



Inside



Library Acquires Lewis Papers

The Library this week announced that it has acquired a trove of documents, films and other media belonging to comedic legend Jerry Lewis.

Page 3

Kluge Gets Interim Director

Former ambassador Robert L. Gallucci this week was named interim director of the Kluge Center at the Library.

Page 4

Mapping the West

A new book published by Levensger Press and the Library explores the cartographic discoveries of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Page 5

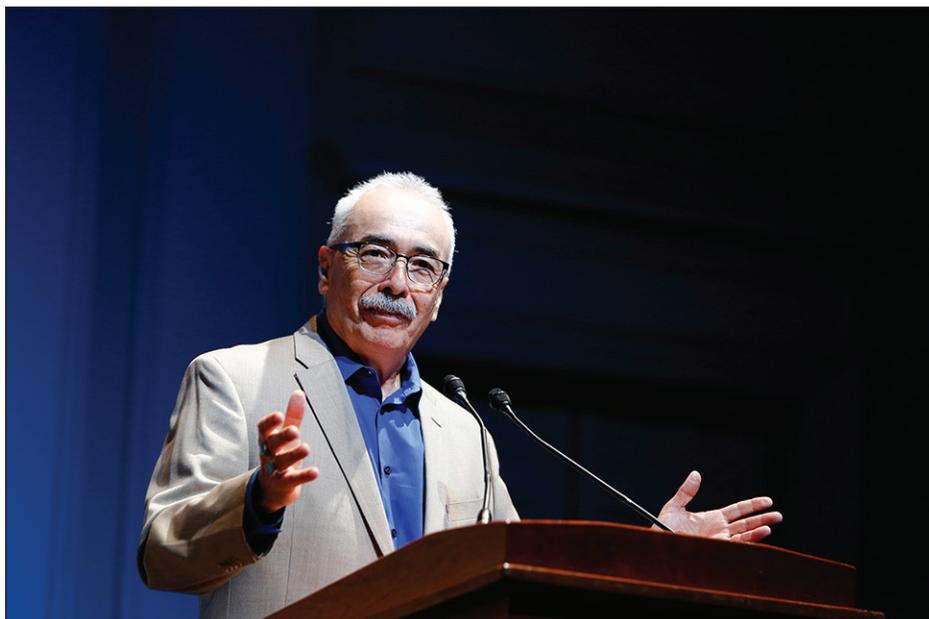


Molly Guptill Manning discusses her new book, "When Books Went to War: The Stories that Helped us Win World War II," Sept. 25 in Pickford Theater.

On Tap

Lectures, films, concerts, classes and other events at the Library of Congress in the coming week.

Page 8



Shawn Miller

New poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera on the Coolidge Auditorium stage on Tuesday.

A Debut for New Laureate

Literary Season Opens with Reading by Herrera

By Mark Hartsell

Imagine, Juan Felipe Herrera wrote in a recent poem, wearing a robe at the Library of Congress, standing in front of family, reading verse aloud before a big audience and signing books as "poet laureate of the United States of America."

On Tuesday night, Herrera did just that – not in a robe but rather a blue shirt and tan suit.

Herrera opened his tenure as the 21st U.S. poet laureate with a reading in the Coolidge Auditorium before an audience of family, friends and poetry lovers, followed by his first book-signing in his official capacity as laureate.

"Muchas gracias," Herrera said as the audience welcomed him with a standing ovation. "This is beautiful. This is beautiful."

Herrera is the author of 28 books

of poetry, novels for young adults and collections for children – most recently "Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes," a picture book showcasing the lives of inspirational Latino Americans.

In June, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington appointed Herrera poet laureate consultant in poetry, following Charles Wright. Herrera is the first Hispanic to hold the position.

"It was such a big moment," Herrera told the audience, recalling the phone call Billington made to offer the job. "I had to hold on to the table. ... Tonight, I'm really feeling the beauty and the obligations and responsibilities."

Over the course of 60-plus minutes, Herrera read 14 poems and reflected on his own life and the path that led him to the laureateship and the Coolidge stage.

