

## Commemorating 100 Years of Service

Establishing the Ralph Ellison Library was not an easy journey. When we celebrate 100 years of its service to the community, we celebrate not only the good it's brought to so many lives but the individuals who fought to ensure libraries in Oklahoma City were accessible to everyone.

Before we existed as the Metropolitan Library System we know today, libraries in Oklahoma were home-grown operations, with beginnings in spare rooms with only a small collection of books.

A wave of women's study clubs, including the Philomathean Club of Oklahoma City, first sparked an interest in establishing local libraries. The Philomathean Club started a small library operation in an unused room in the Commercial Club, which would later become the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce. However, OKC residents who wanted to use the library had to purchase stock in the Public Library Association. After the Philomathean collection grew to 600 volumes, the group pursued a grant from famed businessman and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie.

With a \$25,000 grant from Carnegie, the first library was established in Oklahoma City at NW Third Street and Robinson Avenue in 1901. Carnegie's intention was for libraries to be institutions of learning that included everyone; however, in 1921, the Library Board "moved, seconded and carried that the negroes be excluded from the use of the Central Library."

Despite this act of racism, a thriving and successful library took root – but not without the strong voices of the "negro" community who attended board meetings and made clear that they needed access to the library. They requested that they "be allowed equal privileges with white people at the main Carnegie Library." The commissioners would only agree to "an opportunity to judge the success of the branch library that is now being equipped for use of negroes."



Plans for the Ralph Ellison Library we know and love today.

In October of 1921 at the regular meeting, the Library Board that "the rent of the building for the colored branch, at \$60 per month be ratified by the board." The motion was approved unanimously. The library system opened a storefront location in Slaughter Hall on NE Second Street and Stiles Avenue for "negro" library patrons.

*For reasons that are so well known that they do not need repeating here, it would have been unwise to have extended to the Negroes the privileges of the main Carnegie Library. Nor was it advisable to give them facilities equaling those which were provided for the white*

*people in the city. The negro population of Oklahoma City is comparatively small and the negroes pay only a small portion of the taxation. The branch library will give the negroes a fair apportionment of the library money.*

– Dec. 27, 1921, The Daily Oklahoman

At a regular meeting of the board, members suggested establishing a more permanent location and that "the Chairman

# Commemorating 100 Years of Service (continued)

appoint a committee of negroes to make a selection for location of negro branch."

Meanwhile, "negro" community members maintained they should be allowed in the Carnegie Library. Despite their persistence, the library board continued to oppose their requests.

"I believe negroes should have library privileges the same as white people, but that does not necessarily mean that I think they should like the same library," Mike Donnelly, commissioner of accounting and finance, said in a 1921 article published in The Daily Oklahoman.

*"The Sum of \$5,000 was spent for the establishment of a branch for colored people. Library equipment, books and magazines have been purchased. If this branch performs the service that*

*is expected, I recommend that others be opened in connection with the colored schools. The effort to do consecutive work with the colored people is progressing as rapidly as we had any reason to expect."* - 1921-22 annual report of the library

In 1926, the Dunbar Library location opened, named for Paul Laurence Dunbar, a Black American poet, novelist and short story writer. Lillian Youngblood was the first librarian at the Dunbar Library location. She was also a teacher at Dunbar Elementary until her retirement in 1930.

In August 1966, the Urban Renewal Authority purchased the Dunbar Library location for \$12,250. In 1969, another temporary storefront location (Creston Hills Library) opened, replacing the Dunbar Library. In 1972, by community request, the name of the library changed to Ralph Ellison. A few years later, in 1975,

The Library Board closes the Carnegie Library (only library in the city at the time) to "negros"



April 1921

Dunbar Library opens at 631 NE 4th St.



June 1926



Jan. 1969

Temporary storefront space in Park Estates Center at NE 36th Street and Kelley Avenue used as library

Dec. 1921



A library for "negros" was opened in a storefront in Slaughter Hall, located at NE 2nd Street and Stiles Avenue.

Oct. 1968



Dunbar closes because of Urban Renewal and a bookmobile is placed at NE 36th Street and Kelley Avenue.



the permanent Ralph Ellison Library location that we now know opened.

Today, Library Manager Kimberly Francisco says she sees multi-generational users of the Ralph Ellison Library. She grew up in the area and says she remembers the library being built between 1973-1975.

“To have an opportunity to authentically tell the story of our beginning, while showcasing how the community rallied to assure a viable library was available, is an honor,” Francisco said.

Even amid a pandemic, the Centennial Planning Committee is orchestrating a commemoration of this huge milestone for a beloved library. The committee includes Kimberly Francisco, Dana Beach, Judith Matthew, Morgan Day, Kellie Delaney and LaVetta Dent. The commemoration will likely include a virtual reception; a display with photos, testimonials and newspaper

clippings; and a special souvenir program booklet with information about the library. Look for a potential traveling display throughout the library system as well.

