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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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"I have always been a strong believer in the value of reading as one of the key foundations of the strength of our community," Rep. Slaughter said. "In a time when literary reading is rapidly declining among all age groups, I feel strongly that programs like Big Read are enormously important. I am excited that Buffalo will be undertaking another one of America's classic novels, and I look forward to hearing about the discussions it will provoke."

The Big Read is the largest reading program in the United States, and helps to encourage Americans across the nation discover the joy of reading great literature. Buffalo is among 130 communities selected nationwide to participate in the first phase of the 2008 Big Read program that will take place between January and June 2008. This program provides communities with reader's guides, teacher's guides, website information, and television and radio spots to promote the selected book.

Last year, Buffalo was one of ten cities chosen to participate in a pilot program of the Big Read. Due in large part to the success of the program in 2006, in which thousands of Buffalonians read Fahrenheit 451, the Just Buffalo Literary Center has continued to get NEA grants for the Big Read in Buffalo. Rep. Slaughter also announced a \$15,000 grant in January 2007 for the Just Literary Center to read Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God. In 2008, participants will read Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird.

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