



At the Kuumba, a celebration of African American Theatre, the North Carolina Black Repertory Company presented the play, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," at the Martin Luther King Arts Complex in Columbus Ohio. Many of the local librarians who attended the play dressed in their distinctive African attire. Pictured from (l-r) are: Bonita Cannady, Brenda McLeod, Arnelita Hairston, Renie Andrews and Crystal Daniel.

Historic events raises nation's awareness about libraries

More than 1,000 African-American library professionals converged upon the Hyatt Regency Columbus at Ohio Center September 4-6 for the first national conference of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA).

The conference workshops centered around the theme, "Culture Keepers: Enlightening and Empowering Our Communities" and featured keynote speakers, Gloria Naylor, author; Randall Robinson, executive director of

business science department. "We are known throughout the state and nation for our innovative ideas," said Hamlin. "Forsyth County Library has more African-Americans working in professional positions than any other public library system in the states of North Carolina and South Carolina. We are becoming more culturally diverse which enables us to offer more services. This is what we strive for to promote a sharing and appreciation for different cultures." According to Satia Orange, a

was the Kuumba, a celebration of African-American theatre. At the Kuumba, the play, "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" was presented by the North Carolina Black Repertory Company at the Martin Luther King Jr. Performing and Cultural Arts Complex (in Columbus, Ohio). Other activities during the conference includes a job placement center that advertised over 100 available positions nation-wide. Recruiters were looking for African-American job-seekers, said Hamlin.



Pictured from (l-r) are: Sheila Johnson, Wanda Brown-Cason, Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, Lois Leggett and Satia Orange.

TransAfrica, Inc.; Congressman Major Owens, the first librarian in Congress; and Councilwoman Augusta Clark of Philadelphia, Pa.

"The BCALA hosted the conference to bring together the 15,000-plus African-American library professionals who wish to share in the realization of our mission," said Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, conference chair and assistant director of the Forsyth County Public Library.

The BCALA serves as an advocate for the development, promotion and improvement of library services and resources to the nation's African-American community. It also provides leadership for the recruitment and professional development of African-American librarians. The BCALA has more than 700 members.

North Carolina had the largest number of librarians, overall who attended the conference with about 18 librarians and support staff from the Forsyth County Public Library system.

total of 71 workshops were presented that focused on 20 different clas-



Sylvia Sprinkle-Hamlin, assistant director of the County Library

sifications of specialized libraries such as African-American, medical, federal, and academic libraries.

"This was a conference that focused primarily on the African-American's needs and perspective. It was learning experience," she said.

Orange says the workshop, "An Uncertain Future For Small Academic Libraries" conducted by Dr. Mae Rodney, director of libraries at Winston-Salem State University was one of the most interesting presentations at the conference. Other workshops Orange says that were well-attended includes: "The Budget Process," presented by Anna Curry, director of Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, Md. and Samuel A. Morrison, director of the Broward County Public Library in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; and "Understanding AA, EEO, and Diversity: They're Not The Same Thing," presented by Paula Penn-Nabrit, president/CEO of Penn-Nabrit & Associates in Columbus, Ohio. "Curry and Morrison are two directors from two of the largest public library systems in the country and both are African-Americans," Orange added.

The highlight of the conference

Hamlin says careers in library science are jobs for the future

because assessing information is the key to any successful endeavor. She predicts that information brokers will be in demand due to the interest businesses and individuals have in seeking specific kinds of information. Hamlin says the field is wide open because there is also a shortage of African-American librarians.

"One of the primary goals of the conference was to bring librarians together to network and to recruit people in the field. A scholarship fund, the E.J. Josey Scholarship, has been established to recruit people interested in pursuing M.S. and Ph.D degrees in library science," said Hamlin. The scholarship is named after E.J. Josey, the first African-American male to serve as president of the ALA. He is the founder of the Black Caucus, organized in 1970.

Although university representatives attended the conference to recruit potential candidates for their library schools, there are only two accredited library schools at black universities. They are North Carolina Central University in Durham and Clark-Atlanta University in Atlanta, Ga.

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Hardy R. Franklin, ALA Pres.

Local librarians who attended the conference includes Sylvia Sprinkle Hamlin, Satia Orange, Director of the library's Children's Department; Lois Leggett, manager of the Southside Branch Library; Wanda Brown-Cason, head of cataloging at Wake Forest University; and Sheila M. Johnson, librarian for the county public library's busi-