

Bus

from page A1

a bus load made the trip to "Black Theatre Holy Ground."
 "Every year we get more and more people to come with us," said Rice. "This year is the first we've brought a bus load. Next festival, we hope to have two buses."
 Although they do miss their friend, Rice and Scott say they have made a lot of new friends over the years and they owe all that to Williams.
 "If it wasn't for her [Williams], we would have never heard about the festival," said Scott. "We look forward to the festival every two years, even more now since our friend is no longer with us."
 Williams, who was a true lover of the theater, encouraged Scott to submit a play she wrote to the NBTF. The play was accepted by the festival and was performed during this year's Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop Readers Theatre Series at the Festival and has been performed a number of times in St. Louis.
 "She was a real inspiration to me. "If it wasn't for her words of encouragement, I don't think I would have submitted my play," Scott said.

During a press conference on Thursday, Aug. 6, Rice and Scott told members of the media that this year the social group brought about 50 members, many of whom who have a passion for theatre, and are looking to writing their own productions as well.
 "We encourage those who are interested in getting into theatre to attend," said Rice. "Many of the people we brought with us have never attended the festival before, but all say they want to come back to the next one."

According to Scott and other members of the St. Louis Friends, it was very important that they continue to carry on the tradition. Although Williams isn't physically with them, they believe that she is watching over them while they are at the festival and traveling all those miles.

"I know Sheryl Ann is watching down on us smiling," said Scott. "We will continue to carry on the tradition she started because we know that is what she would have wanted. She really loved this festival, and wouldn't have had it any other way."

NBTF

from page A1

Dr. Sopé Oyèlárán, head of the International Colloquium portion of the festival, poured water in remembrance of all those who have passed away. He said he used water because the body is 75 percent water and it is what we need to survive.
 Those in the crowd were asked to say the names of their lost loved ones as well.

"This water will help the spirits of our lost loved ones live on forever," Oyèlárán said.

As a crowd stood around Oyèlárán in front of the Stevens Center, he also talked about how much the festival has grown over the years.

"Look around. Two years ago there wasn't this many people out here," Oyèlárán said. "This ritual

we are doing here today is to keep the positive spirits around this festival so it may continue to grow and prosper."

During the parade streets were blocked off by the Winston-Salem Police Department as entertainers with African drums and dances marched through streets. The sidewalks were filled with festival-goers

hoping to catch a glance of their favorite celebrities or try their luck at getting a picture of the stilt walker as he towered over the crowd walking the downtown streets.

James Taylor, a regular festival-goer from South Carolina, said the festival continues to get better every year.

"This is my third or fourth time attending the

festival," said Taylor. "Every year I come, it seems to get better and better. This year's festival is the best I've seen so far."

The National Black Theatre Festival descends upon Winston-Salem every two years and has more than a \$13 million impact on the economy in the city. Since 1989, the festival has attracted thousands of national and international

patrons, theatre professionals and scholars to the area.

The National Black Theatre Festival is the outreach program of the N.C. Black Repertory Company and was named one of the top 20 events in the South, according to the Southeast Tourism Society.



(L-R) Roselyn Scott and Ann Rice speak during a press conference on Thursday, Aug. 6 in the main lobby of the Marriott Hotel in downtown Winston-Salem.

Photo by Terin Stinson

Ferguson

from page A1

girls who were with his son told him he was unarmed and had been drawn into a dispute involving two groups of young people.

St. Louis County Executive Steve Stenger declared a state of emergency, which authorizes county Police Chief Jon Belmar to take control of police emergency management in and around Ferguson.

Protests spilled outside of Ferguson. Almost 60 protesters were arrested around midday Monday for blocking the entrance to the federal courthouse in downtown St. Louis. Authorities planned to release them on a promise to appear later in court.

Among those arrested was scholar and civil rights activist Cornel West.

That protest, like other commemoration events over the past few days, was largely peaceful and somber.

But on Sunday, several hundred people gathered in the street on West Florissant, ignoring an officer on a bullhorn repeatedly warning them to get to the sidewalk or face arrest. Eventually, a few lobbed glass bottles and rocks at officers.

One officer was hospitalized with cuts to the face after being hit with a rock. Two others had minor injuries after protesters sprayed them with pepper spray.

