INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

JUL 27 — WINSTON-SALEM, NC — AUG 1

2026

THE BLUEST EYE

The Ensemble Theatre

Friday, July 31, 2:00pm
Friday, July 31, 8:00pm
Saturday, August 1, 2:00pm
Saturday, August 1, 8:00pm

UNCSA
Agnes de Mille Theatre

PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG • PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON • RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE • SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL • MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE • NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM • MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY • JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES WERE WATCHING GOD • ANATOMY OF AN OPERA: NIA IMANI FRANKLIN • STEAL AWAY HOME • OUR STORIES...WE ARE, BECAUSE WE WERE • REIMAGINED VOLUME III: YOUNG THANG PHENOMENAL WOMAN, MAYA ANGELOU: A FIRESIDE CHAT • THE BIRTHRIGHT SESSION-LATE NIGHT WITH MATELYN ALICIA • HOLY GROUND • JITNEY • TOPDOG/UNDERDOG • BLOOMING IN DRY SEASON RUNNING FOR MY LIFE • IN THE BLACK • BERTA, BERTA • ART OF WISE SEARCHING FOR WILLIE LYNCH • PURLIE VICTORIOUS • FENCES • BEING BLACK ON BROADWAY • THE LEGEND OF BUSTER NEAL MICHAEL COLYAR'S LATE NIGHT COMEDY • THE TRIAL OF ONE SHORT-SIGHTED BLACK WOMAN VS. MAMMY LOUISE AND SAFREETA MAE • A FIDDLER'S TALE • TERRY STEELE SINGS LUTHER VANDROSS • STORIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NATIONAL YOUTH TALENT SHOWCASE • MIDNIGHT POETRY JAM MARVIN: THE MARVIN GAYE REVUE • CROSS THAT RIVER • EVERYBODY JOE TURNER'S COME AND GONE • SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD • THE GREAT LOVER • THE BLUEST EYE • THEIR EYES

INTERNATIONAL BLACK THEATRE FESTIVAL®

A NC Black Rep Experience

Winston-Salem | The City of Winston-Salem salutes the 2026 International Black Theatre Festival.

The Bluest Eye

The Ensemble Theatre

Adapted by Lydia R. Diamond
From the Novel by Toni Morrison

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Influenced by the African American theatre movement of the 1960s and 70s, George Hawkins founded in 1976, The Ensemble Theatre, originally named The Black Ensemble Company. The Ensemble Theatre is the oldest professional theatre in the Southwest, celebrating its 50th season. Located in the heart of Midtown, Houston, TX, it is one of eight Black theatres in the world that owns its space. Serving more than 65,000 patrons each year, The Ensemble Theatre consistently receives recognition for its exceptional contributions to the legacy of the theatre community.

TECH CREW

Director ..... Eileen J. Morris**
Technical Direction ..... Nathan Wernig
Costume Design ..... Krystal Uchem
Original Light Design ..... Kris Phelps
Original Set Design ..... Winifred Sowell
Original Sound Design ..... Adrian Washington
Original Prop Design ..... Eileen Dyer
Stage Manager ..... Arianna Day
Crew ..... Ryan Amie
Crew ..... Leevester Clay

