

HARLEM UNBOUND

Against the Cthulhu Mythos in 1920s Harlem

**CHRIS SPIVEY
AND FRIENDS**



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the lights in my life,
Jill and Zora Spivey.
Without you, my dreams would not be possible.

This supplement best used with the *Call of Cthulhu* (7th Edition) roleplaying game
and, optionally, *Pulp Cthulhu*, both available separately.

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INTRODUCTION: IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS

HEY HEPCATS!

That *Harlem Unbound* Second Edition happened is kind of a miracle—much like the original book! When I first pitched what would become *Harlem Unbound*, I heard a lot of responses from people telling me why it would never work: it was not their brand, it would not sell, people did not want to be reminded of the past, and so on. But, getting the book out into the world was too important to me. I wanted to honor my cousin Zora Neale Hurston, preserve the past that is continually being erased in our schools and books, and also combat the ever-present rising tide of racism. I also had faith there were other people out there who wanted to address these issues. I was proven right then and hope this new edition finds an even broader audience now.

That sound floating on the air is hope wrapped in the music of Fats Waller and Duke Ellington. It pours out of the city's windows and doorways. The sidewalks are crowded with women in stylish skirts with silk stockings and men in white gloves and Chesterfield coats. There's a feeling of possibility in the air like never before. But even in this land of promise, Harlem's time is fleeting. While classes, sexuality, and cultures collide, the horrors of the Cthulhu Mythos lurk beneath the streets, creeping through dark alleys and hidden doorways. Can you hold it together and keep the Mythos at bay for one more song?

Harlem Unbound is your ticket to walking the Mythos haunted and jazz-soaked streets of Harlem in the 1920s, during the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance was a new awakening, a surging moment of the New Negro Movement that was a revolution aimed at changing the world through new ideas, art, and the written word. It was a uniquely powerful movement against the unjust status quo, and a time in history that still inspires today. The history and stories in this book shine a spotlight on the people of Harlem, their successes, and their struggles.

DIFFERENT DRUMMER

Harlem Unbound is a melding of two different worlds: the Cthulhu Mythos and the Harlem Renaissance. This book flips the standard Lovecraftian view of marginalized people on its head, putting them in the roles of heroes who must struggle against cosmic horrors while also fighting for a chance at equality.

Players are likely to come to *Harlem Unbound* for various reasons:

- They are looking to expand their *Call of Cthulhu* adventures.
- They want to know how Lovecraft works with black protagonists.
- They want to try something different.
- They know Chris and are curious as to what he's been doing for years.
- They heard about the first edition and want to see what all the buzz is about.

Players step into the roles of Harlemites at the start of the Harlem Renaissance. They'll expose secrets best left hidden, rub shoulders with luminaries who are on their way to making history, thwart cultists, and encounter sanity-shattering horrors, either Mythos or man-made, but equally inhuman.

The protagonists, non-player characters, and everyone in this book is assumed to be African-Americans or immigrants (unless otherwise specified), rather than the standard white characters often found in gaming scenarios that tend to only use non-white characters as a simple splash of "color" or as tokens. In recent years, the wheel is moving, slowly—too slowly—to bridge that gaming gap, but these are early days. Our investigators come from many walks of life with regard to class, ethnicity, race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation.