



THE LANGSTON HUGHES FESTIVAL

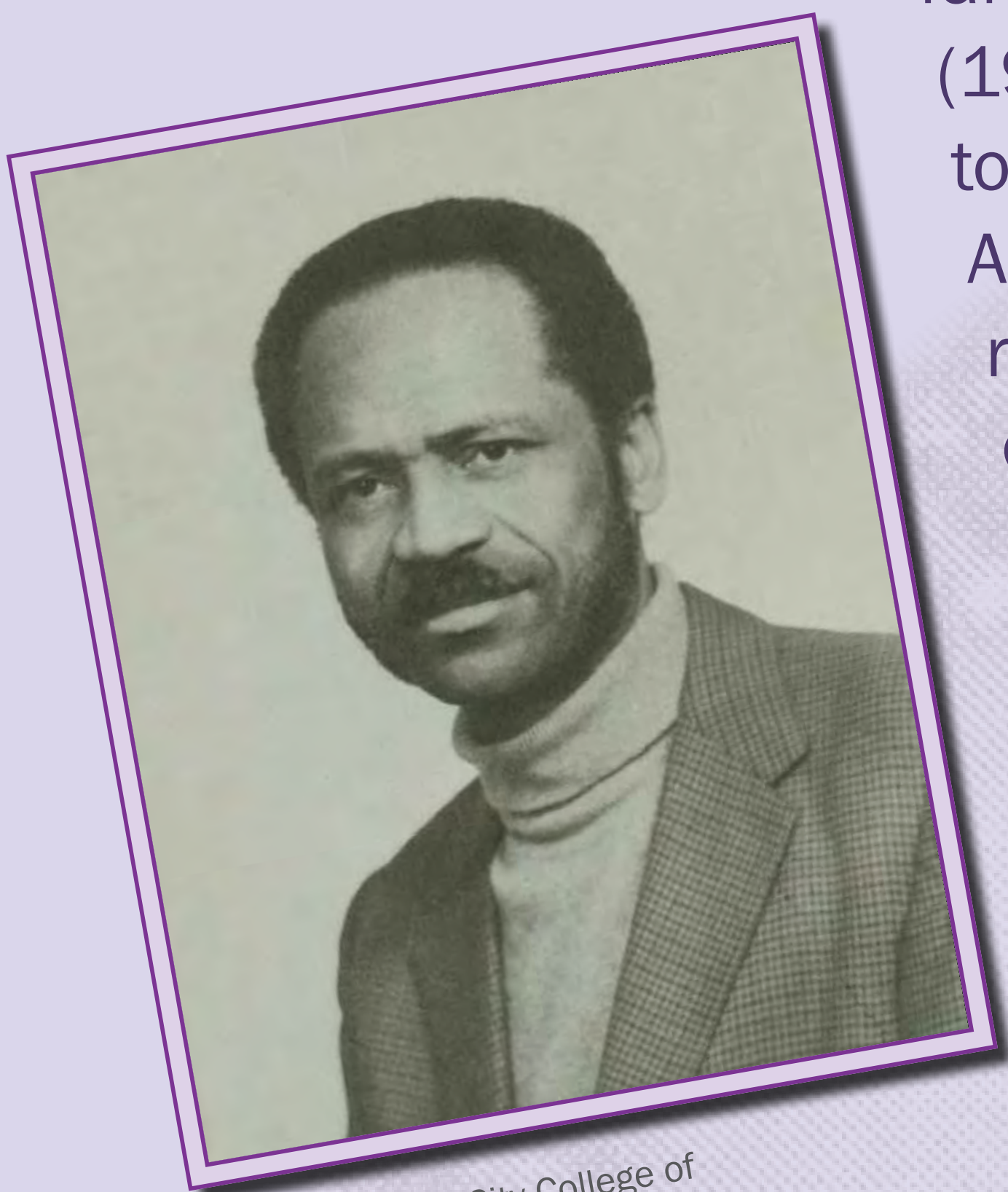
2003 – 2005 Honorees

James A. Emanuel

2003

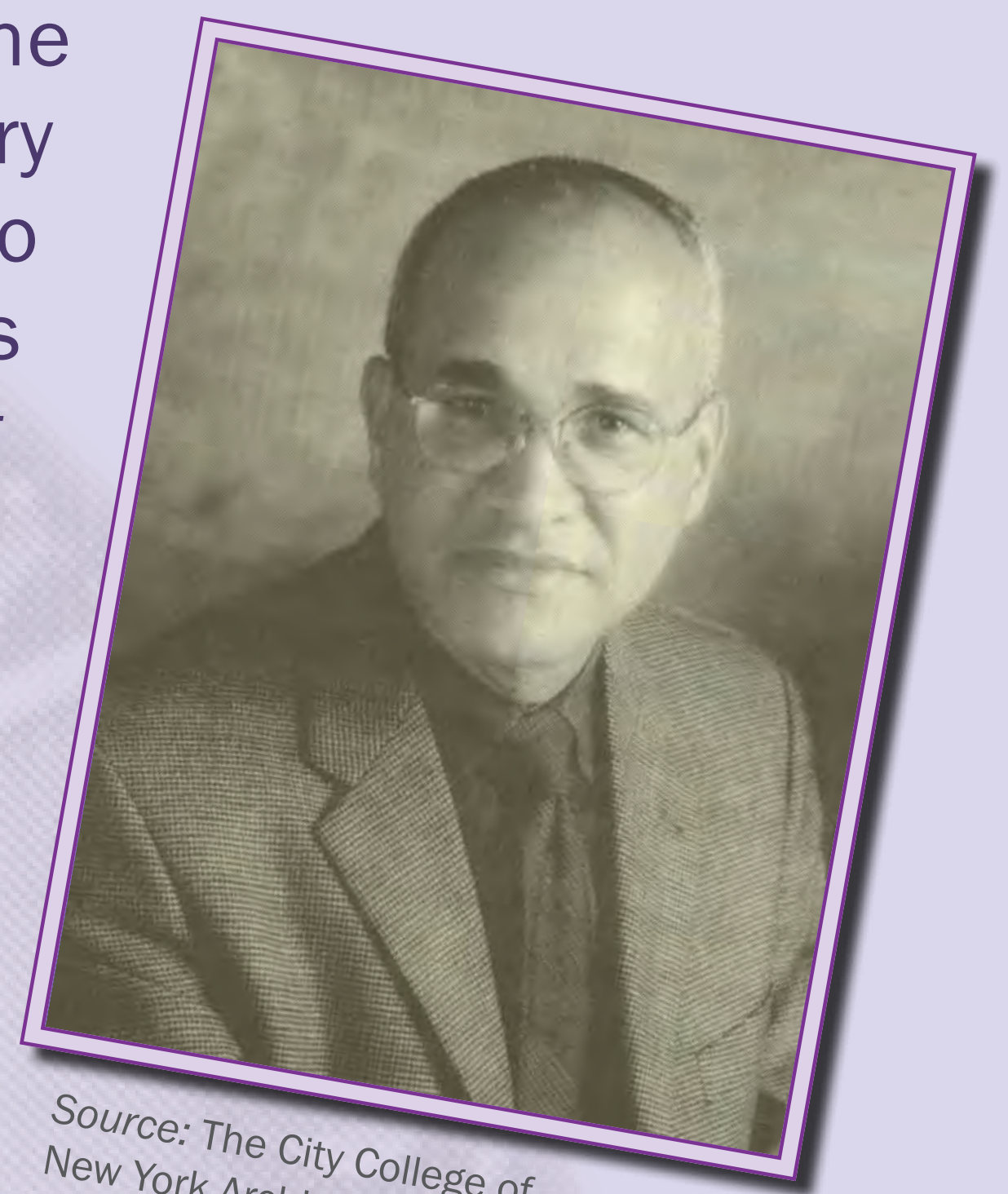
Arnold Rampersad

After a youth spent in the Nebraska badlands which he called the Wild West, Emanuel lived in both small towns and major cities, like Chicago and Washington, before settling in New York and earning a doctorate from Columbia University in 1962. As a writer, Emanuel began as a poet. His “Sonnet for a Writer” (1958) won a citation from *Flame* magazine and the *New York Times* published sixteen of his poems as well as his first book reviews in the 1960s. Before meeting Hughes, with whom he had a relationship, Emanuel had already started a dissertation on the famous writer, which he later published as *Langston Hughes* (1967). During his years of study he noted the lack of attention to literary greats like Hughes and became a champion of African American literature. Emanuel wrote essays urging its official recognition in 1961 and 1963 and taught the City University of New York’s first Black Poetry course in 1966. In 1970, he, along with a small committee, won the struggle to persuade the New York State Education Commission to order the teaching of African American literature in all schools.



Source: The City College of New York Archives

Arnold Rampersad is celebrated most for his important two-volume biography, *The Life of Langston Hughes* (1986, 1988). Rampersad does not call himself a biographer, though it definitely takes the curiosity and diligence of one to do the research for many of his projects. The author said he sees himself “as a literary historian, someone concerned with the combination of history and literature.” Two of his other famous works are *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois* (1976) and the more recently published *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*.



Source: The City College of New York Archives

Sekou Sundiata

Sekou Sundiata has been described as a griot, oral historian, lover of the written and spoken word, and keeper of the flame by many; yet he was so much more.