***Appearing courtesy of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society*

SCENE

PLACE: Lorain, Ohio / TIME: 1940

CAST

Frieda/Darlene ..... Estée Burks

Mrs. Breedlove ..... Brittny Bush

Claudia ..... Caprice Carter

Daddy/Soaphead Church ..... Timothy Eric*

Pecola .....Kiya Green

Mama ..... Jo Anna Davis-Jones

Cholly .....Kory LaQuess Pullam

Maureen Peal/ Whita Girl ..... Alayna Sylvester

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WHO'S WHO

Kory LaQuess Pullam (CHOLLY) is grateful to be back at The Ensemble after appearing in ***Love & Southern Discomfort*** and ***A Motown Christmas***. Kory was born and raised in Corpus Christi, Texas. He has shared his work on stages across the nation, including The Guthrie, Penumbra, Mixed Blood, Park Square, New Village Arts, Porchlight Music Theatre, and Children's Theatre Company. Kory moved to Houston in 2020. Since then, he has been seen locally at The Alley **(Seared)**, Stages Repertory **(*Othello: The Remix*** and ***The Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx/Latine Vote*)**, Main Street ***(Kim's Convenience),*** and Rec Room ***(Death of a Salesman).*** Kory is the founder of Blackout Improv. He is also the founding artistic director of Underdog Theatre. In Minneapolis, Kory was honored as Artist of the Year in both the Star Tribune and City Pages. Kory is incredibly thankful for his family, friends, and community as a whole.

Caprice Carter (CALUDIA) is a Houston native and graduate of the University of Houston. Her recent credits include: ***We Both Suck Our Teeth and Power to the Queendom*** (Rec Room Arts), ***Six Triple Eight*** (Esurient Arts and Mildred's Umbrella Theatre Company), ***Detroit '67*** (Pearl Theater), ***A Bridge in the Distance*** (Shabach Enterprise), ***The Colored Museum*** (Pearl Theater), ***'N'*** (The Company OnStage), ***Private Lives*** (The Players Theatre Company), and ***Of A Darker Hue*** (The Ensemble Theatre). Caprice is thrilled to be making her mainstage debut at The Ensemble Theatre and joining the amazing cast of *The Bluest Eye*.

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WHO'S WHO

Kiya Green (PECOLA) Kiya is a graduate from Stephen F. Austin State University, where she earned her BFA in Theatre. Select credits include: Stages: ***Mud Row*** (Elsie), The Phoenix Group: ***Pullman, WA*** (Self), Alley Theatre ECE Tour: ***The Brainstormers & Their Cosmic Mission*** (Willa), The Ensemble Theatre: ***Flex*** (Sidney Brown), Houston Grand Opera: ***Cinderella*** (Associate Corps Dancer), and Shabach Enterprise: ***The Flow*** (Player). Kiya would like to thank her family, friends, and her partner for all the love and support they continue to give her. FREE PALESTINE, CONGO, SUNDAN, YEMEN, AND HAITI.

Brittny Bush (MRS. BREEDLOVE): Ensemble Theatre Debut. Brittny Bush is a Houston-based actor and teaching artist, the Consulting Creative Director for Brave Little Company, and is currently the Primary School Drama Teacher for St. Francis Episcopal Houston. Past performances include: Independently Produced: ***Crabs in a Bucket***, Classical Theatre Company (Resident Artist): ***Three Sisters***, ***Marriage of Figaro***, ***Government Inspector***, ***The Barber of Seville***, ***A Christmas Carol*** (Present/Ensemble); Catastrophic Theatre (Resident Artist): ***Turn of the Screw***, ***A Maroon's Guide***, ***Fefu and Her Friends***, ***BootyCandy***, ***Speeding Motorcycle***, ***Tamarie Cooper's Field Trip***; Main Street Theater (partial listing): ***Book of Will***, ***Love and Information***, ***Close Up Space***, ***Wrinkle in Time***, ***My Wonderful Day***; Brave Little Company (Director|Actor|Writer): ***Grandpa's Garden***, ***Missing from the Museum***; Mildred's Umbrella: ***Large Animal Games***, Horse Head Theatre Company: ***Church***. Education: B.A., University of Houston, Acting and Directing.

