



NEBRASKA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Kearney to host “Visions for America” Chautauqua

The Nebraska Humanities Council (NHC) will present a new Chautauqua in Kearney June 21-24. The theme is “Visions for America: Notable Nebraska Reformers” and will feature four scholars portraying historical figures from Nebraska who played major roles in important American political and social reform movements of the late 19th century and 20th century.

William Jennings Bryan’s “free-silver” campaign as a three-time presidential candidate articulated the populist unrest of rural America and its distrust of the financial and political power of eastern banks and industrialists. The progressive reforms of **George Norris** focused both on political structure—his challenge to “Boss” Cannon’s control of the House of Representatives and the Unicameral experiment in the Nebraska legislature—and the social reform of public power during the New Deal with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and rural electrification.

Grace Abbott began as a crusader for immigrants in Jane Addams’ Hull House in Chicago and expanded her concerns about immigrant women and children to the national scene as head of the U.S. Children’s Bureau. **Malcolm X** will articulate the radical position of the Civil Rights movement in the post-World War II era. He will challenge the populist-progressive reformers who helped create greater equality in the United States with a failure to extend those reforms to black America.

The Chautauqua runs Thursday through Sunday, with a different scholar portraying their character each evening. Each will give a 40-minute, first-person presentation as the historical character, then answer questions as their research suggests the character would have responded. Finally, the scholar will answer questions as an historian, correcting self-serving answers the historical character may have given or shedding new light on a subject as the historical character would not have been able to do. The Norris character also will serve as host/moderator each evening. During the day, scholars will conduct workshops for adults to explore other themes.

Two of the Chautauqua scholars are members of the NHC’s Speakers Bureau, a third is a former Speaker Bureau presenter, and the fourth is a long-time national Chautauquan. David Landis will portray Norris, Donald Fiedler will portray Bryan, Helen M. Lewis will portray Abbott, and Charles Everett Pace will portray Malcolm X.

The NHC also brings Ride into History, historical-performance educators based in Kansas, to the Chautauqua to work with 4th through 8th grade students. They will research and develop Chautauqua portraits of historical characters from the Kearney area and present Chautauqua performances June 24.

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