

HARLEM IN HAVANA®

Cultural & Educational Programs: 2027-2028

HARLEM IN HAVANA®

MULTIMEDIA PROJECT | HISTORY • FILM • ART • PERFORMANCE

THE STORY & LEGACY

Harlem in Havana: An Extraordinary Show.
A Forgotten History. A Legacy Worth Sharing.

From 1935 to 1967, pioneering African American show producer **Leon Claxton** brought the excitement of **Harlem and Havana** to audiences across North America through his legendary traveling revue of Black and Cuban entertainers. Blending jazz, dance, comedy, and burlesque during the Jim Crow era, Harlem in Havana celebrated Black artistry, entrepreneurship, and cultural exchange.

Today, **The Harlem in Havana Project** preserves this extraordinary legacy, honoring overlooked performers, celebrating women's contributions, and highlighting their lasting impact on American entertainment and cultural history.



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Bring overlooked American history to life through extraordinary archival collections, documentary storytelling, live performance, and immersive cultural programming designed to educate, engage, and inspire diverse audiences.

From the classroom to the museum gallery. From the silver screen to the theatrical stage. **An extraordinary history is waiting to be rediscovered.**

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Step Right Up, Folks!

BRING **HARLEM IN HAVANA** TO YOUR INSTITUTION:

From museum galleries and university classrooms to theaters, libraries, and cultural festivals, **The Harlem in Havana Project** brings an extraordinary chapter of American entertainment history to life.

Through a rare archival collection, award-winning documentary storytelling, photography exhibitions, live performances, and educational programs, we invite audiences to discover the remarkable Black and Cuban entertainers who challenged racial barriers and transformed the American stage.

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The Harlem in Havana Project offers cultural and educational programming tailored to your audience and venue.

- **Museums & Cultural Institutions:** Photography exhibitions, archival presentations, and special events.
- **Universities, Colleges & Schools:** Film screenings, guest lectures, workshops, and discussions.
- **Theaters & Performing Arts Centers:** Live tribute performances, film presentations, and artist conversations.
- **Libraries, Festivals & Community Organizations:** Book talks, screenings, cultural celebrations, and community events.

FLEXIBLE COLLABORATIONS: Single events or multi-day programs, offered virtually or in person, customized to your audience, goals, and budget. Partner with us to create a distinctive cultural experience that celebrates Black artistry, entrepreneurship, women's contributions, and the enduring power of cultural exchange.

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5 Cultural & Educational Experiences:

The project offers **five distinctive cultural and educational experiences** that can be presented individually or combined into customized programming.

1. DOCUMENTARY FILM SCREENINGS:



JIG SHOW | Leon Claxton's Harlem in Havana An award-winning documentary journey into the world of **Leon Claxton's** groundbreaking traveling revue. Available for educational screenings, filmmaker conversations, community discussions, and special cultural presentations.

2. TRAVELING PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION:

Brown Skin Showgirls: Leon Claxton's Harlem in Havana Revue (1930s-1960s). An intimate historical exhibition celebrating the performers whose artistry challenged racial and cultural boundaries . Designed for museums, galleries, universities, libraries, and cultural spaces.

JIG SHOW | Leon Claxton's Harlem in Havana

A documentary film by Leslie Cunningham

- **Runtime:** 90 minutes (Three-Part Documentary Series)
- **Theatrical: F**ull-length film screenings with optional filmmaker Q&A and audience discussion.
- **Online:** Eight-part documentary series available on YouTube.

Filmmaker **Leslie Cunningham** uncovers the extraordinary story of her grandfather, **Leon Claxton,** and his legendary **Harlem in Havana Revue,** a groundbreaking **Black and Cuban** traveling show that challenged racial barriers and helped shape American entertainment.

Through rare archival footage, family interviews, music, and performances, this three-part documentary celebrates the pioneering entertainers who defied segregation and made history.