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WHO'S WHO

TiMOThY ERiC (DADDY/SOAPHEAD CHURCH) was most recently seen as Gabriel in ***Fences*** at Alley Theatre. For the 2024-25 season, HoustonPress.com named TiM and fellow actor Brandon Morgan Best Actors for their performances in 4th Wall Theatre's production of ***TopDog/Underdog***. Television: Guest starring roles in HBO's ***The Leftovers***, ABC's ***American Crime*** and ***Ali: King of the World,*** and National Geographic's ***The Long Road Home***. Theatre: Main Street Theatre – ***Purlie Victorious***. The Ensemble Theatre – ***The Piano Lesson, Clyde's, The Lawsons, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom; Djembe; Blues in the Night; Jitney; Seven Guitars; Sty of the Blind Pig; Gem of the Ocean; Joe Turner's Come and Gone; Two Trains Running; River Niger***. Stages Repertory Theatre – ***Speaking in Tongues; Orange Flower Water***. Main Street Theatre – ***Laws of Storms; Woof; Intimate Apparel; …and L.A. is Burning; Stagolee and The Funeral of a Dangerous Word; Purlie Victorious***. Alley Theatre – ***Of Mice and Men; One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest***. Tim received both his B.F.A. in Theatre/Cinema and M.A. in RTF from Texas Southern University. @timeric

Alayna Sylvester (MAUREEN PEAL/WHITE GIRL) is honored to make her professional debut in The Bluest Eye. This role represents a major milestone in her passion for acting, which began with school productions and creative workshops. She's thankful for the encouragement of her friends, family, and mentors and is proud to help bring this powerful story to the stage.

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International Black Theater Festival

Join Forsyth County in rolling out the purple carpet for the 2026 International Black Theater Festival.

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A NC Black Rep Experience

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Denise Price, Deputy County Manager
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WHO'S WHO

Estée Burks (FRIEDA/DARLENE) is honored to return to the stage with The Ensemble Theatre and perform at the International Black Theatre Festival. She was most recently seen at The Ensemble Theatre in ***Who All Over There?***. Additional theatre credits include ***The Bluest Eye*** and ***Satchel Paige & the Kansas City Swing*** (The Ensemble Theatre); ***Murder on the Orient Express*** **and** ***Cleo*** (Alley Theatre); ***For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf*** (Obsidian Theatre); ***The Royale*** (Rec Room Arts); ***Akeelah and the Bee*** and ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** (Main Street Theater for Youth); and ***Passing Strange*** (Obsidian Theatre), recognized by the Houston Press Awards (2017) for Best Musical and Best Ensemble.

Estée holds a B.F.A. in Theatre from Sam Houston State University and is a proud Houston native. She is deeply grateful for the love and support of her family and friends. Luke 1:37

Jo Anne Davis-Jones' (MAMA) credits include STEW (Best Leading Actress Giorgee Award winner), Da Kink in my Hair (Best Production Giorgee Award winner and Broadway World.com Regional Best Supporting Actress nominee), Constant Star (Best Ensemble Giorgee Award winner), Christmas With Great Aunt (Best Actress Giorgee Award nominee), Women in the Pit (Citywide Best Ensemble nominee), 5th Ward The Series (Shay—UMC drama series), The Ball Peen Chronicle: The Autobiography of Dayra Annie James (Dayra), The Old Settler (Quilly), The First Noel (Lou), A Soulful Christmas (Mahalia Jackson), The Great Exchange, Liberators, Sanctified, Parade, Free to Love, A Raisin in the Sun, Independence, to name a few. Jo Anne is the director of W.I.N.G.S. Creative Arts Ministry as well as a writer/editor of all things creative. She earned her B.A. in Radio, Television and Film

