

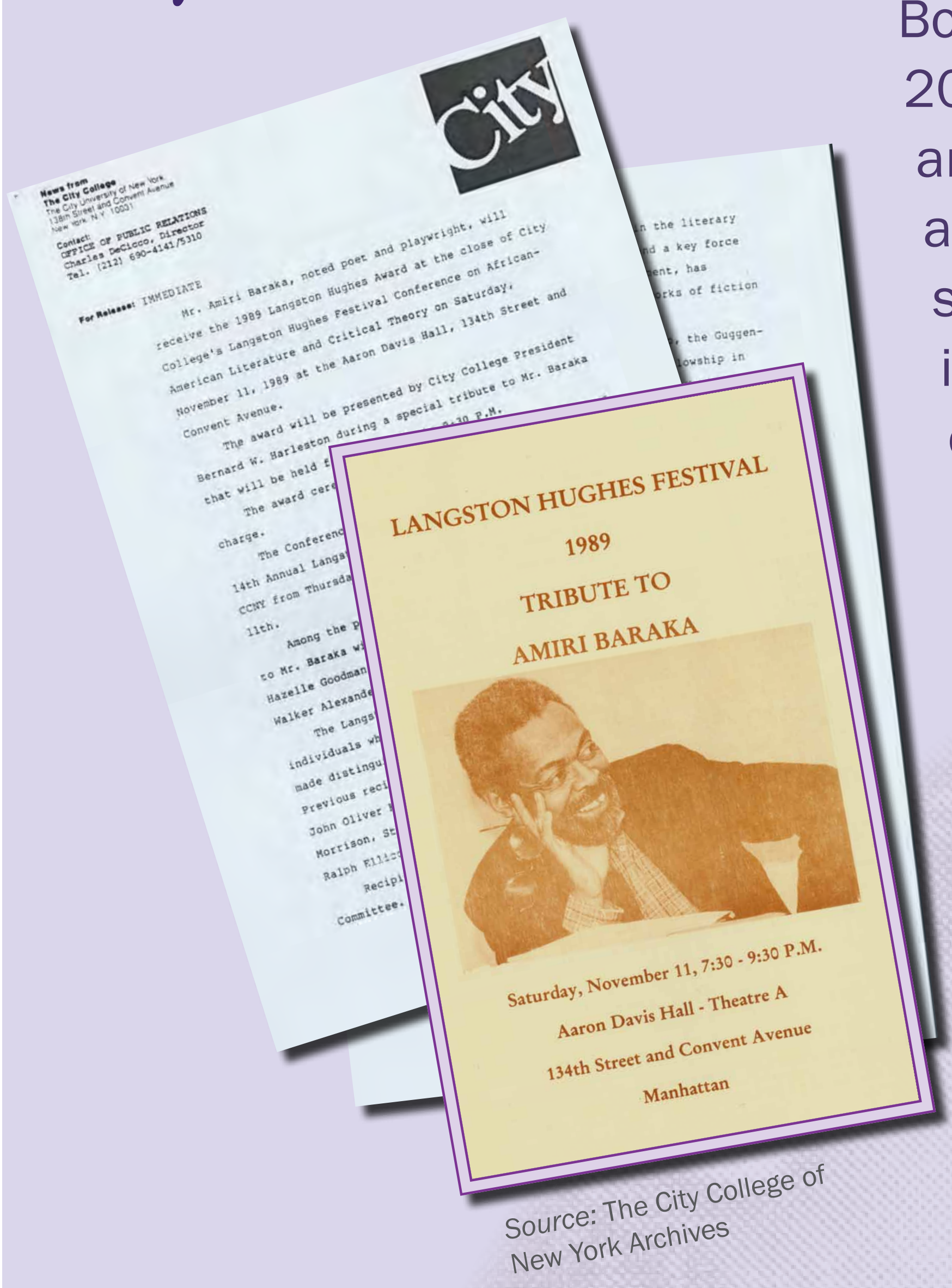


# THE LANGSTON HUGHES FESTIVAL HONOREES

*From Amiri Baraka to Chinua Achebe 1989 - 1993*

## 1989 Amiri Baraka

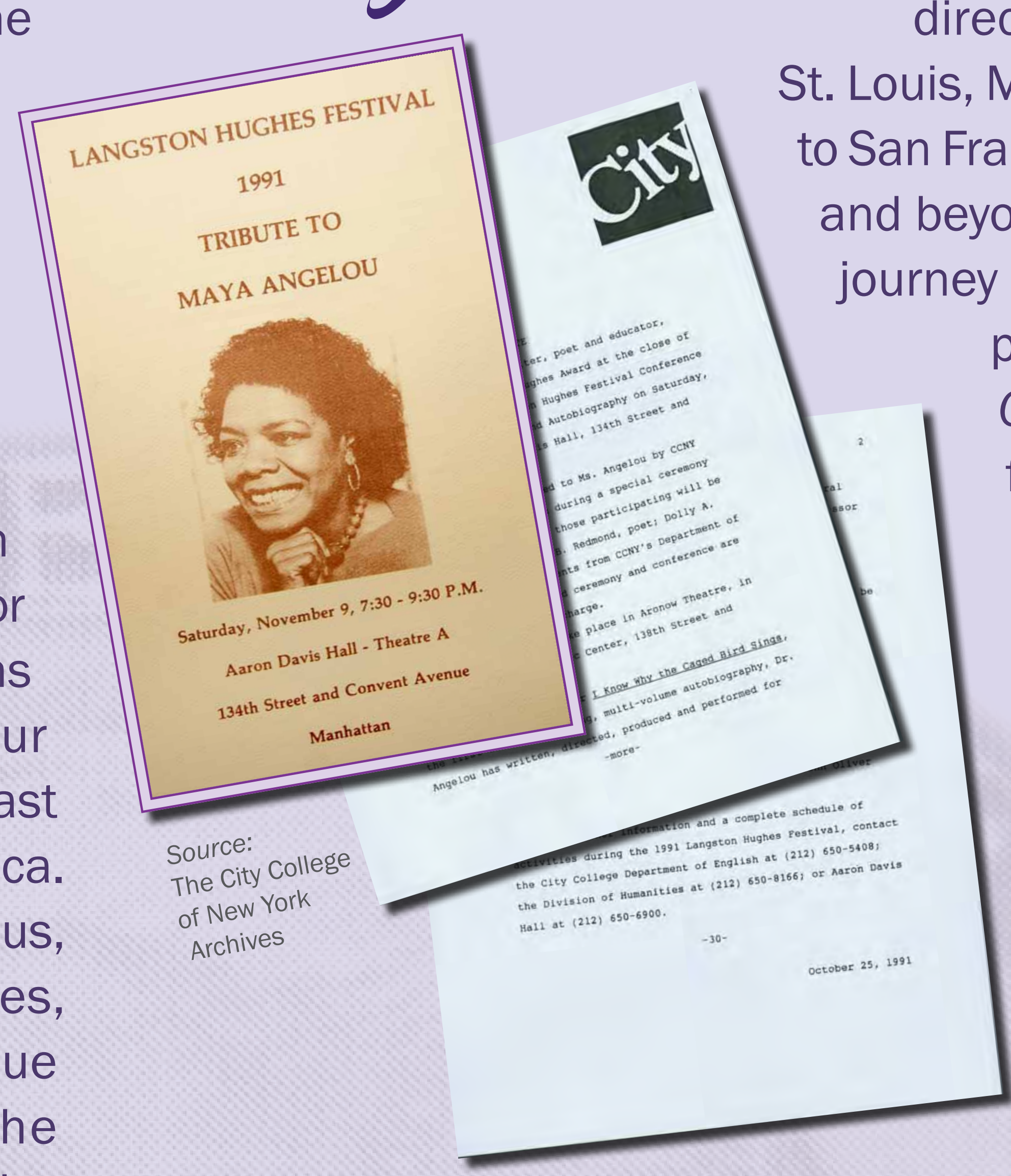
Poet, playwright, essayist, teacher, and political activist Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) is the delineator of what Du Bois called the great problem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the color line. His art—in its essential idealism, its anger and outrage at racial and social injustice, its leaps of the imagination, its wit and violent denunciation—holds up a mirror to contemporary America, wherein we see our harshest images in revealing focus. Baraka’s search for healing and supportive traditions and ideologies has charted our collective journey through the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in America. As Arnold Rampersad reminds us, Baraka, like Langston Hughes, “has placed the greatest value on the consciousness, the expressive style, and the destiny of the common people.”



