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**PRESS RELEASE**

**August Wilson Center Launches Groundbreaking Initiative to Support Local Working Artists with Generous Fellows Program**

**PITTSBURGH, PA—November 28, 2008**—Expanding its reach to artists at all stages of their careers, the August Wilson Center for African American Culture announces the formation of the **August Wilson Center Fellows Program**—an initiative developed especially to support African American artists and artists of African descent who live and work in southwestern Pennsylvania.

According to Shay Wafer, vice president of programs, the August Wilson Center is one of a handful of institutions to offer a fellows program in the Pittsburgh region that is dedicated to cultivating and promoting the artistic needs of the African American community.

“The creativity, imagination and passion of Pittsburgh’s African American artists are tightly woven into the world’s rich cultural fabric. In spite of all the accomplishments of the artists, musicians, dancers and actors birthed out of this region, many artists and performers—historically and present-day—have lacked the resources to advance their artistic development and products,” said Ms. Wafer.

“The August Wilson Center will do much more than provide a physical platform for cultural expression and the arts. It will ensure that creative people in southwestern Pennsylvania have access to the expertise and the wherewithal needed to further their craft and careers,” Ms. Wafer added.

The August Wilson Center Fellows Program is a one-of-a-kind opportunity designed to give local artists access to a broad range of support systems that will allow them to excel in their craft. Five AWC Fellows will be selected to work on a self-identified project over a one-year period. The Center will provide each fellow with a generous stipend and both administrative and creative support.

Interested artists may work in any of the following disciplines: media arts, music composition and performance, performance-based arts or visual arts. **The Center encourages all African American artists and artists of African descent living and working in southwestern Pennsylvania to attend one of two information sessions to learn more about the AWC Fellows Program and how to apply:**

**Thursday, December 4, 2008**  
**5:30 pm**  
**Gallery 209/9**  
**209 Ninth Street, Downtown**

**Saturday, December 6, 2008**  
**Noon**  
**Kelly-Strayhorn Theater**  
**5941 Penn Avenue, East Liberty**

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Applications will be accepted until **Friday, January 30, 2009**. Selection for the program will take place in March 2009 with the first class of fellows announced in May 2009.

The announcement will coincide with the opening of the August Wilson Center's new facility, currently under construction in the Cultural District, Downtown. More than a museum, the 65,000-square-foot, multidisciplinary cultural center will be reflective of all aspects of African American culture and include exhibition galleries, a theater, an education center, a café and gift shop, and multipurpose spaces for community programs and events.

The AWC Fellows Program was made possible through the generous financial support of an anonymous donor, with an additional grant from the Multicultural Arts Initiative (MCAI), a funding and advocacy organization that supports, strengthens and celebrates culturally diverse arts programming with an emphasis on African American programs. For more information, visit [www.mcai-pittsburgh.org](http://www.mcai-pittsburgh.org).

For details on how to apply for the AWC Fellows Program, contact Ms. Wafer at 412.258.2700 or [swafer@AugustWilsonCenter.org](mailto:swafer@AugustWilsonCenter.org).

To make a financial contribution to the August Wilson Center or for more information about the Center's Capital Campaign, visit [AugustWilsonCenter.org](http://AugustWilsonCenter.org) or call 412.258.2700.

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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.

The Center is involved in a Capital Campaign to build a new facility located at Liberty Avenue, Tenth Street and William Penn Place in Pittsburgh's Downtown. More than a museum, the multidisciplinary cultural center will be reflective of all aspects of African American culture. Opening in spring 2009, the Center's striking, two-story, green building will house 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. When it opens, the Center will be the first African American cultural institution in the US to present visual and performing arts, the humanities and educational programs in the same venue.

More information is available on the Center's Web site at [AugustWilsonCenter.org](http://AugustWilsonCenter.org) and by calling 412.258.2700.