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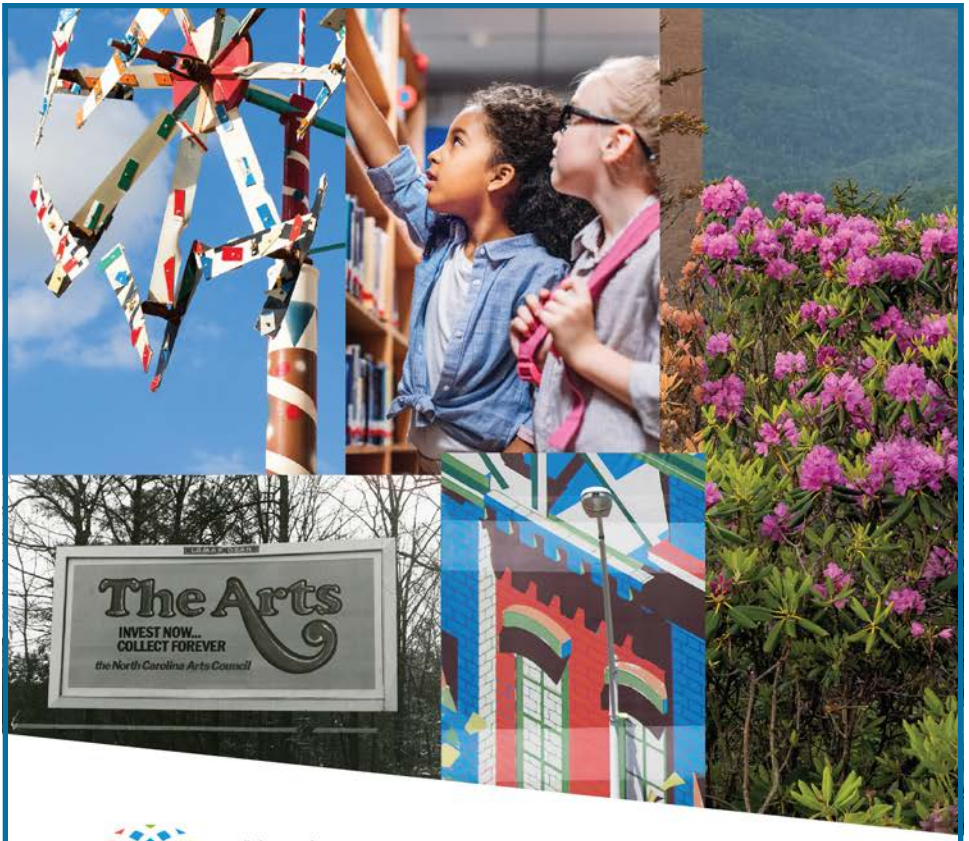
(University of Houston) and her M.A. in Journalism (Texas Southern University). Jo Anne is thankful for the opportunity to work with a group of amazing creatives in ***The Bluest Eye.*** (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Eileen J Morris
Eileen J. Morris is the artistic director of The Ensemble Theatre, where she has produced over hundreds of productions, including 14 world premieres and over 100 regional premieres.

Eileen was named 2023 Best Artistic Director by **Houston Press** Awards, and The Ensemble Theatre was awarded over eight awards in numerous categories. She was also named the 2021 Director of the Decade for ***Fences*** by Broadway World Houston. She is part of the first cohort of the BOLD Women's Theater Leadership Circle, which has benefited The Ensemble Theatre in receiving $1.50 million in the past seven years.

Her most recent Ensemble Theatre directing credits include ***The Bluest Eye***, ***Akeelah & The Bee, Coconut Cake, Stew, On Midnight, Friday the Thirteenth, The Piano Lesson, Chicken & Biscuits, Paradise Blue, Brother Toad, Love & Southern Discomfort, Single Black Female, The Lawsons: A Civil Rights Love Story, I, Too, Am America, More Than Christmas, and School Girls; Or the African Mean Girls Play,*** to name a few. She recently directed Fences at the Alley Theatre in Houston, along with Sweat in 2021. Eileen directs annually at Pittsburgh's New Horizon Theatre (co-founded by August Wilson).

A proud member of SDC (Stage Directors and Choreographers), Eileen holds the distinction of being the ONLY woman in the world to direct nine of the ten August Wilson Century Cycle plays. She is honored to hold this distinction. **She dedicates this play to every little brown and black girl/boy who feels unseen.**



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Toni Morrison
Toni Morrison is the Robert F. Goheen Professor Emeritus in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University. She has degrees from Howard and Cornell universities. She was appointed as the Robert F. Goheen Professor at Princeton University, in spring 1989, a post she held until 2006. Among the universities where she has held teaching posts are Yale, Bard College and Rutgers. The New York State Board of Regents appointed her to the Albert Schweitzer Chair in the Humanities at the State University of New York at Albany in 1984. In 1988 she was the Obert C. Tanner Lecturer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Jeannette K. Watson Distinguished Professor at Syracuse University. In 1990 she delivered the Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, and the Massey Lectures at Harvard University. In 1994 she held the International Condorcet Chair at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and College de France. Eight major novels, ***The Bluest Eye***, ***Sula***, ***Song of Solomon***, ***Tar Baby***, ***Beloved***, ***Jazz***, ***Paradise and Love***, have received extensive critical acclaim.

