

Students looking for audience

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN
Chronicle Staff Writer

Students in Carver High School's Drama and Music Departments hope their door-to-door campaign last weekend helped to sell

tickets to their upcoming production of *Purlie*, Saturday, May 25 at the Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium.

About 15 of the students involved in the play passed out flyers Saturday, May 18, in the Carver Road area to let people know of the

upcoming showing of the play, which will be the last for the school year.

The play was first shown in the Carver auditorium May 10th and 11th, but Director Annie Moye says attendance to the production was less than expected.

"We had about a little over a hundred people for each performance. I don't know if it was because of Mother's Day weekend or people had other obligations or commitments to go other places. But generally we have a bit more than that when we're doing a musical," she said.

Moye went on to say that two years ago when the school produced "The Wiz," the production had the largest audience than any other nighttime school production, and also set a box-office record at the Stevens Center, where it was held. And that was following three consecutive nights at Carver's auditorium, that had large audience attendance.

But Hal Tise, the set designer for the play, says the reason attendance is low may be the subject matter of the production primarily pertains to African-Americans. *Purlie* is about a black minister from Georgia, who goes back to his hometown to reclaim a church, based on the play *Purlie Victorious* by Ossie Davis. Tise, who is white, says because of that, white audiences may be turned off by the play, although he says it has universal appeal, and the community needs to get beyond the racial barriers.

"It's just as important for a white person to see the play as a black person," he said.

The door-to-door campaign, was the first that Carver has done to



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

Pictured (left to right) are: Lillie Peebles, Chad Fulton, Mia Thompson, Shawn Robinson, Kenya Cherry, and Quentin Gwynn, as they perfect their performances for Saturday's presentation at the Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium.

inform the public of an upcoming production, and Moye says it may not be the last. She says generally Carver's productions are advertised through flyers and "every once and a while we'll get a radio spot or a public service announcement on television."

For this production, she says advertising was mainly done with flyers and a spot on the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Television Channel 2, which may not have been enough to draw a large audience.

But they hope last weekend's effort will correct all that with a large audience at Williams auditorium, and they say if anyone else in the community is interested in coming to see the play, they should call Carver High School at (919) 727-2987 for ticket information.



Photo by L.B. Speas Jr.

Shawn Robinson (left) and Mia Thompson (right) rehearse their roles as the Rev. Purlie and Luttrell, in Carver High School's presentation of "Purlie."

Inmate freed after 14 years on death row

By HOYT HARWELL
Associated Press Writer

ODENVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Johnny Harris, who spent 14 years on Alabama's death row, walked free on parole Tuesday maintaining his innocence in the stabbing death of a prison guard in 1974.

Harris, 45, left the St. Clair Correctional Facility near Birmingham 21 years after he was sentenced to five life terms for four robberies and one rape.

He was sentenced to death for the killing of a 43-year-old guard during an inmate uprising but his murder conviction was dismissed in 1987.

Harris, who drew support from international human rights groups as a black man suppressed by white society, told supporters as he emerged from the prison that "my entire life evolved around this day."

"All of my struggling, pain and suffering for my freedom is something beyond your wildest imagination," he said.

"One thing that I've learned from this 21-year experience is that freedom is not a state of being — it's a state of mind."

While insisting on his innocence, Harris did not comment in detail on the cases that led to his incarceration and death sentence.

"The past years have radically transformed my way of thinking," Harris said. "I'm striving to become stronger during times of crisis, humble during times of success, tender in my feelings and grateful to God at all times."

Harris, who denied stabbing the guard, was convicted under a Civil War-era Alabama death penalty statute.

That law, since struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, required an automatic death sentence for an inmate convicted of murder while serving life. The murder conviction was dismissed in 1987 by a state judge on the basis of the Supreme Court decision.

Luell Barrow was taken hostage at Fountain Correctional Center near Atmore, bound and stabbed 27 times during an inmate rebellion in a cellblock.

Harris was approved for parole this year and will remain under the supervision of state parole officials for the rest of his life.

"If he so much as stumps his

toes he can be instantly back serving that sentence," said Elmo Graves, director of the state parole board.

Amnesty International defended Harris in the 1970s, describing him as a victim of racism in part

because he was convicted of capital murder by all-white juries.

His supporters also argued that his initial guilty pleas to the rape and robberies resulted from inept counsel and a white-dominated judicial system.

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Tatia M. Davis

Former Chronicle staffer receives her Masters degree

Tatia M. Davis, a former *Winston-Salem Chronicle* Staff Writer, was awarded a Master of Science Degree in Journalism by Columbia University on May 15 at its annual commencement ceremonies.

Davis was a staff writer last summer for the *Chronicle*, after having graduated in May of the same year from North Carolina Central University

with a B.S. Degree in English. While working at the *Chronicle*, she covered community news.

She is a 1986 graduate of East Forsyth High School and a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and is the daughter of Dr. Lenwood G. Davis and Dr. Glenda M. Davis.

She is the granddaughter of Mrs. Lucy M. Davis.

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