1 Film




HARLEM IN HAVANA NYC
SATURDAY, MAY 9, 2026





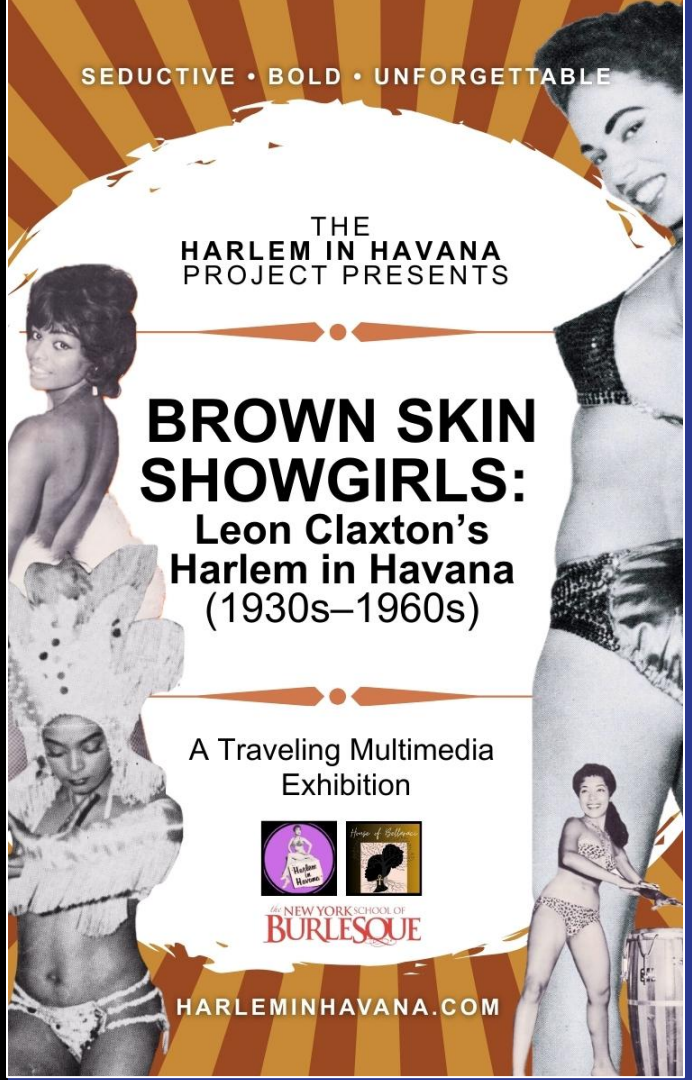
Brown Skin Showgirls:
Leon Claxton’s Harlem in Havana(1930s–1960s)

A captivating traveling photography exhibition celebrating the glamour, artistry, and cultural legacy of pioneering **Black and Cuban performers.**

Curated by **Leslie Cunningham,** the exhibition features rare archival photographs, film, and handcrafted showgirl dolls, bringing this extraordinary history to life.

Format: Museums, galleries, universities, and cultural institutions, with optional curator talks.

Learn more.



2 Exhibit

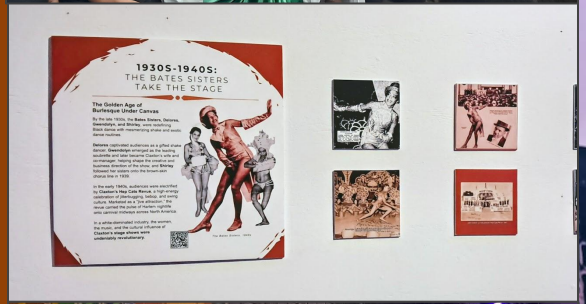
Photographs • Video • Couture Dolls in Costume Recreations



Brown Skin Showgirls: Leon Claxton's Harlem in Havana (1930s–1960s) is a traveling multimedia exhibition honoring the glamour, artistry, and cultural impact of the Black and Cuban dancers of Leon Claxton's iconic revues. Curated and produced by Leslie Cunningham.

- Web: Harleminhavana.com/exhibits
- Email: info@harleminhavana.com
- FB/HarleminHavana
- IG/BrownSkinShowgirls









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5 Cultural & Educational Experiences:

3. LIVE PERFORMANCES:

Brown Skin Showgirls: A Harlem in Havana Tribute Shows A celebration of the legacy of Black burlesque and variety entertainment, bringing history to the stage through dance, music, visual storytelling, and contemporary burlesque performance.

4. PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS, TALKS & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Brown Skin Showgirls, Volumes I & II (1930s–1960s) Explore the glamour, artistry, and untold stories of Black and Cuban showgirls through rare historical photographs, storytelling, book talks and signings, and author readings.

5. BURLESQUE HISTORY & EDUCATIONAL CLASS:

My Grandma Was an Exotic Dancer?! A fascinating look at the pioneering Black women who shaped early American burlesque and carnival entertainment, drawing on intimate family histories, archival discoveries, and cultural scholarship.

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Harlem in Havana Tribute Shows:

Presented by Harlem in Havana®, **Brown Skin Showgirls** is a captivating live **performance experience** blending burlesque dance, live music, archival imagery, film, and storytelling. Honoring the pioneering Black and Cuban showgirls of Harlem in Havana, each performance celebrates their legacy while showcasing a **new generation of extraordinary artists**. *Intended for adult audiences only.*

Follow the Movement: Instagram @brownskinshowgirls

Brownskinshowgirls.com



3 Live







Intended for Adults Only.



Brown Skin Showgirls

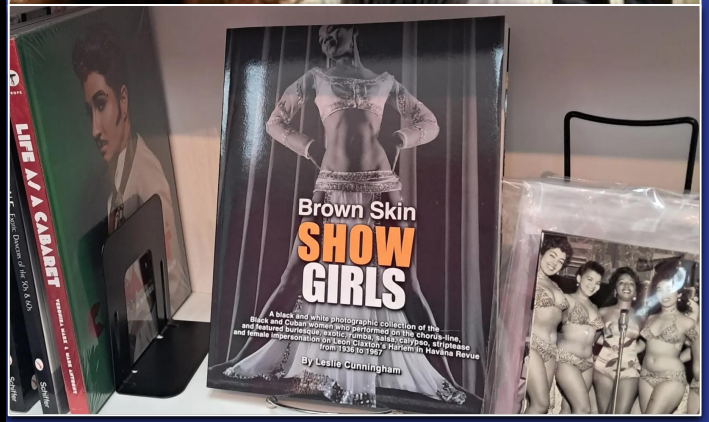
Photography Books, Talks & Educational Programs

Brown Skin Showgirls: Vol. 1 is a captivating black-and-white photographic collection celebrating the **Black and Cuban women** and performers who broke barriers in burlesque, dance, and entertainment with Leon Claxton's legendary **Harlem in Havana Revue.**

Programming: Book readings, author talks, book signings, and historical discussions for museums, universities, libraries, and cultural organizations.

Learn more.





4 Books & Talks

Harlem in Havana

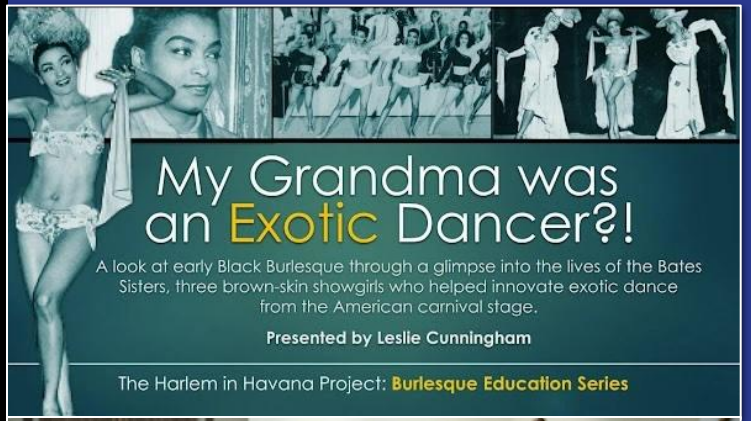
Burlesque Education:

Explore the fascinating history of American burlesque and the pioneering Black and Latinx women who shaped carnival and variety entertainment.

Led by filmmaker and cultural historian **Leslie Cunningham,** these engaging classes feature rare archival photographs, family stories, and historical discoveries.

Format: In-person or virtual classes with audience discussions.

Explore the Classes.





5 Classes

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Programming Opportunities by Institution:

A quick reference to help museums, universities, theaters, and other potential partners identify which Harlem in Havana experiences best suit their audiences.