Lydia R. Diamond
LYDIA R. DIAMOND (Playwright) is an award-winning playwright whose works include The ***Gift Horse***, ***Toni Stone***, ***Smart People***, ***Stick Fly*** (Broadway), ***Voyeurs de Venus***, ***Harriet Jacobs***, ***The Bluest Eye***, ***The Inside***, and ***Stage Black***. Her work has been performed at companies including American Conservatory Theatre Company, The Huntington Theatre (***Stick Fly***, ***Smart People*** [Premiere], ***The Bluest Eye***), Congo Square, Steppenwolf Theatre Co., The Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage, Company One, Writers Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, New Victory at the Duke (Off-Broadway), The Guthrie Theater, Roundabout Theatre Co. (OffBroadway), Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Second Stage Theater (Off-Broadway), Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, True Colors, MPAACT, Arden Theatre Co., Encores at City Center (New York), Intiman Theatre, and PlayMakers Repertory Company. Diamond has

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been a W. E. B. DuBois Institute Non-Resident Fellow at Harvard, a Sundance Playwright Lab Creative Advisor, a Radcliffe Institute Fellow, a Sally B. Goodman Fellow, and a National Endowment for the Arts/TCG playwright in residence. Awards include the Horton Foote Playwriting Award, Joseph Jefferson Award, IRNE Award Nomination, Elliot Norton Award Nomination, Audelco Nomination, Kilroy's List, Susan Smith Blackburn Prize Finalist, LA Critics Circle Award, and National Art's Club Kesselring Prize for Playwriting. She was a consulting producer and writer for Showtime's 4th season of The Affair and was nominated for a Writer's Guild Award for Best Drama Episode. She has also written for NBC, HBO, HBO Max, and Hulu. Diamond has an honorary MFA from A.C.T. and an honorary doctorate from Pine Manor College. She sits on the Dramatists Guild Legal Defense Fund Board and the Dramatists Guild Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Access Committee. Diamond is an associate professor of playwriting at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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ENT 211 AD

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

In our lifetime, many of us have read several novels by Toni Morrison. The Bluest Eye, one of her most popular works, is a complex story that conveys the corrosive effects of systemic racism, Eurocentric beauty standards, and internalized self-hatred. It is a narrative that contrasts innocence with symbolism like blue eyes, Shirley Temple dolls, and unblossomed marigolds. To be born Black is to recognize the deep psychological events that arise when one isn't connected to community or when one understands that joy permeates and is woven into the fabric of existence. Lydia Diamond has adopted a beautiful story; she has created a sense of community and allows the fragmentation of it to be shown through the eyes of a child, Pecola, a child who believes the world would be better if she were not brown or black. Ms. Diamond challenges us to discover the love and beauty within this narrative, urging us not to let modern sensibilities cloud the reality of these experiences. She reminds us that these characters exist far beyond the binary of good and evil; by gaining this insight and bearing witness together, we emerge as more empathetic human beings. We dedicate these performances to our original MAMA, Rita L. Hughes. May she rest in Heaven.

Eileen J. Morris

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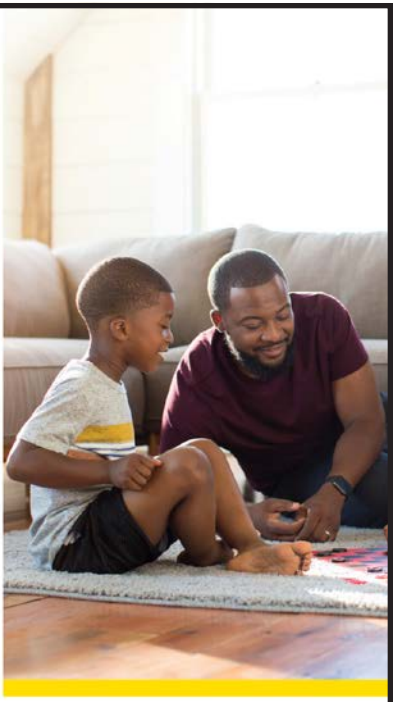

