



**For Immediate Release:** May 13, 2011

**For More Information:** Joy Testa Cinquino, Library System Public Affairs Manager  
[testaj@buffalolib.org](mailto:testaj@buffalolib.org), 858-7182

## DOWNTOWN LIBRARY HOSTS COMMUNITY DISCUSSION LINKING DEPRESSION ERA LEGACY WITH CONTEMPORARY HOUSING CHALLENGES

---

The **Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System** will host a community discussion, the *PastForward Discussion Series*, reflecting on the legacy of WNY housing policy starting in the 1930s and on the challenges of affordable housing today, on **Tuesday, May 24 from 6 – 9 p.m.** at the **downtown Central Library**, 1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo. Titled **“Housing for All: Policy and Reality,”** the event is free and open to the public.

The *PastForward Discussion Series* is made possible through funding from the **New York Council for the Humanities** and the **National Endowment for the Humanities** as part of the Library’s larger project *Re-Collecting the Great Depression and New Deal as a Civic Resource for Hard Times*, an initiative to identify, digitize and make accessible the WNY region’s extensive Depression era resources for the first time.

Panelists participating in the program on May 24 include **Scott Gehl**, Executive Director of Housing Opportunities Made Equal, Inc.; **Frank Mesiah**, community activist and President of NAACP-Buffalo Chapter; **Professor Gail Radford**, University at Buffalo historian and nationally recognized scholar on New Deal housing policy; **Dr. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr.**, urban historian and Director of UB’s Center for Urban Studies; and moderator **Christopher Jamele** of WBFO Radio. They will discuss the 1930s and 1940s New Deal Federal programs that initiated massive slum clearance and affordable housing construction nationally and locally, changing cities including Buffalo forever and leaving behind a legacy of both positive and unintended consequences. But affordable housing is still an issue in these challenging times: can that legacy help find solutions that will strengthen our community in the future?

The evening includes a number of interactive elements that help set the historic context for the topic, share some of the rediscovered historic artifacts and stories of that era in WNY, and invigorate further exploration and discussion. Lobby displays elaborating on WNY’s Depression era housing history and stations at which attendees can order free customized tours and posters on that history are part of the evening’s experience. A station is also included where attendees can help our researchers connect to Depression era artifacts, potential oral history interviewees, collections, documents, or remaining structures that we may not know about to add to the digital “collection of collections” database we are building. For more information, visit [www.buffalolib.org](http://www.buffalolib.org).

*The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System, comprised of 37 libraries is celebrating 175 years in 2011. The System provides hundreds of free services and resources to library cardholders, including: book, DVD, and CD borrowing, downloadable materials, online catalogs and account management, hundreds of free programs, business and employment databases and computer training. For more information, visit [www.Buffalolib.org](http://www.Buffalolib.org).*

###