

# THE COLLEGE LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION



**April 2, 2024**

Dear College Language Association Members,

WELCOME HOME!

I am thrilled to be back in our *Founding City* and *My Hometown* of **Memphis, Tennessee!**

In 1937, a group of Black scholars gathered from April 22<sup>nd</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup> on the campus of the HBCU then called LeMoyne College for the Initial Conference of the Teachers of English in Negro Colleges. They convened to address what they saw as “the alarming decline of the oral and written expression of the average college student.” Yet, they also took time for moments of community, cultural, and social uplift as they found opportunities to enjoy theater productions, an intercollegiate debate, and even a President’s Tea in the Faculty Garden. They set the very foundation that we enjoy today of a scholarly community that is also firmly committed to Black joy and excellence.

Last year, our 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Convention in Atlanta hosted by Emory University was a celebration and restoration for so many of us since we were reconvening in person for the first time since COVID-19, and this year we have the opportunity to expand upon that idea with a HOMECOMING in Memphis! We do not have a Host Institution for our 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention, and the CLA Executive Committee has planned unique moments for us to give back and to celebrate the institution that first gave us a home, the now LeMoyne-Owen College.

I hope that many of you will be participating in our **Pre-Convention Tour and Luncheon of our Founding Institution, [LeMoyne-Owen College](#), Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> from 12pm – 3:30pm** (\$25 additional fee and pre-registration required). Please also join us for the **CLA Founding City Reception, Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> from 6:30pm – 7:30pm. During the Founding City Reception we will take our Convention Photograph**, a return to a tradition that started at the first Conference and that is listed in Program One in the CLA Archives at the Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the Teachers of English in Negro Colleges was held in Atlanta in 1938 and hosted by Atlanta University, and the conference participants gathered for the photo included in this letter that can be found in our [Archives](#). **We will honor and celebrate our Archives during the Opening Plenary on Thursday, April 11<sup>th</sup> at 9am.**

*Founded in 1937*



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We hope that you will embrace the Homecoming theme that we are weaving throughout this Convention. Memphis native [Dr. Zandria F. Robinson](#) is our Banquet Keynote Speaker; the President's Reception will be a HOMECOMING Party on Friday night; undergraduate and graduate student members have a social; we will host the first-ever screening of the CLA Documentary, *College Language Association: Black Scholars in America Part 1 – The Movement*; all of this and so much more makes this a Homecoming to remember! **In final celebration of this theme, we invite you to “Rep Your School” for the CLA Founding City Reception where we will take the Convention Photograph. Come out wearing your favorite T-shirt, hoodie, sweatshirt, or paraphernalia from the school you want to Rep for the CLA Archives!**

Finally, please don't forget that this Convention is a CLA Election Year, so make plans to attend the Business Meeting, Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:30am. The full CLA Convention Program will be available on our website and on our [Convention App, Whova!](#) Finally, follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and the [CLA website](#) for updates, and we are excited that you have chosen to join us for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual CLA Convention in Memphis!

In Service,

Jervette R. Ward, Ph.D.

**President**

**The College Language Association**

[www.clascholars.org](http://www.clascholars.org)

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