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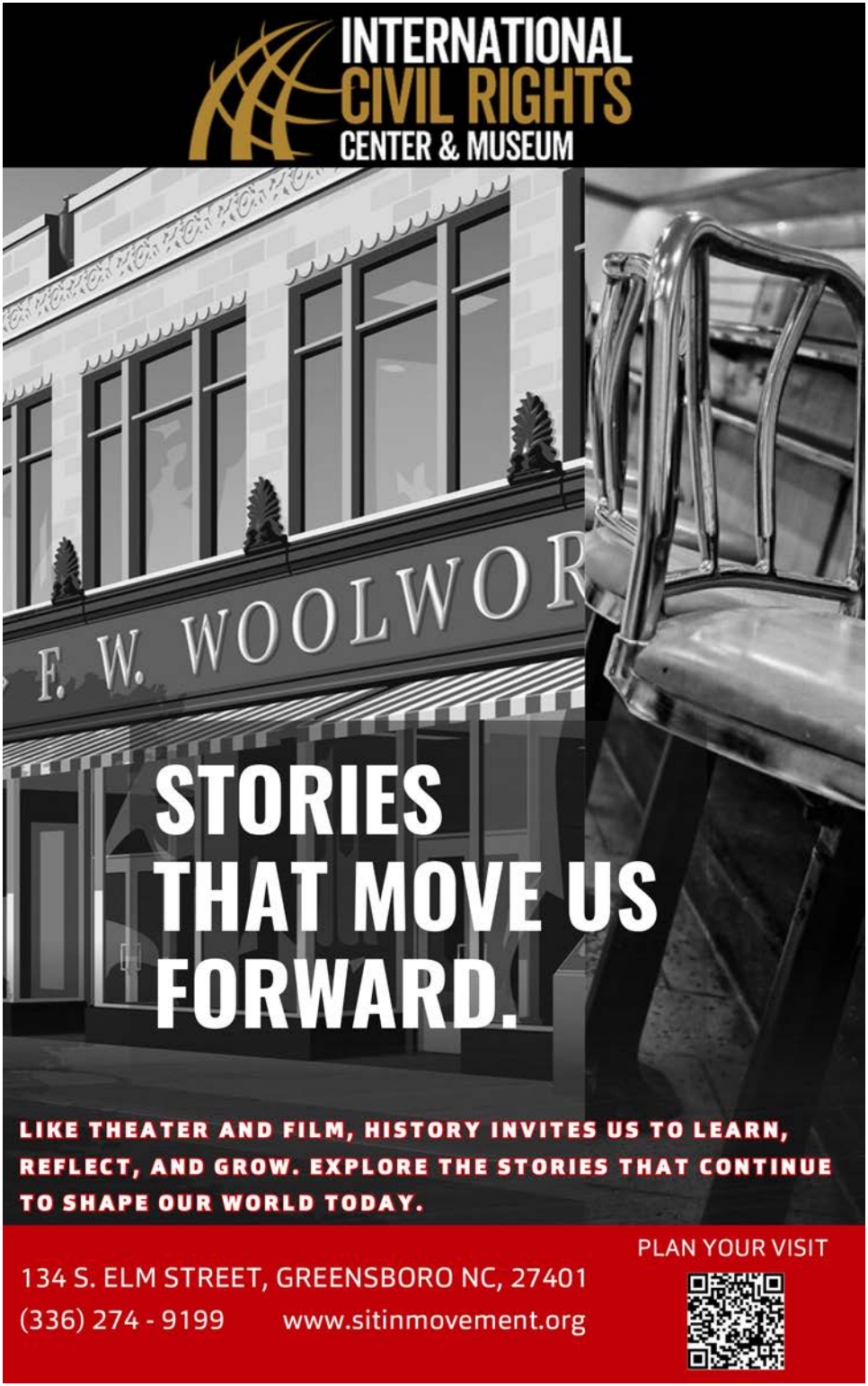
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Nico Amortegui, *Be a Wildflower*, 2025. © 2025 Nico Amortegui. Courtesy of the artist.

