebrating groups that work to advance civil rights, social justice, and cultural identity.
- ▶ **February 22 • We Are the Church**  
Celebrating St. James member-owned businesses with a free Vendor Expo. Registration required.

sjumckc.org | 816-444-5588 |    

If you are unable to worship in person, there are several ways to connect.

- <https://sjumckc.org/worship-online/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/c/StJamesKansasCity>

- <https://www.facebook.com/people/St-James-Church-KC/61564446413681/>
  - 888-363-8708 (Phone Live Streaming)
  - Ride to Church within 15 miles. Call 816-807-8406 on Saturday between 9 am and 6 pm to arrange a pickup.
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## **SUPPORT BLACK-OWNED RESTAURANTS**

### **It's More Than Just Eating.**

Aside from enjoying a meal or coffee break in new surroundings, there are other reasons to support Black-owned restaurants. These businesses help empower their communities and promote economic growth and equality. They are often the heart of neighborhoods where people forge connections and friendships that overcome any perceived cultural barriers. We all spend money eating out. Just imagine what directing some of that spending power to Black-owned businesses can do. Join ARJ in bridging the economic gap by supporting Black-owned restaurants and businesses. Here are a few that we've frequented and you can try. We will feature others in future newsletters.

#### **Black Garlic Restaurant & Rum Bar**

Classic Ethiopian, Eritrean & Caribbean cuisine plus smoothies & coffee in a low-key dining room.

3601 Broadway Blvd. KCMO 64111

Ph. 816-214-6939

<https://blackgarlicrestaurant.com/menu/>

#### **The Combine**

Great hot and cold deli sandwiches, stone-fired pizza, tap selections. Warm community vibes and varied seating (bar, booths, couches). Located in the Wonder Shops.

2999 Troost Ave. KCMO 64108

Ph. 816-895-3036

<https://thecombinekc.com/>

#### **Neice's Restaurant**

Kansas City's soul food restaurant since 1985. Southern fried chicken, grilled wings, and so much more. "Good Food. Served Right" is their motto. All day breakfast, lunch, dinner and catering.

6441 Troost Ave, KCMO 64131

Ph: 816-444-6006

[Niece's Restaurant - Kansas City](#)

#### **Urban Restaurant**

Truly special New American Cuisine in a refined, cozy, modern setting. Come for coffee meetups, breakfast, lunch, happy hour, and dinner. Live jazz most evenings.

