

The Bolivar Commercial

Cleveland, Miss. Friday, September 25, 1992.



'Mississippi Freedom' to perform

Some of the participants in the Jackson-based "Mississippi Freedom" theater group are (from left): James Green, Veronica Cooper, Leroy Divinity, Kay King Valentine, Deborah Imboden, Sameerah Mu-

hammad, Kent Lambert, Clarie Collins Harvey, Sadata Muhammad and Sheila Richardson. Green is a descendant of one of the founding families of Mound Bayou.

Group explores race relations

"Mississippi Freedom," a new theater event that draws on the personal stories of living Mississippians to explore three decades of race relations in the state, will be presented at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 6, in Jobe Auditorium on the Delta State University campus.

Created by award-winning New York theater artist Robbie McCauley in collaboration with 11 actors, storytellers and singers from the Jackson area, the production emphasizes the "Freedom Riders" and the voting rights movement of the 1960s as a "watershed of change for the entire country."

The work is being presented by the Arts Company of Cambridge, Mass., the DSU Division of Languages and Literature, and the Potpourri Artistic Repertory Theater of Jackson.

"Mississippi Freedom" premiered in Jackson in May. A reviewer for *The Clarion-Ledger* wrote at that time: "It's not some Broadway or Hollywood interpretation. The informal, non-fiction

script . . . is illuminating instead of condescending . . . Mississippi Freedom is dramatically positive, culturally inclusive and philosophically expansive. It speaks to every American."

Earlier in the year, McCauley and her multiracial collaborators collected oral histories from people in Mississippi and elsewhere. The histories, which form the basis of much of the piece, are combined with the performers' own stories and the interaction among themselves and with McCauley. Included is a segment where the audience and performers talk to each other about contemporary issues. Various storytelling styles, local music, historical and contemporary slides and media footage add to the social resonance of the work.

"I hope, in Mississippi, that telling stories as performance and developing theater arts out of existing culture is encouraged," McCauley said. "Another intention is to use art in a way that celebrates the hard and good changes

that Mississippians have struggled to bring about for generations."

McCauley is a veteran of New York theater, having appeared in the original Broadway run of "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf". She also has worked in a number of award-winning Off-Broadway productions.

A writer and director as well as an actress, McCauley began to create her own musical theater performances in 1979. In the mid-1980s, she created a series of autobiographical works based on historical events. One of them, "Sally's Rape," received a prestigious 1992 OBIE Award for best new play and a 1990 New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award. Recently, she began working in film and video, and was the dialogue coach for the Hollywood film "Juice."

The 11 cast members are African-Americans and caucasians of a wide range of ages. Many were involved in or have personal memories of the voting rights movement.

Tickets to the performance are \$3 for adults and \$2 for students and senior citizens. DSU students and employees will be admitted free.