As tensions escalated, several gunshots suddenly rang out from the area near a strip of stores, including some that had been looted moments earlier. Belmar believes the shots came from about six different shooters. What prompted the shooting was not clear, but Belmar said two groups had been feuding. The shots sent protesters and reporters running for cover.

The shooters included the suspect, identified by his

father as 18-year-old Tyrone Harris Jr., whom police had been watching out of concern that he was armed, Belmar said.

"During the gunfire, the suspect crossed the street and apparently spotted plainclothes officers arriving in an unmarked van with distinctive red and blue police lights," Belmar said. The suspect allegedly shot into the windshield of the van.

The four officers in the van fired back, then pursued the suspect on foot. The suspect again fired on the officers when he became trapped in a fenced-in area, the chief said, and all four opened fire.

Harris was in critical condition after surgery. Prosecutors announced 10 charges against him, five counts of armed criminal action, four counts of first-degree assault on a law enforcement officer and a firearms charge. All 10 are felonies.

"All four officers in the van, each wearing protective vests, escaped injury. They were not wearing body cameras," Belmar said.

Tyrone Harris Sr. told The Associated Press his son was a close friend of Michael Brown and was in Ferguson Sunday night to pay respects.

The elder Harris said his son got caught up in a dispute among two groups of young people and was "running for his life" after gunfire broke out.

"My son was running to the police to ask for help, and he was shot," he said. "It's all a bunch of lies ... They're making my son look like a criminal."

Belmar said the suspect who fired on officers had a semi-automatic 9 mm gun that was stolen last year from Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

The police chief drew a distinction between the shooters and the protesters.

"They were criminals," he said of those involved in

gunfire. "They weren't protesters."

Gov. Jay Nixon agreed, saying in a statement that such "reprehensible acts must not be allowed to silence the voices of peace and progress."

Some protest groups said police were too quick to go into riot mode. Others questioned why plainclothes officers were part of the patrol.

"After a year of protest and conversation around police accountability, having plainclothes officers without body cameras and proper identification in the protest setting leaves us with only the officer's account of the incident, which is clearly problematic," said Kayla Reed, a field organizer with the Organization of Black Struggle.

Belmar said it is common to use plainclothes officers. In addition, there were more than 100 uniformed officers from the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Ferguson and St. Louis County police departments.

Some protest leaders worried about how the latest police shooting, especially on a day honoring Michael Brown could escalate tensions.

"It changes the equation," said Rebecca Ragland, an Episcopal priest who was part of a group that marched to the federal courthouse in St. Louis. "The way the police will respond now will be much more militaristic. It legitimizes a response from the police that's a lot more aggressive."

John Gaskin III, a member of the NAACP national board from St. Louis, was more hopeful.

"I don't believe there will be looting or rioting," he said. "That's not in my vocabulary. We have to have some faith."

Associated Press writer Jim Suhr and photographer Jeff Roberson contributed to this report.



Upperclassmen at WSSU help unload a vehicle during the official move-in day for a freshman on Sunday, August 9.

Photo by Terin Stinson



Nearly 900 freshmen moved into their dorms on Sunday, Aug. 9 on the campus of WSSU. The official move-in day for freshmen kicked off the weeklong activi-

WSSU

from page A1

A&T University, said during a visit earlier in the summer, he knew that WSSU was the right place for his son Derrick Gregory Jr. "We visited a few other colleges, but I believe there is nothing like that HBCU experience," said Gregory. "That's what made WSSU stand out, the care and support they give to the students."

To ease the stress on the parents, throughout the summer WSSU hosted Rams at Home Sessions. These ses-

sions were designed to allow parents of incoming freshmen to complete the bulk of paperwork and business processes prior to their arrival to campus.

Each Rams at Home Session drew hundreds of students and parents.

"The sessions were very helpful," said Gregory. "It really helped make move-in day a lot less stressful."

WSSU didn't stop there. Upperclassmen were on campus to welcome the incoming freshmen. Many of the upperclassmen helped unload vehicles and give directions to those in need.

A number of fraternities, sororities and student social

organizations were also on hand to welcome the class of 2019.

A lot of students said they were looking forward to the week's festivities and starting a new chapter of life.

Jasmine Wright said she is most looking forward to meeting new people and the freedom that comes with starting college.

"I'm really looking forward to meeting new people and learning how to make it on my own," Wright said.

The first official day of class for WSSU is set for Wednesday, Aug. 19.



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