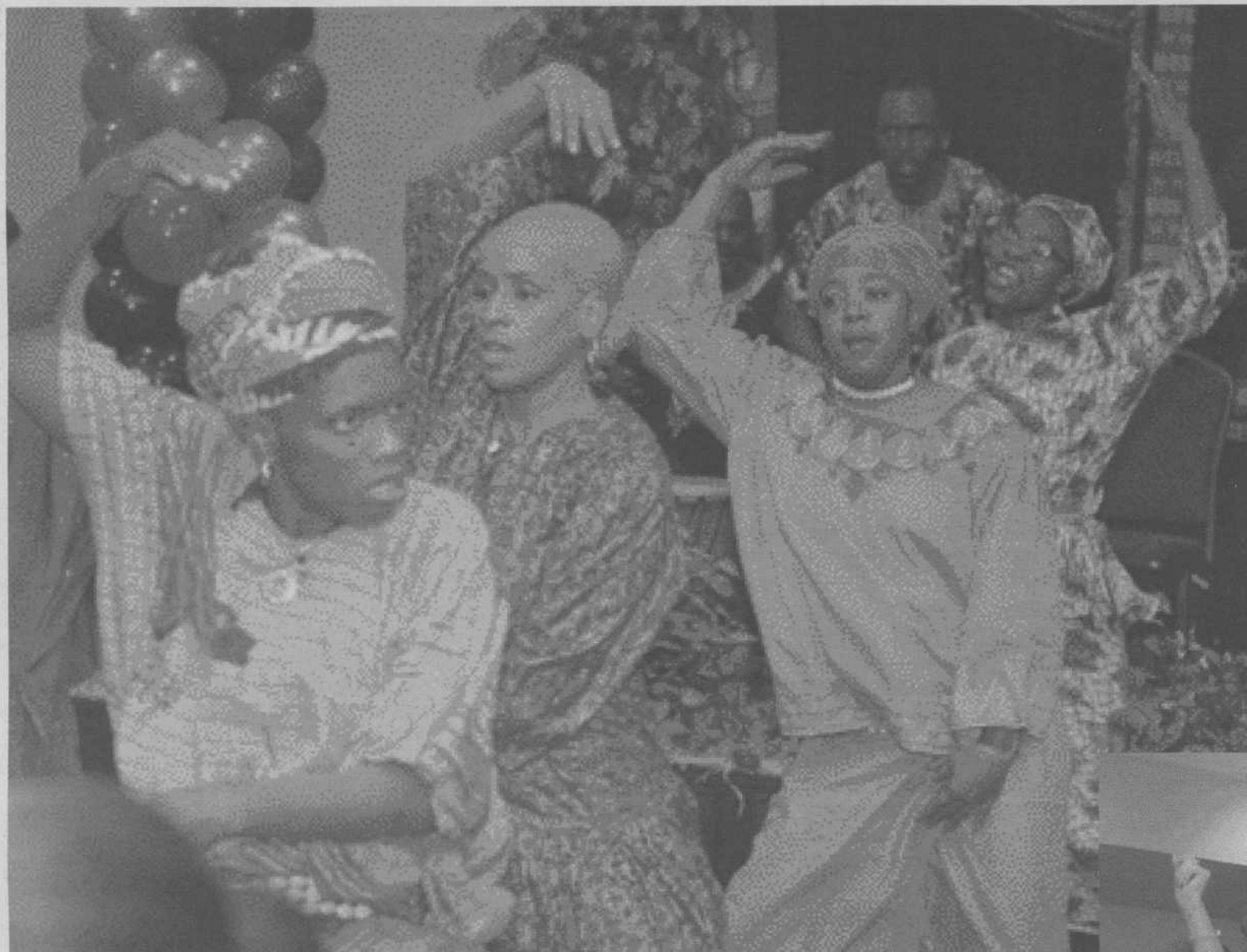


Black Democrats Celebrate Kwanzaa Holiday



The Clark County Black Democratic Black Caucus hosted its inaugural Kwanzaa ceremony on Saturday at Nevada Partners. An African theme suffused the atmosphere. (Adjacent) Members of the Olabisi African Dance Troupe did a salute to the motherland, Africa. (Below, right) Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev., takes part in the festive activities. (Bottom left) Kim Russell performed a one-woman show in which she embodied the character and spirit of freedom fighter Sojourner Truth. John Hunt, chairman of the Clark County Democratic Party, gets a hat put on his head. The CCDBC's overarching objective is to "unite as one voice on issues affecting the African-American community, family and economic opportunities," its preamble notes.

Sentinel-Voice photos by Ramon Savoy



Pitt stars in remake of F. Scott Fitzgerald classic

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Very loosely based on the classic tale of the same name by F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" is a melancholy meditation on love, mortality and loneliness revolving around a baby (Brad Pitt) born old who grows younger over the course of his life.

This melancholy parable was adapted by Academy Award-winner Eric Roth ("Forrest Gump") who managed to stretch a 14-page short story into a meandering, 167-minute parable of Biblical proportions.

Directed by David Fincher, the film opens in New Orleans at the end of the first World War where we find Benjamin's mother (Jocanna Saylor) dying during childbirth being followed by his father's (Jason Flemyng) wrapping the inexplicably-aged infant in swaddling clothes and secretly depositing him on the back steps of the local old folks' home.

Fortunately, he is soon discovered and adopted by the place's nurse, Miss Queenie (Taraji P. Henson), a selfless, mammy-like figure who altruistically decides to care for him the best she

can. Although her odd-looking, little octogenarian is initially beset by an assortment of infirmities, Queenie can't help but notice that there is something which sets Benjamin apart from the rest of the residents of her assisted living facility. For, while they continue to deteriorate and die, he miraculously has his vitality restored, and gradually gets back his hearing, eyesight, hair, and so forth. Eventually, Benjamin not only feels fairly spry, but independent enough to bid Queenie and company adieu

and sets out to explore the world on his own. And with an uncanny sense of timing rather reminiscent of a Forrest Gump, he proceeds to embark on an epic journey which lands him in the middle of a number of events of historical import over the ensuing decades, such as a World War II naval battle and a NASA rocket launch. And whereas Forrest was fond of repeating the refrain "My mamma always said, 'Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get,'" Benjamin relies on Queenie's

equally-maternal words of wisdom, a sage warning that "You never know what's coming for you." The parallels between the pictures don't end there, either. Like Forrest, Benjamin has an endearing naivete about him, and he also yearns for an elusive love interest (Cate Blanchett). All these similarities can easily be explained by the fact that Eric Roth wrote the script for both movies, and he's undoubtedly attempting to regenerate some of that magic by resurrecting some of the same gimmicks that won him an Oscar for

Gump. At least Button's reverse aging theme is unique, allowing for a sufficiently novel and compelling plotline. Furthermore, Fincher's painstaking attention to detail during each era is nothing short of spectacular. A relatively-morose morality play likely to land its share of accolades during award season, provided everyone stops comparing it to Gump. Excellent (3.5 stars). Rated PG-13 for profanity, sexuality, smoking and brief war violence.