This son of Harlem was an activist, father, poet, playwright, song writer, educator, and vocalist who drew inspiration from his life experiences and from the sounds of jazz, funk, blues, and Afro-Caribbean rhythms. Some of his most highly recognized works include his award winning theater performance *The Circle Unbroken Is A Hard Bop* and his Grammy-nominated recording, *The Blue Oneness of Dreams*. His untimely passing in the summer of 2007 was a devastating loss in the educational and performing arts field but his work will continue to live on for years to come.



Source: The City College of New York Archives

2005

Octavia E. Butler

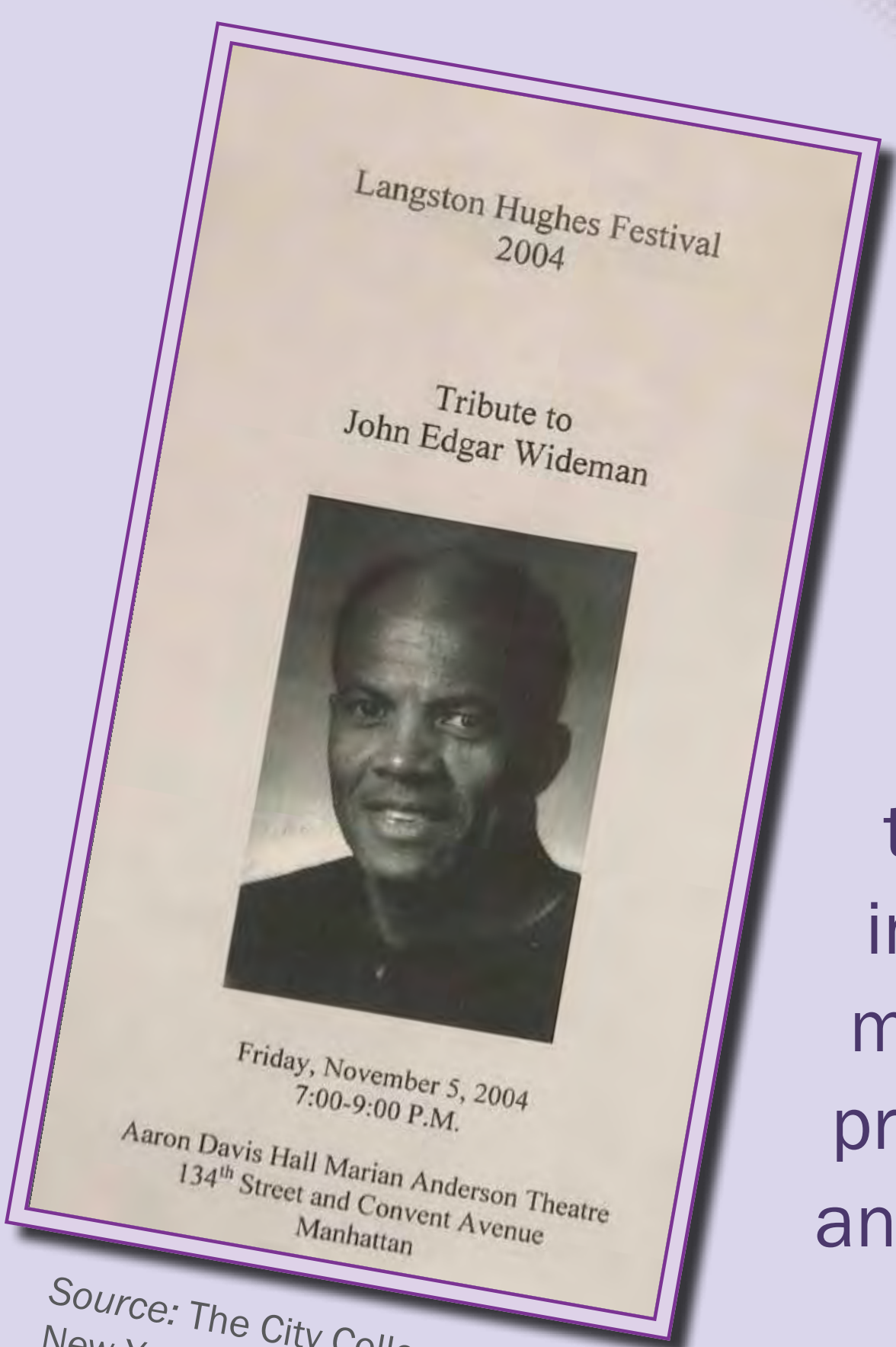
Butler wrote three sets of interlocking novels and two single-volume novels. Her 1979 novel *Kindred*, where the main character, Edana (Dana) Franklin, is swept from her 1976 life to the antebellum south, is one of her best known works. Along with the uncontrolled time travel, readers are forced to consider ideas about the United States’ long history of slavery.