What will the next 100 years hold for this special library branch full of rich history? Francisco said she hopes they continue to meet community needs and look for ways to make library services as accessible to their community as possible.

“Our hope is that this community is again a thriving mecca of businesses and community outreach and self-regulation; vibrant and thriving with multi-generational families living with and among one another,” Francisco said. “I hope that the community isn’t saddled with language of deprivation that overlooks the immense assets in and of this community. I envision, as we are today, Ralph Ellison Library being an integral part of this community, serving our patrons to the best of our ability while living the core values in all our work and endeavors.”

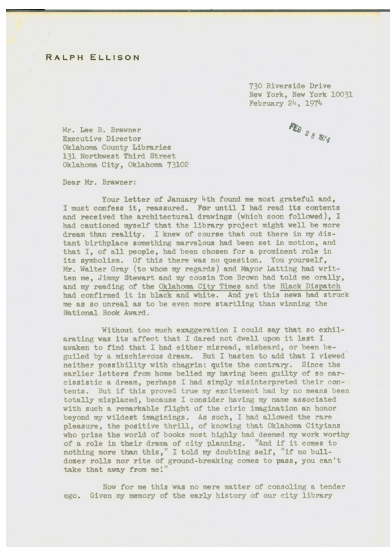
### Temporary location closes

Photo: Oklahoma First Lady Molly Shi Boren talks to 4-year-old James Lesley during storytime at the Ralph Ellison Library in 1978.



May 1975

Oct. 1972



By community request, the library name was changed to Ralph Ellison Library.

Photo: Letter from Ralph Ellison to Lee Brawner.



June 1975

Ralph Ellison Library opens

**Editor's note:** Metropolitan Library System communications largely adhere to AP Style, which outlines the usage of the term *Black*, capitalized, as an adjective in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense. However, you'll see this story reflects the language of the times, which we believe is necessary to understand the full scope of our library system's history and the role the library system played in the lives of the Black community.



# NATIONAL *Hispanic/Latinx* HERITAGES MONTH SEPT. 15 - OCT. 15

Join us in celebration of Hispanic/Latinx Heritages Month! We'll explore the history and culture of the diverse peoples throughout Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world with programs and take-home kits.

**Did you know?** Spanish is not the only language spoken in Latin America. Portuguese, French, Creole, a number of Indigenous languages and many others are spoken throughout Latin America and the Caribbean Islands.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Sat, Sept. 11**

Northwest Library  
Guatemalan Quetzal Kids Craft on the Patio\*

### **Mon, Sept. 20, at 10:30am**

Harrah and Almonte Libraries  
Bilingual Book Club and Conversation\*

### **Tue, Sept. 28, at 7pm**

Harrah and Almonte Libraries  
Cuéntame un Cuento/Bilingual Storytime\*

### **Wed, Sept. 29, at 10am**

Library Online  
Sonia De Los Santos Concert

### **Wed, Oct. 6, at 10am**

Library Online  
Musical Instruments of Latin America  
with Sonia De Los Santos

### **Wed, Oct. 13, at 10am**

Library Online  
Latin Rhythms with Sonia De Los Santos  
\*Registration Required

## TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY KITS

### **Aztec Codices Activity Kit\*\***

Belle Isle Library

### **Passport Around the World-Cuba Teen Activity Kit\*\***

Almonte Library

### **Loteria/Bingo Activity Kit\*\***

Del City Library & Warr Acres Library

### **Guatemalan Worry Dolls/Munecas Quitapena Activity Kit\*\***

Warr Acres Library

### **Paper Mache Alebrijes Adult Take-Home Kit\*\***

Almonte Library

\*\*All activity/take-home kits available while supplies last.



# Sonia De Los Santos

By: Morgan Day

If you're in need of uplifting, we couldn't think of a better person for the task than Latin American family musician Sonia De Los Santos.

Armed with cheerful instruments like kazoos and ukuleles, the 2019 Latin Grammy nominee will uplift Metro Library customers virtually through three Facebook Live events celebrating Hispanic and Latinx Heritages Month. De Los Santos, a native of Mexico who's usually bedecked in bold colors with a beaming smile that never seems to fade, might just be the epitome of joy.

In fact, "¡Alegría!" meaning "joy" in Spanish, is one of her favorite songs to perform, and it happens to be a crowd-pleaser as well. That song, and her other Spanish-language and bilingual songs, will make an appearance on her set list for Metro Library customers in September and October.

"¡Alegría! is very simple to sing along to, but it also has a very special story attached to it," she said. "I wrote it because my mom told me I was born with a smile on my face. I thought, 'What? I thought all babies were born crying!' It's a personal anecdote that puts a smile on my face again and again, every time I think about it."

During "¡Alegría!," De Los Santos prompts listeners to think about their favorite memory, person or color that makes them happy and encourages them to hang onto that thought and revisit it on days when things aren't going their way.

Don't be surprised if De Los Santos's music inspires you to get off your feet, clap along with her prompts and even dance a little. And if you don't speak Spanish, no worries — you'll have fun following along with the musician's gestures and prompts and will likely learn something along the way.