He thanked his third-grade teacher, seated in the first row, for the help and

POET LAUREATE, continued on page 6

NEWS

POET LAUREATE, continued from page 1

inspiration she provided decades ago to a child struggling with identity and the English language. “It was your words that made it all happen for me,” he told her.

He recalled arriving on campus at UCLA as a poor, new student. “I had ‘Chicano luggage’ – it was cardboard boxes and rope,” he joked.

He reminisced about landing in San Francisco as a young poet with big dreams. “We were going to conquer the poetry scene,” he said. “We didn’t conquer anything.”

Herrera was born to migrant farmworkers in California’s Central Valley in 1948. The family moved from town to town and crop to crop in Dad’s 1940s Army truck, often living in tents or trailers.

He graduated from UCLA with a degree in social anthropology, a master’s in the same field from Stanford and a master’s in fine arts from the University of Iowa. He taught at California State University in Fresno and the University of California at Riverside and later served as California’s poet laureate.

His cultural heritage and the small towns of the San Joaquin Valley of his childhood, the Mission District of San Francisco and the Logan Heights neighborhood of San Diego all influenced his work – demonstrated on Tuesday night in the English and Spanish verse and pastoral images of “Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way,” one of his first poems.

*Let us gather in a flourishing way
en la luz y en la carne of our heart
to toil
tranquilos in fields of blossoms ...*

Herrera, leaning on the podium and working from a sheaf of papers he called his “playlist,” delivered his poems in a style that often was more performance than reading.

He invited audience participation (“where’s the tuna?” he had the crowd shout during “Saturday Night at the Buddhist Cinema”), advocated the use of soft paper and Japanese bamboo pens (“that will get you writing a poem, tell you the truth”), misplaced a few pages

of text (“one good thing about being a poet: you can go with the flow”), lauded the collections and work of the Hispanic Division and, with guitarist Juan Díes, performed a tragic ballad that had been written at a workshop at the Library only that afternoon.

He also pondered the impact of immigration, borders and racial and class strife on individual lives.

“So much is going on. So much separation between us, between colors, between classes. ... Who’s suffering more, who’s suffering less. Who’s right, who’s wrong,” Herrera said before reading his “Almost Livin’, Almost Dyin’.”

*Officer Ramos Red and Eric Garner
whose
last words were not words they were
just breath
askin’ for breath they were just burnin’
like me like
we are all still burnin’ can you hear me
can you feel me swaggin’ tall & driv-
ing low &
shootin’ fine & hollarin’ from my corner
crime & fryin’ against the wall
almost livin’ almost dyin’*

Herrera ended the evening with “Imagine What You Could Do,” the recently written inspirational poem that envisions better things – a work he dedicated to family, to those attempting to cross borders in search of food and hope, to those facing tough times in communities in this country.

*If I stood up
wearing a robe
in front of my familia and many more
on the high steps
of the Library of Congress
in Washington, D.C., and read
out loud and signed
my poetry book
like this—
‘poet laureate of the United States of
America’
Imagine what you could do. ♦*

*The poet laureate consultant in poetry
position and the opening reading and
reception are made possible by a gift from
Archer M. Huntington to bring the living
world of creative writing to the Library
and the American people.*

Library of Congress Research Orientation

The Humanities and Social Sciences Division offers an introduction for researchers to Library collections and resources. Orientations are held in the Jefferson Building, Room LJ G07.

Morning sessions (10–11:30 a.m.) are scheduled Sept. 21 and 28, Oct. 19 and 26 and Nov. 16. Evening sessions (6:30–8 p.m.) are scheduled Oct. 5 and Nov. 2. Registration is required by phone at 7-3370 or online at www.loc.gov/rr/main/infocoreas/signup.php.

For more information, contact Abby Yochelson at 7-2138 or Kathy Woodrell at 7-0945. Request ADA accommodations five business days in advance at 7-6362 or at ADA@loc.gov.

‘The Power to Save a Life’

A Heartsaver CPR/AED training class is available Sept. 22 (LM 654E). The class runs from 9 a.m. to noon. Register at the Center for Learning and Development Online Learning Center at <http://www.loc.gov/staff/cld>. Select course number LCHEAL 100, search “Heartsaver CPR.” For more information, contact Paul Martin at 7-8035 or pmar@loc.gov.