Kindred was later adapted for the stage at the Seeing Ear Theater, with Alfre Woodard starring as Edana. Before her sudden death in 2005, which left fans devastated, Butler published *Fledgling* (2005), which has been called her “final masterpiece.” Butler was a beloved writer and will remain an essential name when discussing African American and female Science Fiction writers.

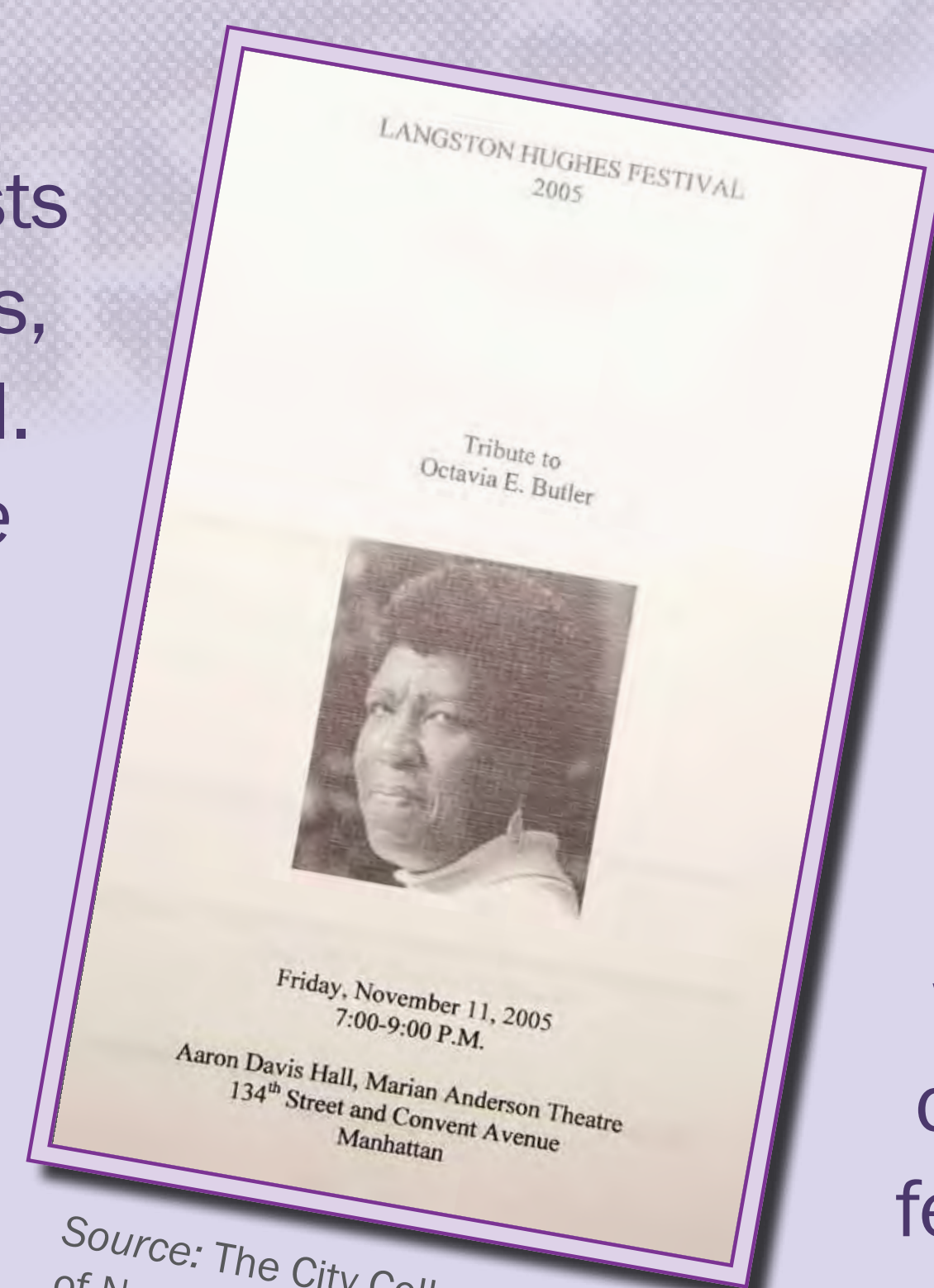
2004

John Edgar Wideman

Many of Wideman’s writings explore his personal interests and life. Surprisingly, this author of short stories, novels, memoir and more once strived for a career in basketball. In the memoir *Hoop Roots: Basketball, Race and Love* (2001), Wideman used his love of the sport to present the complexities of black life. Wideman took a personal interest in Frantz Fanon and gave him a contemporary meaning in his latest work, *Fanon* (2008), which has been praised and described as part fiction and part biography and memoir.



Source: The City College of New York Archives



Source: The City College of New York Archives

