

The Augusta Chronicle

Library highlights black history from bottom up

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The Augusta Public Library is giving the community an opportunity to learn about Augusta's black history this month.

Each Saturday through Feb. 20, a speaker will be featured in a series called Augusta's African-American Story, said Sherryl James, the community service/outreach librarian.

"They are all going to bring personal things to it. They are all from Augusta, and they know a lot of people," she said. "I think that adds a lot of value to their presentations."

Joyce Law, who has done research in black culture and genealogy, will be the speaker Saturday. She will discuss the period from after the Civil War to the early 1900s and topics including educational institutions and reform through education. She will also share some of her genealogical research.

She wants to dispel some myths, she said.

"People have this misconception that African-Americans were illiterate and raggedy, but Augusta was filled with strivers and achievers," she said.

On Feb. 13, Corey Rogers will give a presentation on the early 1900s through the 1960s. He is the historian at the Lucy Craft Laney Museum of Black History.

"My goal is to look at Augusta history but present it in a way where we go from focusing on Augusta just from a local perspective to a global perspective," he said, noting that many Augustans, including C.T. Walker and Lucy Craft Laney, made an impact beyond the city.

He'll also showcase photographs of everyday people in Augusta.

"I think people will get a kick out of it because there will be a lot of people they recognize, like neighbors, teachers, lawyers," he said.

On Feb. 20, Joseph Williams, an Augusta native and author, will talk about his experiences, some of which will tie in with events Rogers will have talked about.

"I'm going to talk about the events from a first-person view of it, which is sometimes a little bit different than the historical view of the situation," he said. "I think history is a lot more than 'the great wonderful people.' It's about everyone, including people in everyday life and their experiences."

Rogers agreed.

"Often history is told from the top down. It's very top heavy. We only focus on certain people, when in fact everybody has a story to tell and everybody has a perspective on history," he said. "The facts don't change. Perspectives do."

All presentations will start at 2:30 p.m. in the library's auditorium, James said. The series is being funded through a grant from the Georgia Humanities Council.