James Baldwin on Film, on the Page, and in the Classroom

This workshop on James Baldwin is a collaboration of the Western Massachusetts Writing Project, the UMass History Department, and the James Baldwin Project. This first session focuses on why to teach Baldwin; the second will focus on how. Welcome to the series!

Agenda for November 2

5:00 Dinner and Conversation
Welcome by Jessica Johnson, Outreach Director, Department of History
Sticky note writing prompt: What brings you here tonight? Why are you interested in Baldwin? Please share responses at your table then post them on the chart paper.

5:30 Introduction and Film
Background and overview by Bruce Penniman, WMWP Site Director
Screening of The Price of the Ticket, courtesy of the James Baldwin Project

7:15 Discussion and Sharing
Facilitation by Momodou Sarr, WMWP Co-Director of Language, Culture, and Diversity
Prompts for table discussions:
• What scene or saying in the film is most memorable to you? Why?
• Why did Baldwin leave America? Why did he return?
• What themes connect Baldwin’s diverse literary works?
• How is Baldwin’s work relevant to current social issues?
Please write key ideas from the table discussion on chart paper.
Report-out to whole group and comparison of responses

7:45 Conclusion and Next Steps
Sticky note writing prompt: Why is it important to teach James Baldwin today?
Preview of November 30 session: Reading and discussion of “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to my Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation”
Curriculum materials provided by the James Baldwin Project (www.jamesbaldwinproject.org/)