Aesthetic Realism Answer to Racism
Thrills Audience at NC Museum of History

(Raleigh, NC) The audience at NC Museum of History in Raleigh on June 3rd gave a standing ovation to “The People of Clarendon County”—A Play by Ossie Davis, & the Answer to Racism! This event, based on the book by journalist and civil rights scholar Alice Bernstein, has been educating audiences around the country for four years. It is a project of the non-profit Alliance of Ethics & Art in New York City.

Joining Bernstein were black, white, and Native American speakers: Onilaja Waters, Earl iJanes, John E. Scott Richardson, Dr. Arnold Perey, and Monique Michael. They discussed what Aesthetic Realism, the education founded in 1941 by the great American philosopher Eli Siegel, explains is the cause of racism—the contempt, the addition to self through the lessening of something else, and the answer to racism, criticizing contempt, including in oneself, and learning to see the inner lives of other people as real and as deep as our own.

The one-act 1955 civil rights play, which Bernstein unearthed in 2004, chronicles the brave black parents whose struggle to unequal education led to the Supreme Court’s Brown decision, outlawing segregation in public schools. Ossie Davis applauded her vision of presenting the play in relation to Aesthetic Realism, believing the combination would be powerful in fighting racism. And it is!

The performance by the ensemble Voices in Concert: Joan Jai, Lester Hill, Jade Arnold, Connie McCoy Rogers, directed by Rudy Wallace, brought history to life with moving and joyous musical accompaniment by Grammy nominee Cynthia Jones and the Diversity Choir of the NC Department of Cultural Resources, directed by Lorice Hyman.

Educator Monique Michael (born in Haiti), gave an interactive first grade science lesson on diversity in bird and animals. Monique, Onilaja, and Ruby Dee are all descended from ancestors who fought in the American Revolution.

Voices in Concert: (l-r) Connie McCoy Rogers, Lester Hill, Joan Jai, Jade Arnold. Photo credit: Karleigh Diaz

The one-act play, which Bernstein unearthed in 2004, chronicles the brave black parents whose struggle to unequal education led to the Supreme Court’s Brown decision, outlawing segregation in public schools. Ossie Davis applauded her vision of presenting the play in relation to Aesthetic Realism, believing the combination would be powerful in fighting racism. And it is!

The performance by the ensemble Voices in Concert: Joan Jai, Lester Hill, Jade Arnold, Connie McCoy Rogers, directed by Rudy Wallace, brought history to life with moving and joyous musical accompaniment by Grammy nominee Cynthia Jones and the Diversity Choir of the NC Department of Cultural Resources, directed by Lorice Hyman.

Educator Monique Michael (born in Haiti), gave an interactive first grade science lesson on diversity in birds and animals. Monique, Onilaja, and Ruby Dee are all descended from ancestors who fought in the American Revolution.

Monique Michael, Onilaja Waters, Arnold Perey, PhD. Photo credit: David M. Bernstein


To learn more, call the Alliance of Ethics & Art toll free (888) 262-5310 or email: clarendonevent@gmail.com

This story also appeared in Philadelphia Sun, Culvert Chronicles (NY), LaVida News/Black Voice (TX), Triangle Tribune (NC), and others.