



A Renaissance in Harlem: Lost Essays of the WPA, by Ralph Ellison, Dorothy West, and Other Voices of a Generation

Lionel C. Bascom

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More than fifty "lost" essays by Dorothy West, Ralph Ellison, and others portray Harlem during the Great Depression, the finest period of self-discovery in African-American history between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's.

Written for the WPA writer's project and the stored unseen in the Library of Congress, these forgotten writings capture the voices of war veterans, Pullman porters, prostitutes, preachers, and even the black trail blazer who became the first American to reach the North Pole. From the "rent party" described by Frank Byrd, where paying guests "partook freely of fried chicken, pork chops, pigs feet, and potato salad, not to mention homemade "crawn liquor" to Dorothy West's portrayal of Amateur Night at the Apollo, *A Renaissance in Harlem* -- a work filled with humor, compassion, hope and outrage -- is an essential historical record of the African-American experience.

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