Source: The City College of New York Archives

## 1991 Maya Angelou

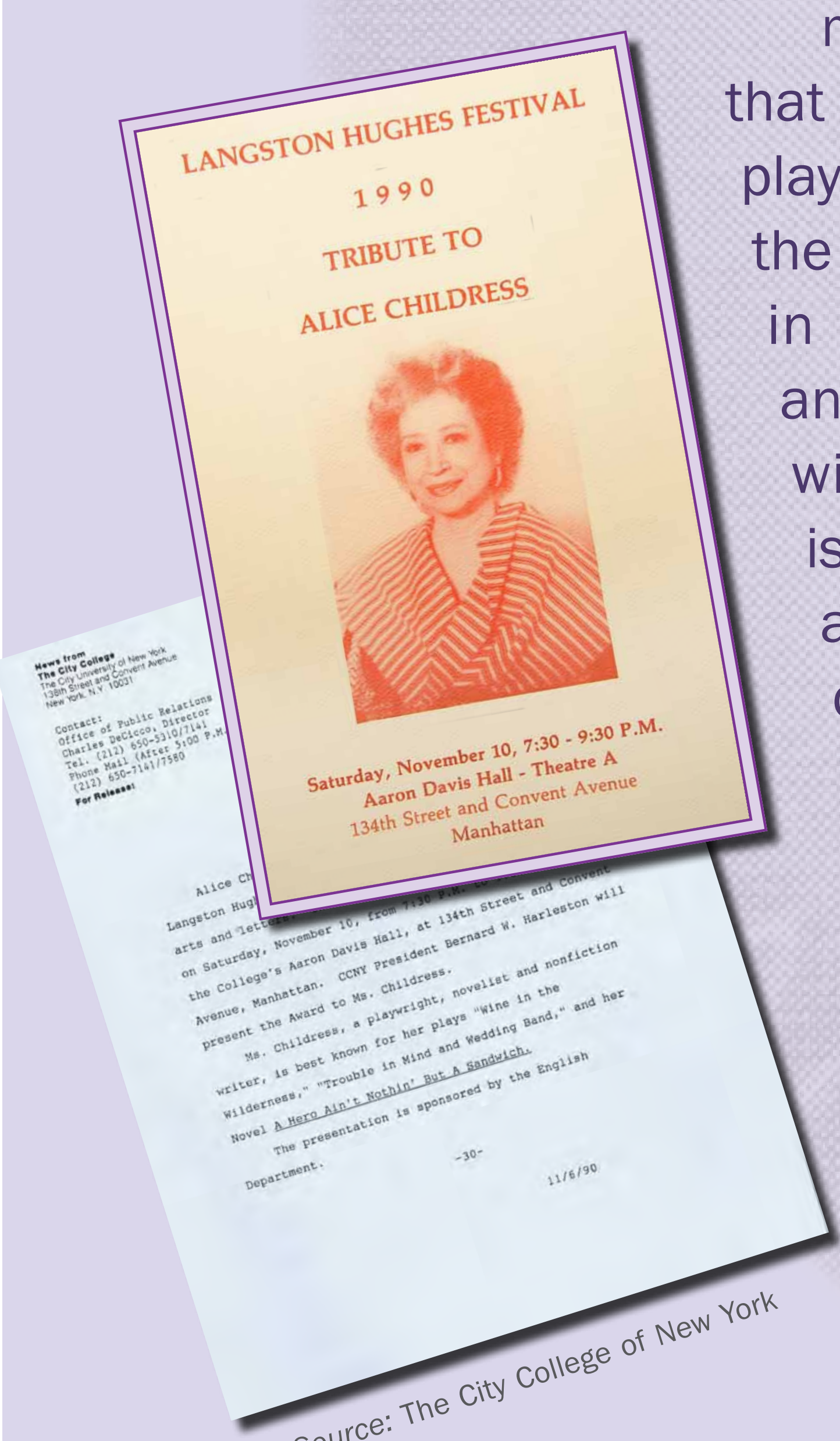
Maya Angelou: author, poet, educator, playwright, actress, historian, civil rights activist, producer, director and world traveler. From St. Louis, Missouri, to Stamps, Arkansas, to San Francisco, Europe, Africa, Harlem and beyond, Angelou’s life has been a journey towards self-hood. Since the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the classic first volume of her continuing autobiography, Angelou has enriched us, book after book, with what James Baldwin has called the “moving wonder” and “luminous dignity” with which she confronts her life. “You may encounter many defeats,” she instructs us, “but you must not be defeated.”



