

**Roanoke Public Libraries
Gainsboro Branch
Records of the Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange**

Collection Description

Repository: Gainsboro Branch of Roanoke Public Libraries

Title: Records of the Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange

Physical Characteristics: Two (2) record storage box

Donated by: Bill Modica, 1 April 2022

Arrangement: Collection is arranged in series with folders in alphabetical order and items within the folders in chronological order.

Creator: Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange

Reproduction Restrictions: No known restrictions on publication. Gainsboro Library copy fees apply.

Processor: Megan Koehler Mizak, 27 December 2022

Historical Note:

The Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange grew out of response to the tragic death of community leader and Indian immigrant Betty Desai in February 2000, as a way to honor her legacy. Initially the group began as a drumming and chanting circle whose intent was to unite people from diverse backgrounds and cultures and to commemorate Desai and promote her message of racial and cultural understanding. As the group expanded, it began to hold monthly drumming and chanting ceremonies, eventually becoming the group Diversity Drumming. Additionally, members of this group created the Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange (RVCE), which sought to explore other aspects of cultural understanding in the Roanoke Valley.

In the beginning, the RVCE held monthly luncheons with the intent to share ideas about future events and project opportunities. These discussions soon led the organization to seek to establish a cultural center whose purpose would be to host events and bring people together to share music, food, and traditions from around the world.

In 2001, the organization announced a proposal to refocus the long-discussed redevelopment of Henry Street, which was the social, cultural, and economic center for Roanoke's African American citizens during the era of Jim Crow. Henry Street, located in the historic Gainsboro neighborhood, had suffered badly at the hands of urban renewal projects and few historic structures survived. Initially, the group intended to create an umbrella organization which would include three projects that were identified as being paramount to revitalization efforts. These projects included the New Henry Street Plan, which was a multi-faceted project spearheaded by

Roanoke Neighborhood Development Corp. and included the creation of a new office building; an extensive renovation of the former Dumas Hotel into the Dumas Hotel Music Center which would be led by Total Action Against Poverty; and the renovation of the former Lincoln Theater (also known as the Strand Theater, the Ebony Club, and the Morocco Club).

The theater project was identified by RVCE as being a location that could be used by the community to create a space that would celebrate the importance of the contributions of African American artists and honor the rich heritage of the neighborhood. As part of these plans, the former Lincoln Theater would be renamed the Micheaux Theater in honor of Black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, whose production company, Congo/Micheaux Film Corporation, was based out of the building from 1922 to 1925. Financing for the project would be supported, in part, by the development of a commercial building on the corner of Center Avenue and Henry Street which would house a restaurant and shops.

While the RVCE did not succeed in their plans to renovate the Lincoln Theater, due to lack of funding, their efforts did succeed in convincing the Roanoke Higher Education Center to acquire the building for use as a culinary school, now called the Claude Moore Center. Additionally, the RVCE eventually became the shell organization for Local Colors, a non-profit organization which holds a multicultural festival in Roanoke annually.

Key Persons:

William Modica, Executive Director

Eddie Ratlieff

Bill Rhiehold

Sally Garst

Tom McKeon

Mohandas Sallamah

Tom Cain

Margaret Roberts

Alice Roberts

John Kerns

Greta Evens

Pearl Fu

Scope and Content:

The Records of the Roanoke Valley Cultural Exchange consists of two record storage boxes. The collection was donated by William Modica, a founder and member of the organization. The collection consists of administrative documents, documents relating to the Gainsboro

Neighborhood Plan, the proposed Micheaux Theater and the New Henry Street Plan, and Local Colors. Materials in the collections date from 1998 to 2022, predominantly 1998-2002.

Container List:

Box 1 of 2

Series 1: RVCE Administrative Documents

Folder 1: Community Profile RVCE

Folder 2: Contact List Form

Folder 3: Correspondences, 1998 - 2002

Folder 4: Financial Documents

Folder 5: Informational Flyers

Folder 6: Legal Documents: Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws, Memorandum of Understanding

Folder 7: Meeting Sign-in Sheets

Folder 8: Minutes

Folder 9: Mission Statement

Folder 10: Notes

Folder 11: Organizational History

Folder 12: Organizational and Support Tasks

Folder 13: Press Releases

Folder 14: Program Manager/Task List

Folder 15: Programs and Projects Summary

Folder 16: Tax Documents

Folder 17: Website Pages

Series 2: Gainsboro Neighborhood Plan

Folder 18: Gainsboro Contacts

Folder 19: Gainsboro Neighborhood Demographics

Folder 20: Gainsboro Neighborhood Plan Community Meetings/Forums

Folder 21: Gainsboro Neighborhood Plan Discussion Draft

Folder 22: Gainsboro Neighborhood Plan Strategic Assessment Draft

Folder 23: Gainsboro Neighborhood Profile

Series 3: Micheaux Theater and New Henry Street Center

Folder 24: Board of Directors New Henry Street Center

Folder 25: Brochure

Folder 26: Design Notes
Folder 27: Ebony Club Site Proposal

Box 2 of 2

Folder 28: Financial Documents
Folder 29: Micheaux Center Revenue Streams
Folder 30: Micheaux Theater and New Henry Street Center Schematics
Folder 31: New Henry Street Development Schedule
Folder 32: New Henry Street Packet
Folder 33: Petition
Folder 34: Photographs - 10 photographs of the Lincoln Theater/Ebony Club pre renovation
Folder 35: Plan - New Henry Street Project
Folder 36 & 37: Proposed Henry Street Development Project Package
Folder 38: Roanoke Higher Education Center Claude Moore Education Complex

Series 4: Local Colors

Folder 39: City of Roanoke Proclamations
Folder 40: Correspondences
Folder 41: Local Colors Celebration
Folder 42: Multicultural Reception, 24 October 2002
Folder 43: News clippings
Folder 44: Press Releases