



The Charlotte Friends of the Arts anniversary committee plan for their September celebration. The are from left to right: Wanda Reeves, Hester Johnson, founder Vivian Williams, Vanesa Green, executive director of Afro Center, Stephanie Counts and current president Marie Watkins.

## Arts Advocacy Group To Celebrate 10th Anniversary With Dinner, Arts Update

**Special To The Post**  
The Charlotte Friends of the Arts, an affiliate of the Afro-American Cultural Center, plans to celebrate their tenth anniversary with a formal dinner gala at Windows on Trade, Sunday, Sept. 25.

Over the years each Friend has been an avid advocate of the arts and dedicated to community service. Members are committed to

supporting and promoting art organizations and artists in Charlotte.

Many successful fund raising events have been planned and implemented to provide needed funds for the Afro Center, student scholarships, receptions for artists and showcasing of student talent.

Special guests to the gala will be Dr. George Butler, a native Charlottean and presently vice-

president/executive producer CBS records, New York, Vivian Nivens and Shirley Farrar, former directors of the Afro Center and charter members of the Friends. They will give an update on the arts in Charlotte through the years.

The Friends wish to thank the Charlotte community for their continued support from 1979 to 1989!

# Winston-Salem Is Site Of Attention With Theatre

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) --- Representatives from many of country's black theater companies, the administration of Gov. Jim Martin and the national news media descended on Winston-Salem this week to see if a long and difficult struggle had really been won.

To see "... if I gained the weight back," Oprah Winfrey said, jokingly.

In truth, the once-plump talk show host and an array of distinguished visitors were in Winston-Salem to throw their collective weight behind a dream realized --- the first-ever National Black Theater Festival.

The six-day event --- conceived by Larry Leon Hamlin, artistic director of the North Carolina Black Repertory Company, and nurtured by author Maya Angelou --- features plays, workshops and celebrity receptions. It is designed to both celebrate and bolster black theater companies, which historically have been financially strapped and have tended to be isolated from one another.

Apart from her obvious drawing power, Ms. Winfrey might have seemed an odd choice as special guest for Monday night's opening dinner. She stressed, however, that black theater was instrumental in her rise to television superstardom.

At a news conference Monday,

she recalled watching Ruby Dee perform in "A Raisin in the Sun" on her family's small black and white television when she was growing up in rural Mississippi. That production, and participation in the black church --- with its theatrical elements --- inspired her to build a career she knew would one day involve acting, she said.

"I let that vision carry me," she said. "If there had not been black theater, there would not be an 'Oprah Winfrey Show.'"

She has used her popular talk show as a springboard to an acclaimed supporting role in the film "The Color Purple" and a starring role in "The Women of Brewster Place," a TV-movie.

"Black theater took me where I belonged when I didn't even know it," Ms. Winfrey said. "I am grateful to black theater, because black theater is me."

She was joined at the news conference by several prominent figures in black theater, including director Melvin Van Peebles, producer Woodie King Jr., actor Antonio Fargas and Ms. Angelou.

Fargas, best known for his recurring role of "Huggy Bear" on the television series "Starsky and Hutch," said he was drawn to acting by watching Adolph Caesar, Clarence Williams and other black actors and actresses practice their craft on the New York stage.

He called black theater and the black church "the preservers of our (black) culture."

Van Peebles, testifying to the traditional fragmentation and isolation of black theater, said he knew of no one presenting any aspect of the black experience on stage when he was beginning his career.

He went into theater, he said, "because I had never seen my image" in a profession of white performers and white themes.

With plans to repeat the festival every two years in Winston-Salem, Hamlin sees a continuation and strengthening of the unity being displayed this week.

"Black theater will never become isolated and fragmented again," he vowed.

## Oprah Credits Black Theater With Show

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) ---Talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey says she couldn't have created the "Oprah Winfrey Show" without the influence of black theater.

The National Black Theatre Festival opened in Winston-Salem Monday with a reception featuring Ms. Winfrey as guest of honor. The reception included a performance of "Don't Bother

Me, I Can't Cope," by the North Carolina Black Repertory Company.

The festival will showcase productions from 16 of the top black theater companies in the nation this week. The festival also includes seminars on black theater.

"If there had not been a black theater, there would not have been an Oprah Winfrey show,"

Ms. Winfrey said. "I remember sitting on the kitchen floor, watching 'A Raisin in the Sun' on my little black and white TV. That was when I decided acting was what I wanted to do with my life and I let that vision carry me."

"I hope the festival will benefit and strengthen our spirituality, focus and direction," said festival producer Larry Leon Hamlin.



Winfrey

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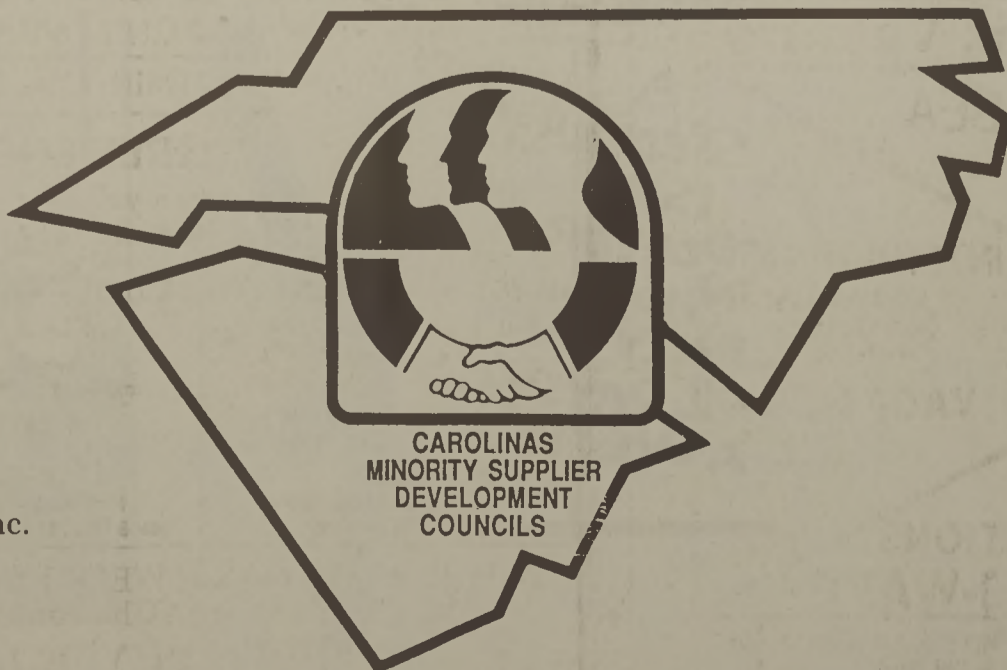
### at the 12th Annual Carolinas Minority Supplier Development Councils Trade Expo

Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to meet purchasing representatives from corporations all over North and South Carolina! Make the connection at the CMSDC Trade Expo, Wednesday and Thursday September 27 & 28, at the Charlotte Marriott City Center Hotel.

Booths and banquet tickets must be reserved in advance. For more information or to make reservations, call (704)372-8731. Or write: Malcolm Graham, Executive Director, 700 E. Stonewall, Street Suite 340 Charlotte, NC 28202

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