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The North Carolina Museum of Art, Winston-Salem (formerly SECCA) is pleased to announce a new exhibition and program space, now open in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem.

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THURSDAY	1PM	→	7PM
FRIDAY	1PM	→	5PM
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SUNDAY	1PM	→	5PM

NCMA Winston-Salem Downtown is centrally located at
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Admission is free and open to the public. Learn more at
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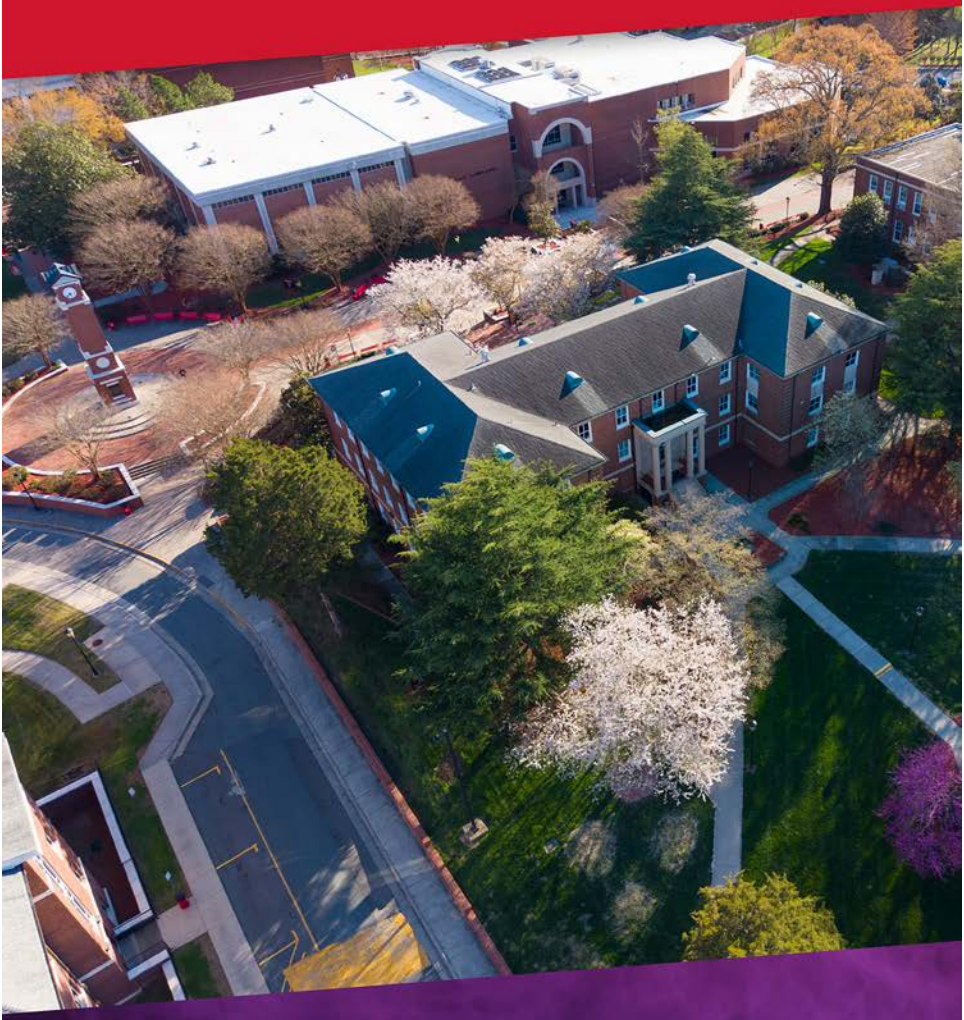

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