

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Rashad, Taulbert promote black film

By Clarence Thomas Jr.
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Phylicia Rashad wanted a part in "Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored" so badly, she ordered her agent to close the deal.

Now, she's pitching to have the movie seen across the country.

Rashad, who portrayed the TV wife of Bill Cosby for eight years on NBC's "Cosby Show," was in Charlotte to do a live broadcast at Cablevision and promote the movie.

"Once Upon A Time" is the story of an African American family living in the rural South during the height of racial segregation, and how the family manages to make an oasis in the mist of adversity.

It was a project that Rashad described as beautiful on every level. "When I received the script, I wanted to do this or nothing else at all," she said. "I had to demand that my agent close negotiations and not do the typical Hollywood thing."

The movie, an adaptation of acclaimed author Clifton Taulbert's novel, is playing in a select group of cities nationwide. The Black Media Association of Charlotte thought the work was important enough to bring Rashad and Taulbert here as part of an effort to not only further expose the film, but to bring it here.

City Council members Patrick Cannon and Ella Scarborough and County Commissioner Darrell Williams joined Mayor Pat



Taulbert, Lamont Grier and Rashad hang out at a reception at the Afro American Cultural Center. PHOTO/Paul Williams III

McCory in giving Rashad a key to the city. Taulbert, the great great grandson of slaves, expressed his wishes for the film.

"I hope that people will see it, and we (African Americans) will remember for ourselves who we really are," he said.

The book has been translated into 17 different languages worldwide and is required reading in German high schools. "Our gift to the world is that we have endured," said Taulbert. "Technology, money and knowledge is not America's greatest exports, but African Americans' resilience."

Paula Williams, President of The Black Media Association and host of the live broadcast, collaborated with Harry Harrison to help bring the pro-

gram to the Afro Center. Harrison, the center's director of programs, explained why the association settled on his facility.

"They were looking for ambience and something that would work well in this instance," he said. "The artistic achievements of Mrs. Rashad as an actress and Mr. Taulbert as an author gives credence not only to the city of Charlotte, but to the center as well."

The crowd on hand agreed. They applauded both Rashad and Taulbert upon their arrival and responded favorably to their comments. Those present were also treated to an evening of song and dance by area musicians and singers

"Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored is a Black Entertainment Television film and was produced and direct-

ed by actor Tim Reid. Rashad is joined by an all-star cast which included Al Freeman Jr., Leon and veteran actor

Richard Roundtree. "We're used to stories that are empty, so this film is important because it is so full," Rashad said.



Brandon Crawford greets Rashad at the Charlotte-Douglas International Airport. Crawford appears with Rashad in "When We Were Colored." Photo/Paul Williams III

Two benefits for injured student set for Feb. 17

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Family and friends of Unseld "Bingo" Smith, who was critically injured in a car accident Oct. 4, is sponsoring two benefits next weekend to help with his medical bills. A benefit golf tournament will be held 9 a.m. Feb. 17 at Sunset Golf Course, 800 Radio Road. "A Night of Elegance" will be held 7 p.m. that evening in the student union on the campus of Johnson C. Smith University.

"It's more of a gala event," said John Alexander of J. Zander

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Unseld "Bingo" Smith

SOUNDS

By Winfred B. Cross

Various Artists
Verity Records
Presents:
A Tribute To Mrs.
Rosa Parks
Gregory J. Reed and
Tara Griggs-Magee,
executive producers
Verity Records

☆☆☆☆

Black History
Month

Rosa Parks CD is fitting tribute

shouldn't be necessary, but it is. If the rest of America would treat African American accomplishments as a part of history and not separately, then February would just be February.

But that might mean we would not have gotten this stunning work called "A Tribute to Mrs.

Rosa Parks." If such would be the case, let Black History Month live on forever. This is one of the best musical tributes done in the last decade.

It was hard getting through this tribute album to Civil Rights legend Parks. Not because it's bad - far from it - but because I kept hitting repeat on several of the songs.

There is a plethora of good ones.

