

The Bluest Eye

NCCU DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE PHOTO



Daja Middleton, Moriah Williams and Kalyn Monet in "The Bluest Eye."

The Bluest Eye
WSSU's Dillard Auditorium (Anderson Center)

Thurs, Aug. 6	8 p.m.
Fri. Aug. 7	8 p.m.
Sat. Aug. 8	3 p.m.
Sat. Aug. 8	8 p.m.

\$27



Dr. Stephanie "Asabi" Howard

The North Carolina Central University Department of Theater is returning to the National Black Theatre Festival with its stage adaptation of Toni Morrison's best-selling novel "The Bluest Eye." It is one of the festival's Fringe offerings, a collection of plays by college and youth theater troupes.

The story is set in 1940s Lorain, Ohio, and centers around 11-year-old Pecola Breedlove, an abused and lonely black girl who longs to have blue eyes because she thinks they will make her beautiful. Pecola's sense of self-worth has been stripped away. Her mother, Pauline, a domestic who works for a white family, also has low self-esteem; her father, Cholly, is violent and cruel. The McTeer sisters, Pecola's friends, are fighting an uphill battle in trying to convince Pecola to stop worshipping European standards of beauty.

When Morrison's novel was released in the 1970s, it was praised for its lyrical prose and its unflinching portrayal of sensitive subjects, including incest, prostitution, domestic violence and racism. Still today, the book is often deemed too controversial and frequently banned from school shelves. Dr. Stephanie "Asabi" Howard, who directs the play and serves as an assistant professor in NCCU's Department of Theater, says the story should be viewed as a cautionary tale on many levels.

"I must admit that after every reading of the play, I am filled with despondency," Howard said in a press release. "But, redemptively, I am also soon replete with an

inspiration and determination to find my role in preventing such atrocities and fallacies from reaching our community of African-American children."

She added that the story demands African-Americans to examine their own color and hair prejudices, biases that are passed on to impressionable children.

"The Bluest Eye' forces us to confront our own ideas of what counts as beautiful through the incomprehensible, lower depth of existence experienced by a malnourished soul," said Howard, who is also an actress who has appeared in N.C. Black Repertory Company productions. "Pecola's desire for blue eyes is symbolic of self-worth, love, acceptance and happiness. This play makes us take a hard look at the world we create."

When the play was staged at NCCU last year, the cast included Moriah Williams as Pecola Breedlove; Daja Middleton as Claudia McTeer; Kalyn Monet as Frieda McTeer; Tierra McMickle as Pauline Breedlove; and Robert Dartez Wright as Cholly Breedlove. Toni Oliver, Lekeeda Barbara, Diarra Fields, Kelvin Carter, Malcolm Green and Tiara Jones were also a part of the cast. ■