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PRESS RELEASE

**Actors Angela Bassett, Delroy Lindo, Courtney Vance, Phylicia Rashad
lend expertise, service to Pittsburgh's August Wilson Center**

*26-member National Advisory Council includes high-ranking directors, producers, actors
and other arts authorities all devoted to serving nationwide as the new Center's ambassadors*

PITTSBURGH, PA—May 10, 2009—The August Wilson Center for African American Culture today announced the formation of a National Advisory Council, comprised of influential, leading experts and artists in the performing and visual arts.

Neil Barclay, the August Wilson Center's President and CEO, said the Council consists of accomplished, prominent national figures committed to celebrating arts and culture while furthering the legacy of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright August Wilson.

"We have always relied on our numerous community partners and strategic alliances across the country to assist in guiding our planning and strategic development as an institution. By pooling our knowledge and working together with this devoted Council, we can and will dramatically enhance the preservation and presentation of the art, history and culture of African Americans and people of African descent throughout the world," said Mr. Barclay.

"As we prepare to unveil the August Wilson Center to the globe, we look forward to working with the Council and wish to thank the members for devoting their service to the Center," he added.

This new Council's principal role will be to promote and endorse the August Wilson Center beyond the Pittsburgh region, serving as ambassadors for the Center to their audiences. Each member will serve a three-year term. The Council, which will meet annually, consists of producers, directors, actors, art collectors, musicians and other authorities in the arts:

"What an honor to serve on this Council," said Harry J. Elam, Jr., a professor at Stanford University. "The Center is a fitting tribute to Mr. Wilson, whose work continues to inspire me and others. I am eager to do all I can to make the institution thrive at this critical time and in the future."

Actor and Director Delroy Lindo said he considered it a privilege to serve an organization that pays homage to Wilson and is dedicated to helping the Center preserve, present and interpret African American culture.

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“The thing about August Wilson’s work is that it never, ever fails to excite and inspire, both from an audience and creative point-of-view inside the work. I am excited about advancing the August Wilson Center’s mission and purpose,” said Mr. Lindo.

This announcement comes at the beginning of the Center’s opening celebrations. The Center will host a free Community Open House from 10 am to 5 pm Saturday, May 30 at the new \$36 million, 65,000-square-foot facility, located at 980 Liberty Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh. Everyone is invited preview the brand-new August Wilson Center. Attendees will enjoy tours, art and food markets, live performances, family activities and other festivities, inside and outside the Center.

Also, on September 19, 2009 will be the World Premiere Ceremony and Celebration, where the Center will pay homage to and recognize August Wilson’s family and the Center’s founders, donors and friends.

The August Wilson Center National Advisory Council includes chairs: **Charles S. Dutton**, actor; **Vivian Davidson Hewitt**, art collector; **S. Epatha Merkerson**, actor and **John Edgar Wideman**, author. Council members include: **Paris Barclay**, producer/director; **Angela Bassett**, actor; **Anthony Chisholm**, actor; **Teresa Eyring**, executive director, Theatre Communications Group; **Bettye Fletcher Comer**, director, Fletcher Foundation; **Harry J. Elam, Jr.**, professor, Stanford University; **Kent Gash**, visiting associate art professor, academic director, NYU Tisch School of the Arts; **Sandra L. Gibson**, president/CEO, Association of Performing Arts Presenters; **Stephen McKinley Henderson**, actor/director; **Ruben Santiago-Hudson**, actor/director/playwright; **Ahmad Jamal**, musician; **Kenny Leon**, artistic director, True Colors Theatre Company; **Delroy Lindo**, actor/director; **Harry Lennix**, actor; **Gail Dexter Lord**, president, Lord Cultural Resources; **Bill Nunn**, actor; **Phylicia Rashad**, actor/director; **Michele Shay**, actor/director; **Mikki Sheperd**, national arts consultant; **Carolyn Bright Smith**, philanthropist; **Tamara Tunie**, actor/producer; **Courtney B. Vance**, actor.

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About the August Wilson Center for African American Culture

Founded and managed by African American community leaders and professionals, and named for Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning playwright, Hill District native August Wilson, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture engages regional and national audiences in its mission of preserving, presenting, interpreting, celebrating and shaping the art, culture and history of African Americans in Western Pennsylvania and people of African descent throughout the world.

The August Wilson Center is the only major cultural institution in the United States designed by an African American woman, architect Allison Williams, who received this commission following a national design competition.

Located at 980 Liberty Avenue in Downtown Pittsburgh’s Cultural District, the multidisciplinary August Wilson Center is reflective of all aspects of African American culture. The Center’s striking, two-story, green building houses seven exhibition galleries, a 486-seat theater for performances in all disciplines, an education center, a café and gift shop, and multipurpose spaces for community programs and events. The Center is among the select few African American cultural institutions presenting visual and performing arts, the humanities and educational programs in a state-of-the-art venue.

More information is available on the Web at **AugustWilsonCenter.org** and by calling 412.258.2700.