



**MEDIA ALERT**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Media Contact: **Will Caperton y Montoya**  
**DCA Director of Marketing and Development**  
**213.202.5538**  
[will.caperton@lacity.org](mailto:will.caperton@lacity.org)

**The First Annual Leimert Literary Festival**  
**presents**  
**The Leimert Park Art Walk Tribute**  
**to**  
**Wanda Coleman: High Priestess of Word**

Los Angeles - The First Annual Leimert Literary Festival presents "The Leimert Park Art Walk Tribute to Wanda Coleman: High Priestess of Word," on Sunday, April 26, from noon to 3:30 p.m., at The Vision Theatre at 3341 West 43<sup>rd</sup> Place, Los Angeles, CA, 90008, in Leimert Park Village. The doors will open at 11:30 a.m. Sponsored by the Leimert Park Vision Theatre, the event is being produced in collaboration with the Leimert Park Art Walk, Tricia Alkmia Cochée, Trudy Goodwin, and Bryan World Productions.

An afternoon of film, spoken word, literary readings, and arts panel discussions, the Festival will take place on the People Street Plaza and in the Leimert Park Vision Theatre. The Literary Festival is a free family oriented event, with parents encouraged to bring their middle school and high school children, especially those interested in the arts.

The tribute will open with the documentary film *GV21 THE WANDA COLEMAN PROJECT: Genius. (period)* directed by Bob Bryan of Bryan World Productions. Literary readings of Ms. Coleman's writings by featured literacy, poetry, and spoken word artists will follow the screening including: veteran Hollywood actresses Beverly Todd and Judy Pace; performance artists V Kali, Pam Ward, and Kamau Daáood; representatives of the World Stage; Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez; and young poets from the Get Lit Players, Project Blowed, and the Conscious Youth Global Network.

The afternoon will close with a panel discussion "Celebrating the Legacy of Wanda Coleman: Literature and Community, 1965 to ....?" examining cultural and economic development, arts production, and the role of the artist in the community after the 1965 Watts Rebellion.



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Invited panelists include: Austin Straus, poet, educator, and husband of Wanda Coleman; author and poet Pam Ward; poet/performance artist and co-founder of The World Stage Kamau Daáood; Bikbaye Inejnema, poet/Hip Hop artist, educator, and Co-Executive Director of the Conscious Youth Global Network; and Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez.

A nominee for California state poet laureate, Wanda Coleman was considered “The Poet Laureate of South Central” or “The Poet Laureate of Venice.” Coleman, who published thirteen books of poetry, two collections of short stories, three books of essays, and a novel, in addition to numerous uncollected book reviews, newspaper columns, spoken-word recordings, and radio shows, has been called “the most extraordinary woman on the Los Angeles poetry scene.”

Poet, journalist, and literary critic, Coleman’s 1998 poetry collection *Bathwater Wine*, received the 1999 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize, and her collection *Mercurochrome* was a bronze-medal finalist in poetry for the 2001 National Book Awards. She has also received awards from the California Arts Council (fiction, 1982; poetry, 2002), a proclamation from the City of Los Angeles, and a City of Los Angeles (C.O.L.A.) Individual Artist Fellowship award from the Department of Cultural Affairs in 2003-2004.

Ms. Coleman passed away unexpectedly on November 22, 2013, at a time when several writers were pursuing extended studies of her writings. Many of her poems have been translated into Spanish, French, German, and Hungarian. A German translation of her short stories was published in 1991.

Upon her death, E. Ethelbert Miller, author and literary activist, wrote “Remembering Wanda Coleman” for the Nation: “Listening to her recite changed my understanding of black poetry. Her voice was unique and made my ears look for instructional notes. Coleman was more grassroots than Carolyn Rodgers, Audre Lorde, Nikki Giovanni, or Sonia Sanchez. Wanda didn’t just live in Los Angeles—she was LA. While some writers are associated with creative writing programs or a style, Wanda needed a city—a place to define her, a place she defined.”

Coleman’s early writing career was nourished and encouraged at the historic Watts Writers Workshop (developed in September 1965 after the Watts Rebellion in August 1965), Studio Watts, Beyond Baroque, and playwright Frank Greenwood’s Saturday workshop.

#### **About The Vision Theatre**

The Vision Theatre is a facility of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) under the direction of James V. Burks,



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Special Projects Director for DCA. The Vision Theatre has been declared a historic monument and is currently undergoing a multi-million dollar restoration expected to be completed in December, 2016.

**About the Leimert Park Art Walk**

The Leimert Park Art Walk was started by Ben Caldwell of the KAOS Network in association with Leimert Park business and community members in the summer of 2010 and takes place every last Sunday of the month in the Leimert Park Village. Past offerings have included open art studios and art exhibitions, musical performances, fashion show, drumming and storytelling, arts and crafts, spoken word workshops, local shopping, and food trucks throughout the various Leimert Park Village cultural spaces.