Tonight's Program

CHRISTMAS IN BLACK:
THE ENDURING LEGACY OF LANGSTON HUGHES'S "BLACK NATIVITY"



Wallace Best
Hughes-Rogers Professor of Religion and African American Studies Princeton University



Rashida Z. Shaw McMahon
Associate Professor of English, Theater and African American Studies Wesleyan University



The Honorable Milton Wright Jr.
Choral Director, Narrator and Soloist Black Nativity



Amanda Shea
Emmy-Nominated Spoken Word Artist Moderator



Free Event!

Friday
October 30
6:00-8:00 PM (EST)

Roxbury Community College
1234 Columbus Avenue
Boston, MA 02120

HowlRound.tv (livestream)



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026 · 6:00–8:00 PM

PROGRAM

Christmas in Black: The Enduring Legacy of Langston Hughes's "Black Nativity"

Media Arts Center, Roxbury Community College

WELCOME

Akiba Abaka, MFA, Executive Director, National Center of Afro-American Artists

Jordan Smock, Vice President of Communications & External Affairs, Roxbury Community College

ART BURST 1

"Let America Be America Again" by Langston Hughes · **Amanda Shea**

PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Dr. Wallace Best · Dr. Rashida Z. Shaw McMahon · The Honorable Milton L. Wright, Jr.

Moderated by **Amanda Shea**, with front-row voices **Desiree Springer** and **Vivian Collier**

ART BURST 2

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" by Langston Hughes · **Jael Williams**, Children of Black Persuasion

ART BURST 3

"The Shepherd's Speech" from Langston Hughes's *Black Nativity* · **Rodney Williams**, Children of Black Persuasion

AUDIENCE DIALOGUE

Your questions, memories, and reflections

MUSICAL FINALE

Children and Adults of **Voices of Black Persuasion**

ABOUT BLACK NATIVITY

Langston Hughes's *Black Nativity* began in Boston as the annual capstone of the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts, staged by Miss Elma Lewis and Vernon Blackman, with music by John Andrew Ross and choreography by George Howard. Now in its 56th season, it is offered each year by the National Center of Afro-American Artists as a gift to people of good will from every spiritual tradition.

December 4–20 · Emerson Paramount Center · blacknativity.org

TONIGHT'S CONVERSATION

Dr. Wallace Best · Panelist

Hughes-Rogers Professor of Religion and African American Studies at Princeton University and a historian of African American religion. Author of *Passionately Human, No Less Divine* and *Langston's Salvation: American Religion and the Bard of Harlem.*

Dr. Rashida Z. Shaw McMahon · Panelist

Associate Professor of English, Theater and African American Studies at Wesleyan University, originally from St. Croix. Author of *The Black Circuit: Race, Performance, and Spectatorship in Black Popular Theatre,* a study of the Chitlin Circuit.

The Honorable Milton L. Wright, Jr. · Panelist

Adult choral director, narrator, and soloist in *Black Nativity* for 42 years. Former First Justice of the Roxbury District Court, CEO of Common House Theater and Production, and NCAAA board member.

Amanda Shea · Moderator

Emmy-nominated, three-time Boston Music Award-winning spoken word artist, educator, and filmmaker. Founder of Free Verse, host of GBH OUTSPOKEN SATURDAYS, and RCC alum and former trustee.

FRONT-ROW VOICES & MUSIC

Desiree Springer, 47 years in the *Black Nativity* cast, longtime Mary and Ballet Mistress, and this year's director.

Vivian Collier, mother of Ron Collier, Boston's first *Black Nativity* baby.

Voices of Black Persuasion, the ensemble choir of Boston's *Black Nativity,* children and adults singing side by side.

WITH GRATITUDE

Roxbury Community College · State Senator Liz Miranda · City Councilor Rev. Miniard Culpepper · HowlRound Theatre Commons, our livestream partner · Jeffrey Dandridge · John Michael Kennedy · Jacqueline Johnson · the NCAAA Board of Directors · and the *Black Nativity* family of artists, staff, and volunteers.

Support the National Center: ncaaa.org

The National Center of Afro-American Artists · 300 Walnut Avenue, Roxbury, MA 02119

NATIONAL CENTER OF AFRO-AMERICAN ARTISTS'

Black Nativity

by **Langston Hughes**

Directed by **Desiree A. Springer**

Choreography by **George Howard**

Musical Arrangements by **John Andrew Ross**

Featuring original staging by **Vernon Blackman and Elma Lewis**

2026 December 4–20

BLACKNATIVITY.ORG

Emerson Paramount Center
559 Washington Street
Boston, MA

Tickets: $56-$100
Official Box Office
Emersontheatres.org
617-824-8400

$10* off 8PM shows.
Dec. 4-12 only
Use code:
BNEVE10
*Offer expires 11/14

