

Roundtable Gathering



Members and friends of the Black Leadership Roundtable gathered recently at a Christmas party. Above: guests prepare for an evening of food and dancing. Right: Linda Sutton, from right, Ethel Evans and Beverly Tucker pose for the camera. The three women were instrumental in organizing the event.



Johnson

her patrons and their oftentimes-engaging conversations. Her greatest joy, however, was looking into sparkling eyes of the children as they checked out books or videos with their parents. She said such

experiences are very special and fulfilling. She said that she would certainly miss the staff members that she has worked with over the past 20 years. She gave them love and respect, and they gave her love and respect in return. Now she says she must spend

time traveling and volunteering with Hospice and organizations that advocate against child abuse. She will also share time with the many clubs and organizations with which she is already involved. She said that she is extremely excited about the formal retirement dinner for her that is scheduled in the very near future.

Freeman

going forward. Make sure you give each other words of encouragement to stick with the program. Soon, all

of you will begin to experience the power of accumulating wealth. Who knows, maybe the next time someone asks, "Who wants to be a millionaire?", your final answer will be, "I am a millionaire!"

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Easley

entertainers, films and hands-on activities for children can be found throughout both museums on Saturday from 1 to 5 p.m. Outside at the north end of the Bicentennial Plaza, performers will be on the main stage from 2 to 5 p.m. The line-up includes the Bailey Mountain Cloggers, traditional Hebrew music, bluegrass, steel drums and more. The celebration will conclude with an open house from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Executive Mansion, featuring the beach music band "The Embers" and authentic Down East

barbecue, favorites of the incoming first family. All the ceremonies and festivities are free and open to the public. North Carolina's public television station, UNC-TV, will telecast the swearing-in ceremony and parade live that day. The Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies' web site, www.ncinauguration2001.org, will also carry the UNC-TV broadcast. For more information before Saturday, log on to www.ncinauguration2001.org.

Val Atkinson's background: retired military (20 years in the U.S. Army); business officer, Dorothea Dix Hospital; business officer, N.C. School of the Arts; Office of State Personnel; acting assistant secretary, N.C. Dept. of Cultural Resources; assistant director, NC DMV; radio talk show host, Foxy 107.1/104 since 1989; columnist (N.C. African-American newspapers) since 1998; B.A. degree, psychology, Columbia College; M.A. degree, business management, Central Michigan University; M.P.A. degree, public administration, N.C. Central University. Atkinson can be reached at Atkinson@Africana.com

Atkinson

early minority appointments. I wish Powell and Rice all the best. But I'm gonna be the last one surprised if Powell or Rice doesn't like their roles enough to serve the entire four years with George W. Bush.

rutted trail and through fields of knee-high guinea grass and stood in the shade of a guongo tree in the yard of his father's four-room house. He and his wife, Alma, paid their respects to his grandparents, who are buried on the property, and met relatives whom he recognized because they resembled him. Among the newest generation

in Jamaica is 5-year-old Christopher Powell, whose creased eyes and stern mouth make him look like the general. The boy has not met his famous relative - "our big man up north," as Powell's cousin Reuben Powell called him - but he has heard something about his success in the United States. "Auntie told me he run America!" he said.

Powell

music in the Pentagon's E-Ring." Powell traveled to Jamaica in 1992 after the Persian Gulf War, at the invitation of then-Prime Minister Michael Manley, and again in 1994 with TV interviewer Barbara Walters. He walked down the narrow,

strong will and her commitment to the principles of Kwanzaa. "Every year at every event Ms. Moseley is there...She is an inspiration to many of us," Suggs said. Moseley, who is also well known for her hosting duties on WSNC 90.5 FM, attended her first Kwanzaa event in the mid-'80's while living in Texas. She has been participating in the holiday ever since. "I come because it's the gathering of family," she said. "They are not my biological family, but I feel they are still my family...And sometimes I only get to see them once a year, at Kwanzaa." Moseley said the spiritual energy of Kwanzaa also keeps her

coming back year after year. Moseley, who is a grandmother, often performs poems and high energy dances at events. Kwanzaa puts things in perspective for her, she said. "It's a time to reflect...It's a time to look back at what you did over the last year...It rejuvenates my spirit," she said, searching to put her feelings about Kwanzaa into words. The Afternoon Jazz Jam, one of Moseley's shows on WSNC 90.5 FM, airs Monday through Friday from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. She also anchors the biweekly show Blues Dues from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays.

