

Celebrity Co-Chairs



▲ Luke and Laura. Bo and Hope. Victor and Nikki.

The annals of soap opera history are filled with supercouples, lovers whose passion-filled and tumultuous affairs have transfixed fans around the world. The supercouple mold was cracked wide open in the early 1980s when Jesse and Angie began steaming up the screen on "All My Children." Never before in daytime television had black love received so much airtime and attention, never had a supercouple been non-white.

Fans laughed, cried, celebrated and commiserated with Jesse and Angie from 1982 to 1988. The couple returned to the soap from 2008 to 2011 and then again in 2013, shortly before the long-running "All My Children" was cancelled by ABC. (The couple also briefly surfaced on the CBS soap "The Young and Restless" in 2012.)

Actors Darnell Williams (Jesse) and Debbi Morgan (Angie) are back together again, serving as the celebrity co-chairs of the 2015 National Black Theatre Festival. Though their soap alter egos made them stars, the two have shined brightly in various arenas over the years.



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Debbie Morgan

Morgan, a native of Dunn, N.C., has graced the stage and the small and silver screens. In 2013, she brought her acclaimed one-woman show "The Monkey on My Back! An Intimate Evening with Debbi Morgan" to the NBTF. In the deeply personal on-stage memoir, Morgan took audiences on a journey through her own life, including her family's legacy of abuse.

Morgan made her showbiz debut in 1971 in the bawdy whodunit "Cry Uncle!" Her breakout role would come four years later in the slave-era drama "Mandingo." At around the same time, Morgan began making regular guest appearances on several popular sitcoms, including "Good Times," "What's Happening!" and "The Love Boat."

Her most famous role – that of Angie Hubbard – earned her a Daytime Emmy for Outstanding Supporting Actress in 1989; it was a first for a black daytime actress. Her trophy case also contains several awards for her much-heralded performance in the 1997 film "Eve's Bayou." Morgan won a Chicago Film Critics Association and Independent Spirit awards for her role as Mozelle Batiste Delacroix, and the late film critic Roger Ebert argued that she should have received an Oscar nod for what he praised as one of the best performances of the year.

Morgan's many other big screen credits include "The Hurricane" (opposite Denzel Washington), "Love and Basketball," "Coach Carter" and "Woman Thou Art Loosed." Her television credits also include "The Practice," "Any Day Now," "Boston Public," "Strong Medicine" and "Power," the new Starz hip-hop drama produced by rapper/actor 50 Cent.

Darnell Williams

Williams was born in London to American parents. His father, a career Air Force man, was stationed in England at the time. Because of his father's service to his country, Williams also spent some his childhood in Japan. By the time the family (Williams has seven siblings) returned to his parents' native Brooklyn, Williams had dreams of stardom and boarded a bus for L.A. when he was in his late teens to pursue them.

The world first got a glimpse of him on the hit weekend music showcase "Soul Train." Williams was one of the show's regular dancers and, thusly, charged with showing the world the hottest dance moves. He made his television acting debut in 1980 on the drama "The White Shadow." The next year, he won the role of Jesse Hubbard and would spend the next 30 years playing the character, or some iteration of Jesse.

Williams' peers have rewarded his stellar work with two Daytime Emmy Awards. Producers have acknowledged his immense talents by hiring him for a long list of daytime dramas over the decades. In addition to "All My Children," Williams has appeared on "The Young and the Restless," "Loving," "Guiding Light" and "The City." His stage credits include "Spalding Gray: Stories Left to Tell," and his big screen credits include the Golden Globe-winning Robert Altman film "Short Cuts," and "Manhattanites," which he co-directed. His long list of non-soap opera television credits includes work on shows like "Law and Order: SUV," "Nash Bridges," "Felicity" and "The City." ■

National Black Theatre Festival

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