Program:	Suggested primary audience:
1. Documentary Film screenings	Universities, museums, film festivals
2. Traveling Exhibition	Museums, galleries, universities
3. Live Tribute Shows	Theaters, Nightclubs, festivals, performing arts centers
4. Photography Books & Talk	Libraries, cultural centers, bookstores
5. Burlesque History Classes	Universities, adult education, cultural organizations

Programs can be presented individually or combined into customized cultural and educational experiences tailored to your institution's audience, mission, and programming goals.



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HARLEM IN HAVANA | YOUR CITY

Customized Partnership Experiences.

- **Documentary screening, filmmaker discussion, and archival presentation -** Ideal for universities, film festivals, libraries, and museums.
- **Brown Skin Showgirls: *History Comes Alive*** - Traveling exhibition, curator talk, and live tribute performances for adults only audiences. Ideal for museums, cultural centers, and performing arts venues.
- **Black Burlesque: Art, History & Women's Cultural Legacy.** Educational class, photography book discussion, and optional artist conversation. Ideal for colleges, women's history programs, and cultural organizations.



Download the Harlem in Havana | NYC Program Booklet.

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EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL IMPACT:

Harlem in Havana® inspires learning and dialogue through the rich history of **Black and Cuban** entertainment.

- **African American History & Entrepreneurship:** Celebrating Black innovation, resilience, and business ownership during Jim Crow.
- **Afro-Cuban Culture & Music:** Exploring cultural exchange through jazz, dance, and performance.
- **Women's History:** Honoring pioneering Black showgirls and their artistic independence.
- **Performing Arts & Preservation:** Preserving overlooked contributions to American entertainment.
- **Race & Social History:** Examining segregation, representation, and the breaking of cultural barriers.

Educational Value: Ideal for history, African American studies, women's studies, music, theater, film, and cultural studies programs.

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RECOGNITION & SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS:

The Harlem in Havana Project has earned recognition through award-winning filmmaking, museum exhibitions, educational programs, and live performances at prominent cultural institutions.

AWARD-WINNING DOCUMENTARY

- Uncovering History Award | Dancinema, 2024

SELECTED CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS

- Burlesque Hall of Fame | Las Vegas, 2025
- New York Public Library for the Performing Arts | 2026
- Lincoln Center | New York City, 2026
- Dupont Underground | Washington, DC, 2026

FILM FESTIVAL SELECTIONS

- Hayti Film Festival Next Level
- Seoul International Film Festival



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LESLIE CUNNINGHAM

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER / CULTURAL HISTORIAN / CURATOR / WRITER / EDUCATOR

Leslie Cunningham is an award-winning filmmaker and creator of **The Harlem in Havana Project**. As the granddaughter of legendary show producer Leon Claxton and Harlem in Havana dancer Shirley Bates, she brings a deeply personal connection to this extraordinary history.

Through documentary film, photography, exhibitions, and live performances, Leslie is dedicated to preserving the legacy of Black and Cuban entertainers, celebrating their cultural contributions, and sharing their overlooked stories with new generations.

- **Read Leslie's Full Bio**
- **View Leslie's C.V.**

Email: info@harleminhavana.com



Creator

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LET'S COLLABORATE.

Bring the History. Celebrate the Artists. Inspire Your Audiences.

We invite you to bring the extraordinary legacy of **Harlem in Havana®** to your museum, classroom, theater, or community. Let's create an unforgettable cultural experience together!

BOOKINGS & PARTNERSHIP INQUIRIES:
Contact Leslie Cunningham, Creator & Director

- **Email:** info@harleminhavana.com
- **Website:** harleminhavana.com
- **Educational partnerships**



harleminhavana.com

Bring the History. Celebrate the Artists. Inspire Your Audiences.

HARLEM IN HAVANA®

History. Film. Art. Performance.

*Discover showman **Leon Claxton's** legendary that broke racial barriers and captivated North American audiences from 1935 to 1967.*

Now booking collaborations, screenings, exhibitions, live tribute shows and educational partnerships in 2027-2028.











Email: info@harleminhavana.com **Visit:** HarleminHavana.com