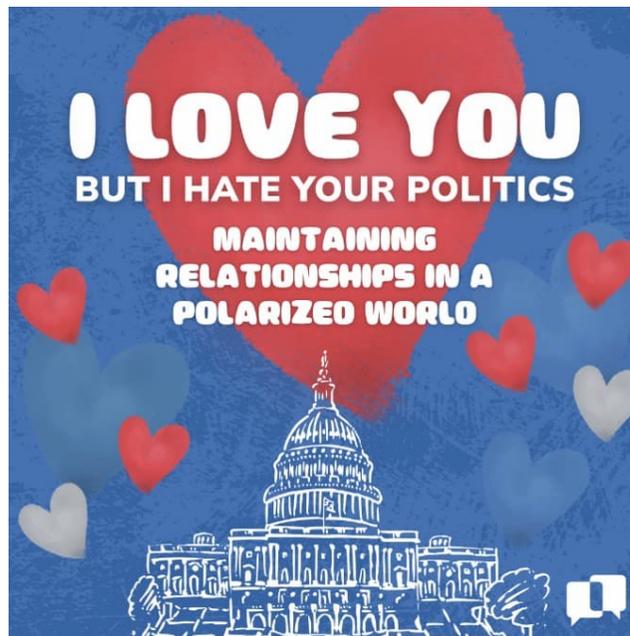
3420 Troost Ave. KCMO 64109

Ph: 816-503-6921

<https://urbanontroost.com/>



**PRESENTING**



**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 19**

**Doors open at 5:30 PM – Program at 6:00 PM**

**Church of the Resurrection Student Center – Bldg. C  
13720 Roe Ave, Leawood, KS 66224**

American Public Square and Church of the Resurrection are hosting a conversation about maintaining connection across the political divide. On Thursday, February 19 at 6 pm in the Student Center, Rev. Adam Hamilton will moderate a discussion with Dr. Jeanne Safer, psychotherapist and author of *I Love You, But I Hate Your Politics*, and her husband, historian Richard Brookhiser—a couple who've built a life together despite holding different political beliefs. They'll share practical insights on navigating disagreements with family members, friends, coworkers, and neighbors without sacrificing the relationship. If you're struggling to talk politics with someone you care about or simply want to understand how to stay curious rather than combative when beliefs collide, this program offers real strategies for preserving trust and connection in polarized times.

Doors open at 5:30, and the program begins at 6 pm, post-event reception follows.

[Register Here For I Love You But I hate Your Politics](#)

If you register to attend online, a link will be emailed to you with your confirmation. To register for Childcare, [click HERE!](#) Parking & Entrance: South side of Building C (enter from Roe Ave.)

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## SAVE THE DATE

**Langston Hughes: A Lyrical Life** – A semi-staged musical and literary performance celebrating the life of Langston Hughes, American poet, social activist, writer, and leader of the Harlem Renaissance. Scheduled for **March 21**, at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center, 3700 Blue Pkwy, KCMO 64130.

**ARJ Afternoon Theatre Event – April 26** – Black Repertory Theatre of Kansas City - Unicorn Theatre, 3828 Main St., KCMO 64111

*“The African Company Presents Richard III”* is not your typical Shakespeare! It is an inventive retelling of a little known, yet pivotal event in the history of our country’s first Black theatrical group – the African Company of New York, circa 1821.

ARJ has purchased a block of discount tickets (\$20 ea.) to the **Sunday, April 26 matinee** performance of this play. **Save the date now.** Watch your email and the March newsletter for more details and a link to purchase tickets.

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## OUR PARTNER CHURCHES

**Forging authentic relationships to eliminate the existing racial divide  
in our churches and communities**

**St. James Church and Resurrection offer inspiring worship, fellowship, studies, and community volunteer activities throughout the year. Check the individual websites and weekly newsletters to stay up to date on all opportunities.**



**Stay Connected – Visit our church’s web pages and sign up for pastor newsletters.**

### Websites

Resurrection [resurrection.church/next](https://resurrection.church/next)  
St. James Church [sjumckc.org](https://sjumckc.org)

### Pastor Newsletters

St. James Church [e-News](#) from Senior Pastor Emanuel Cleaver III  
*(click the grey box to join the mailing list)*

Resurrection [Weekly Updates](#) From Pastor Adam

*Allies for Racial Justice* (ARJ) is a partnership between St. James Church and Resurrection, two United Methodist churches. ARJ exists to build **authentic relationships to eliminate the existing racial divide in our churches and communities.**

Inquiries are received at [allies4racialjustice@gmail.com](mailto:allies4racialjustice@gmail.com)

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## Read, View and Learn



Visit the Allies for Racial Justice website for great video and book suggestions that can help us better understand our differences, appreciate our similarities and establish Christ-centered solutions to end racial and social injustices. Terrific selections for ARJ Small Groups!

[Click HERE](#) for all our recommended reading and video resources

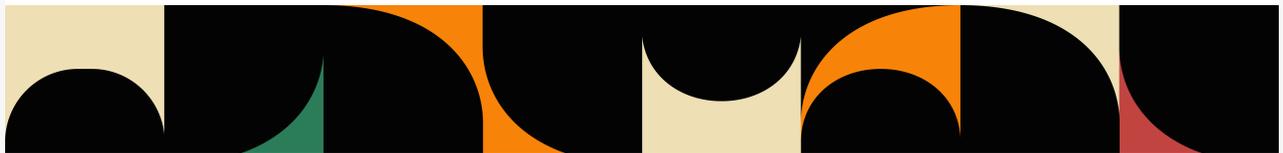
For more information on Allies for Racial Justice, visit our website:

<https://resurrection.church/arj>

or join the conversation on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/AlliesForRacialJustice>

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