Moseley

used for everything from decorating homes to sprucing up outfits, Suggs said. The ribbon will be sold for \$7, with the seller (the children) getting \$2, the after-school program getting \$2 and Suggs' company getting \$3. "We just felt that it was good all the way around," Suggs said, "because it teaches self-esteem, responsibility and entrepreneurship. That's how it started with me (wanting to be an entrepreneur). When I was young I used to sell seeds, cards - everything." The children kicked off their selling at last week's Kwanzaa celebration at the Sims Center. The principle the night of the kickoff was appropriately "Ujamaa," or Cooperative Economics.

Piggott said he approached Suggs with the idea because he was tired of seeing kids in the neighborhood selling things that were either illegal or not directly beneficial to them or their neighborhood. "We are trying to tell them that there are better things they can do than selling drugs on the corner. We want to show the kids that there are African Americans like Mrs. Dana Suggs who have products that they sell and have successful businesses of their own," he said. David Fields was excited last week as he waited for the Sims Center Kwanzaa program to end. He then expected to try to sell his very first ribbon. He worked out several sales strategies aloud, but then decided to use a tried and true approach. "I'm just going to ask them if they want to buy a ribbon that

represents African pride," he said with a smile. Fields was pleased with the opportunity to make a few dollars of his own, but he said that was not his primary reason for selling the ribbons. "I'm just trying to do something to help the rec," he said. Selflessness, a sense of giving back and working together are the ultimate goals Piggott and Suggs say they want the children to achieve through the project. Cooperative Economics for African Americans must start with a strong sense of community and a connection to the people that live around you, they agreed. "African Americans need to support one another's organizations and businesses," Suggs said. "There is so much that can be gained if we did that. It would make for better communities and better people."

Project

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McClennahan

one of those people who give guidance and direction. He left a successful stage design career in New York four years ago to teach here. McClennahan designed the set for August Wilson's "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," which featured a then unknown Charles S. Dutton. He did film work and music videos with Spike Lee. Many Big Apple directors had him on speed dial. But McClennahan said he rarely looks back. "I feel that coming here to North Carolina has helped me complete myself...I don't think your life is full until you are able to complete a cycle of taking what you have learned and giving it back so that it will help someone else," he said.

During his days at NCSA, McClennahan was the only African American studying set design at the school. He was the first black to receive a degree in the field from the school. His uniqueness, he said, caused some nervousness near graduation. "School officials didn't know what to do with me," he laughed. "They didn't have the contacts they needed to have in the black theater world."

McClennahan credits, and praises, NCSA for giving top-notch training, but when it came time for him to make a name for himself in the theater world, he was left to his own devices. Now as a teacher at the school, McClennahan prides himself on giving students the direction he never had. He has personally recruited all of the African Americans in the school's set design program. Even black students who do not attend the school often e-mail him for advice and guidance.

"I sometimes feel that I'm a teacher online...Every time I check my e-mail, I have one from a student somewhere," he said. McClennahan said he does not believe that it, necessarily, takes an African American to guide African-American students, but

often, he added, African Americans in a field like set design look to schools with black faculty members that they think will be able to guide them.

He also doesn't believe that only African Americans can design sets for black productions and vice versa. Most of his credits are black productions with companies like the Negro Ensemble, but McClennahan said that wasn't by choice.

"You quickly get typecast based on the work that you do, he said. Although he was classically trained at Yale, he doesn't mind being branded as a black theater set designer.

