

Words can be powerful — especially those expressed on paper by talented novelists or poets which come to life when spoken by others who capture the true spirit of the writers' thoughts. This was the case Wednesday afternoon during the 15th-Annual African American Read-In at Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, hosted by members of the local Plaid Cloth Literary Society. More than 20 people were drawn to the event, part of a nationwide observance occurring for 35 years. Wednesday afternoon's gathering at the museum was held in conjunction with Black History Month. Those attending were invited to select works written by African Americans and read a poem or excerpt from a book — or they could just listen. Troubling legacy

While Wednesday's event drew a multi-racial group of local residents, the material read focused on the black experience in the U.S. — not always pleasing portraits, but ones making listeners think long and hard about the implications involved. This was reflected in a selection by Olivia Jessup for the Read-In, "Let America Be America Again," a poem by Langston Hughes. It explores the notion that the American dream is not truly realized because not everyone can attain it, as cited in passages read by Jessup: "Equality is in the air we breathe," Hughes wrote, yet "there's never been equality for me, nor freedom in this 'homeland of the free.'" Passages delivered by Bisse Bowman Wednesday addressed racial stereotypes as highlighted in a book from Lisa Jones, "Bulletproof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex and Hair." This included use of the word "auntie" in referring to black women in a way that's disrespectful or diminishes their status, such as the Aunt Jemima pancake image. As rendered by Bowman, the "Bulletproof Diva" author mentioned this in writing about a real-life relative. "You couldn't put a red bandanna on my Aunt Cora with a 10-foot pole," according to Jones. "My aunt has never been an auntie." Roosevelt Pitts Jr., another reader Wednesday, chose the book "Black People Are Indigenous to the Americas" by Kimberly Norton as his topic. It is billed as a research work which makes the case that blacks have existed in this part of the world long before they were thought to be here. Pitts told Wednesday's audience that his would prove helpful to him after thinking, "who am I — where did I come from?" as a child. "When all is said and done, I realized I was here," Pitts added. "This is my home." The power of words themselves also was highlighted at Wednesday's African American Read-In by Millie Hiatt in reading lines from Marc Worthy, a poet born in Winston-Salem: "Lock me up and throw away the key," Worthy wrote in part, "because I speak with a vigorous voice." In view of a takeoff Sunday by Super Bowl halftime performer Kendrick Lamar on the 1970s poem and song "The

**Revolution Will Not Be Televised,” Olivia Jessup read the original words. “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” is a satirical work that mingles the unrest of the black community with the TV marketing influences of the Seventies. One will not be able to “skip out for beer during commercials, because the revolution will not be televised,” the original states. “NBC will not be able to predict the winner at 8:32,” and “there will be no highlights on the 11 o’clock news,” the song continues. “The Revolution will not go better with a Coke.” Works by Maya Angelou also were among those highlighted Wednesday.**