"Even if you don't speak Spanish, you'll still be able to follow along," she said. "Even if we're not in the same space, you can follow hand motions and participate in that way."

## **Sonia De Los Santos** **Facebook Live Performances:**

**Bilingual Music Performance**  
Wed, Sept. 29, at 10am

**Latin American Instruments**  
Wed, Oct. 6, at 10am

**Introduction to Latin American Rhythms**  
Wed, Oct. 13, at 10am



## Aug.-Sept.

### HELLO!

**Bailey Ramer**

CL Library Aid PT

**Bridgett Bills**

OUT Outreach Specialist PT

**Robert Nielsen**

IT Technical Support Manager FT

**Colton Clayton**

DC Library Aid PT

**Maria Dejarlo**

VI Library Aid PT

**Britni McGuire**

VI Library Aid PT

**Katelin Seay**

ED Library Aid PT

**Deborah Thao**

RE Outreach Specialist PT

**Jasmine Blue**

BI Access Specialist HT

**Dorothy Darden**

BI Library Aid PT

**Destiny Hightower**

VI Access Specialist FT (rehire)

**Madison Lucas**

Access Specialist HT (rehire)

**Jana McLemore**

DN Access Specialist HT

**Ogieva Uwudia**

RE Library Aide PT

**Cierra Vaughn**

ED Library Aid PT

**Saidah Yakasai**

RE Engagement Specialist II FT

### GOODBYE

**Janeth Rivera**

5 yrs, CH Access Specialist

**Miriam Villanueva**

1 yr, ED Library Aide

**Samuel Karns**

3 yrs, DN Virtual Librarian

**Alyssa Katsion**

8 mos, AL Library Aide

**Sabino Torres**

1 yr, CH Library Aide

**Robert Nielsen**

1 month, Technology Support Manager

**Deborah Thao**

1 month, RE Library Aide

**Megan Autaubo**

5 yrs, WA Access Manager II

**Brittani Mulkey**

2 yrs, BI Access Specialist

**Vanessa Spaeth**

13 yrs, BI Access Manager II

**Alex Campbell**

1 yr, BI Library Aide

**Laqueta Lewis**

15 yrs, AL Access Specialist

**Cindy Revels-Nigg**

10 yrs, BE Access Manager I

**Mary Kate King**

2 mos, CSD Collection Processing Specialist I

**Kresta Jayne**

1 yr, VI Library Aide

**Daniel Dunlap**

9 mos, RE Library Aide

**Stephanie Valencia**

8 yrs, AL Access Specialist

**Dwight Maney**

1 mo, SO Library Aide

**Christan KJose**

2 mos, BI Library Aide

**Roland Herwig**

13 yrs, DN Surveillance Systems Technician

**Nava Yekita**

2 mos, BI Library Aide

**Marcie Jackson**

1 yr, Marketing Coordinator

**Dana Mahmoud-Elhaj**

6 mos, WA Library Aide

**Kevan Dunkelberg**

9 mos, ED Library Aide

**Michelle Merriman**

5 yrs, DN Engagement Manager

**Johnathan Willis**

15 yrs, DN Network System Coordinator

**CONGRATULATIONS****Albert Brown**Maintenance Technician II FT to  
Asst Director of Facilities MTC/Fleet Ops**Tricia Ross**

ED Library Aide PT to VI Access Specialist FT

**Sharon Rutz**

SO Access Specialist HT to SO Access Specialist FT

**Amy Smith**

AL Library Aide PT to Access Specialist HT

**Melannie Chavez**AL Engagement Specialist II HT to  
CL Engagement Specialist II FT**Jakob Hertzell**

DN Librarian FT to Engagement Manager FT

**Armando Celayo**

WA Library Aide PT to Engagement Specialist II HT

**Ellory Williams**

VI Access Specialist FT to Virtual Engagement Specialist II FT

**Katrina Wilde**

LU Access Specialist HT to Outreach Delivery Specialist FT

**Julia Moser**

NW Access Specialist HT to NW Access Specialist FT

**Tammie Crawford**CL Access Specialist HT to  
CL Access Specialist FT**Matthew Logo Falepouono**MTC Delivery Driver FT to  
MTC Delivery and Fleet Coordinator FT**RETIREMENTS****Geraldine Adams**

13 yrs, SO Access Manager III

**COMING UP****Sept. 16**

Metro Library Commission Meeting

**DIY Development  
Niche Academy  
Tech Talk: Think Like  
Tech Support**

34(m) Troubleshooting is now a common reality for anyone who works with computers in all of their various shapes and sizes — smartphones, desktops, even smart watches. Eventually, something will go wrong, stop working or not work as expected. This tutorial is intended to sharpen problem solving skills, especially when it comes to investigating issues with technology.

In this tutorial, we will assume that you don't know where to start, or that you've tried everything and are now stuck in solving a computer problem. This tutorial is first and foremost aimed at people who are not computer experts.

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