The first selection, "Something Inside So Strong," is a prime example. It's a shimmering "We Are The World"-type gathering of some of the best voices in gospel and pop. Vanessa Bell Armstrong, Shirley Caesar, Fred Hammond, Daryl Coley, and The Sounds of Blackness are a few of the two dozen or so artists who give this song a glorious workout. The song was originally done in the '80s by its writer Labi Siffre as a protest to South African Apartheid. It's a fitting tribute to Park's accomplishments as well.

Then there's Oleta

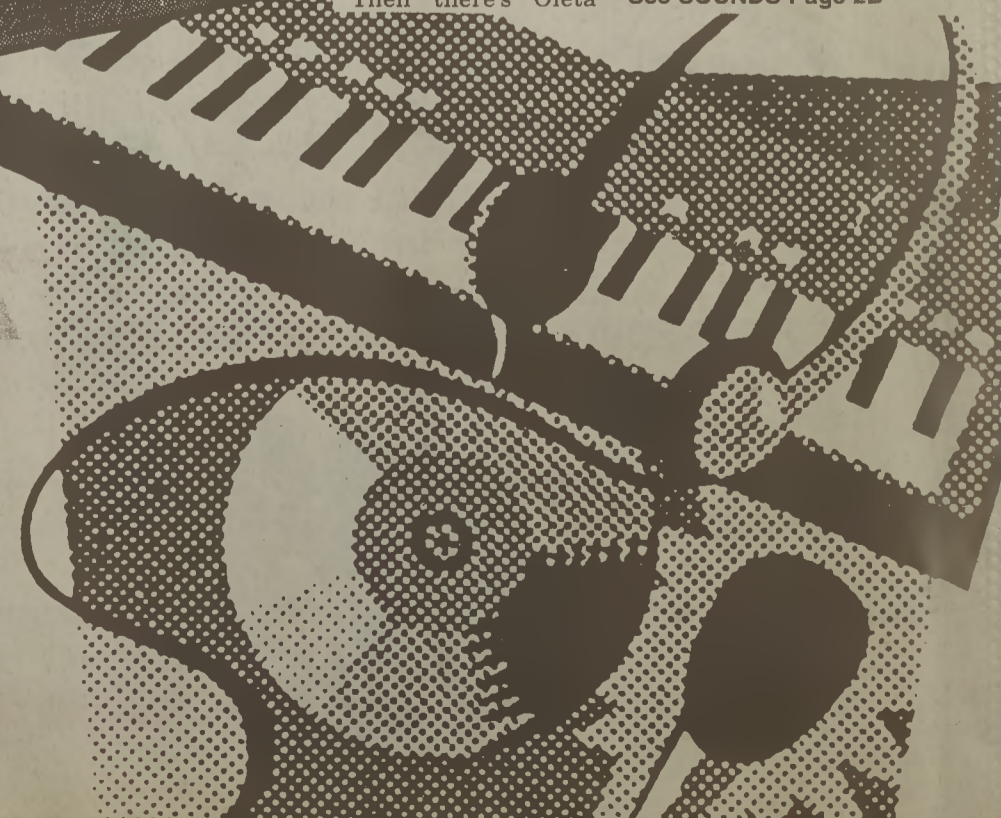
Adams' worshipful "The Captain of My Ship." Adams wrote it. Hammond produced and sang background vocals. It's marvelous and should inspire more collaborations from the pair.

John P. Kee and his New Life Community Choir offer "Rosa" an elegantly simple song that showcases Kee's raspy tenor and his choir's ability to sing sweetly, but powerfully moving. The addition of children giving Parks' history is touching.

Just as touching is the extraordinary tenor Coley's reading of "No Fear." As always, Coley twists phrases, leaps octaves and defies gravity with his voice.

But the tribute's show-stopping piece is "Still I Rise," by Yolanda Adams. No, this isn't a musical version of Maya Angelou's emotional poem, but it's just as moving. Written and produced by the extremely gifted Percy Bady, the song is filled with vivid images of hope, determination and

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GEORGE DUKE