

***My Children! My Africa!*
to highlight USI's
black history observance**



**NEWS
RELEASE**

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Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* will be presented at 7 p.m. Friday, February 16, in Reitz High School Auditorium as the feature of the 1996 Black History Month observance at the University of Southern Indiana.

Fugard's play arose from his familiarity with South Africa and his fear that blacks and whites would become too polarized to allow a united South Africa to emerge. The play -- set in 1984 when unrest began to spread -- was inspired by an incident that occurred during that time period, when a black teacher who was a police informer was taken by a black mob and burned to death.

Fugard's teacher, Mr. M., is portrayed by Leonard Stephenson, a San Francisco native who has performed in regional theatre across the nation and on such television series as *Hill Street Blues*, *St. Elsewhere*, and *MacGyver*. Mr. M. selects Thami, a black high school boy from the Cookhouse ghetto who is caught up in the clash between violent action and intellectual thought, and Isabel, a white middle-class girl who craves intellectual fencing, to prepare for a debate in an English literature competition. The passion and reasoning that permeate their efforts take the audience on a journey from ignorance to knowledge, but not without pain and tragedy.

Thami is brought to life by Gregory Thomas, a Connecticut native and graduate of Carnegie Mellon University who has performed in more than 40 plays and musicals. Nicole Levy, a South African native who at age 10 moved with her family to England and later to New York, portrays Isabel. A graduate of Tisch School of the Arts, she has performed in London, Scotland, and extensively in New York; her own play, *The Telephone Conversation*, has been produced. The trio has performed *My Children! My Africa!* throughout New England as A Mixed Company touring ensemble affiliated with Joanne Rile Artists Management, Inc.; other American actors affiliated with A Mixed Company have performed the play throughout the United States.

The play -- free and open to the public -- was moved to Reitz because more space is available in the 600-seat auditorium. The program is sponsored by USI's student Activities Programming Board, the Black Student Union, and the Multicultural Center. Call the USI Multicultural Center, 812/465-7188, for information or complimentary tickets.

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(see back side for Black History Month listing)

Other Black History Month events at USI, all open to the public, include:

Wednesday, February 7 - Soul Food Extravaganza, 12 noon, University Conference Center; students, faculty, and staff are invited to sample a variety of African American foods; a \$2 donation is welcome

Monday, February 12 - panel discussion, "The Underrepresented: Black Faculty and Administrators in America," 12 noon, Orr Center, room 2018

Panelists will include faculty/administrative staff: Dr. Robert E. Mays, associate dean of the School of Education and Human Services; Dr. Betty L. Hart, associate professor of English; Marilyn S. Schmidt, director of Career Services and Placement; and Dirk D. Johnson, Enrollment Services counselor

USI students: sophomore Melissa Duneghy and junior Justin Hunter.

Wednesday, February 14 - Kathy Culmer, "Storytelling from the African American Experience," 12 noon, Eagle's Nest (snackbar)

Monday, February 19 - Diversity Workshop, 12 noon, University Center, room 118

Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday, February 26-27-28 - Black History Bowl, 12 noon, site TBA

Thursday, February 29 - Club 8600: "I'm black and I'm proud," 8 p.m., Eagle's Nest (snackbar)

USI students also will participate in these community events:

Saturday, February 3 - First annual Kids Art Fest, 10 a.m., Evansville Museum of Arts and Science

Sunday, February 11 - "At the River I Stand," 3 p.m., New Hope Baptist Church (re-enactment of sanitation strike in Memphis)

Sunday, February 18 - Michael Jackson fundraiser planned by the Evansville Housing Authority/RESPECT (tentative)