He has found different ways to break out of the mold. He has written a series of short stories over the years, stories that he's now computer animating.

McClennahan has also developed a love for puppetry. He and his wife, Janeen, often do puppet shows at local schools. The show they currently perform revolves around honey bees.

McClennahan is a self-proclaimed bee fanatic. He raises bees in his back yard and displays stuffed bees in various places throughout his house.

He believes humans can learn a lot from the unity seen in bee communities. That's the message of the puppet show. A replica of a huge tree used in the show is assembled near his living room. McClennahan keeps it up for inspiration. There are signs of his past, present and future in his house.

Sketches he did for a jazz club scene from the movie "Mo' Better Blues" sit against a wall; still frames for the computer animation story he hopes to submit to film festivals one day line the walls of his office.

A computer rendering of St. Philips Moravian Church is also displayed. He did the computer rendering back in 1998 after Mel White of Old Salem gave him a guided tour of the historic African-American church.

McClennahan took pictures inside the church and electronically re-created images and lighting to create what may be how the church looked in its heyday.

"When I was in the church, I felt an usual feeling," McClennahan said, giving the reason he decided to do the computer rendering. "It was like whatever happened in that church was so powerful that it spoke to me."

McClennahan did not know at the time that an effort was under way to refurbish the church and convert it into a museum. McClennahan also did not know that Larry Leon Hamlin, founder of the N.C. Black Repertory Company, had seen his rendering. Hamlin called McClennahan last year and asked him if he would do the set for "Papa C.W. Brown and the Black Moravians," the one-man play Hamlin plans to debut here in February and then take on the road.

Hamlin and McClennahan first met when Hamlin was just starting the Black Rep and McClennahan was a new student at NCSA. McClennahan designed a few sets for Hamlin's early productions and is looking forward to re-creating St. Phillips for the stage.

The chain of events that led him to working with Hamlin again is yet another one of those coincidences that have been so prevalent in his life, McClennahan said.

McClennahan takes his art very seriously, but for the most part, he says, what he does is not about him or his art.

"I don't want to get bogged down in the art stuff...This stuff could burn down," he said, motioning his hand around his house. "But it's the message that I'm trying to send with the art that's important...I did the computer visualization because I wanted to bring life to that African-American congregation. If you don't get that message, then I have failed. If those kids don't get the message with the puppet show, then I have failed. It's not about the actual art as much as it is about the message."

Alston

a green salad, and keeping a resolution this long (one week). Day 7: A new magazine (CODE - The Style Magazine for Men of Color), toasting marshmallows in the fireplace, neck

rubs, four-movement symphonies and a sense of place (that ranks up there with knowing what you want).

Now that you have a head start on things to be happy about this year, I'll stop or I will not have anything to be happy about the rest of the year. Make happiness a reality this year. It's a journey, not

a destination. Enjoy the trip. Today is a good day to get started, unless you have other plans.

Happy New Year!
Nigel Alston is a radio talk show host, columnist and motivational speaker. Visit his web site at www.motivationalmoments.com.

The North Carolina Black Repertory Company

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Larry Leon Hamlin
Executive & Artistic Director

16th Annual
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Birthday Celebration

Produced By
John Poindexter, IV

7:00 P.M. Monday, January 15, 2001
Arts Council Theatre
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Hosted by Wanda Starke
Anchor of WXII News Channel 12

Featuring

- Joe Robinson Randy Johnson
- Rev. John Heath Sharon Frazier
- Charles Greene Cle Thompson
- Janice Price Carlotta Samuels-Fleming
- Nathan Ross Freeman Melanie Maxwell
- Ambassadors for Freedom Bill Jackson
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- Sandra Kay Lawson Dr. Sir Walter Mack

Youth Performers

- Glorious Sounds Jazz Ensemble Ciara Mixon
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Admission is FREE but RESERVATIONS are recommended.

CALL (336) 723-2266

Between 9:00 A.M. & 5:00 P.M. for reservations and information.

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