Source: The City College of New York Archives

## 1990 Alice Childress

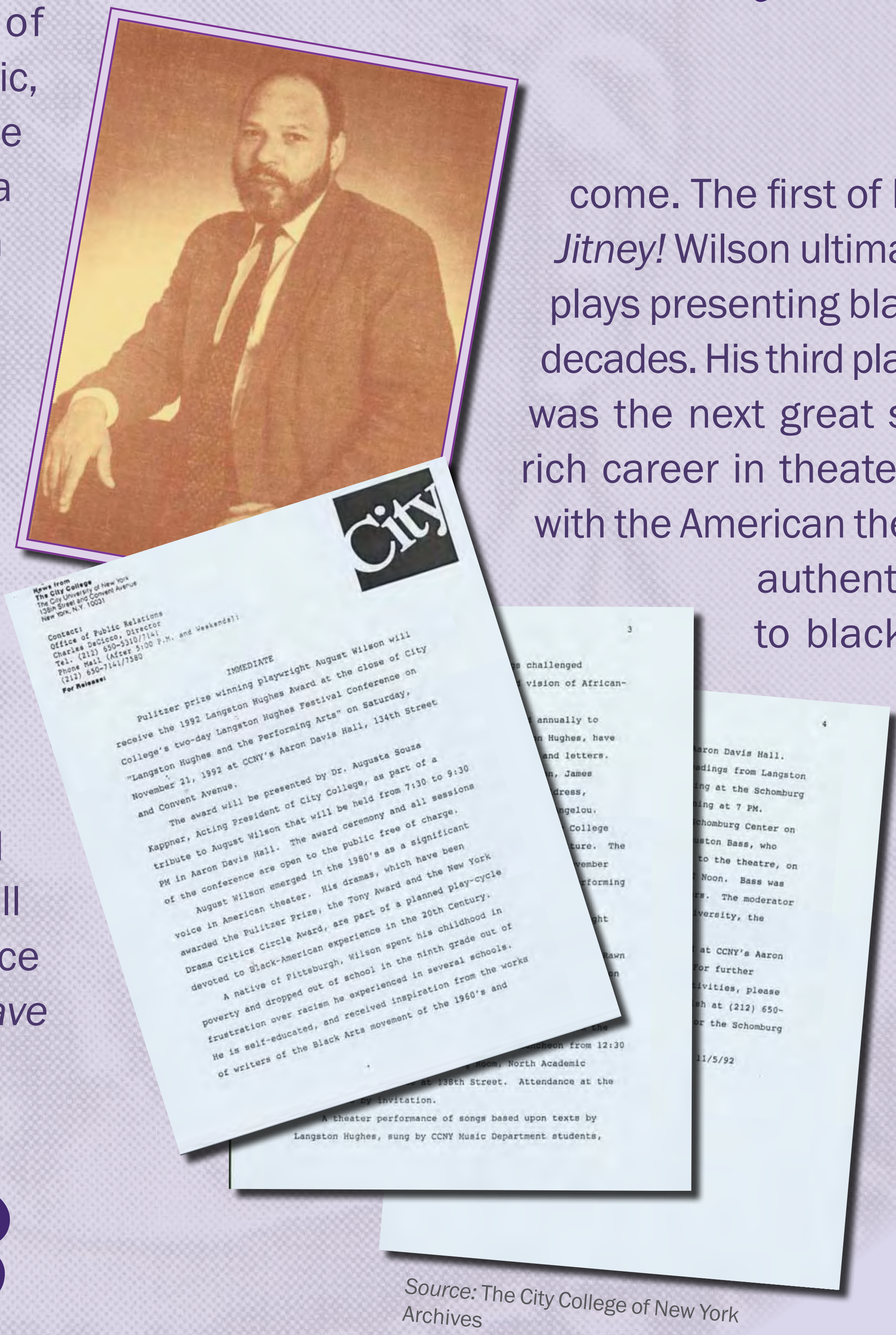
Playwright, novelist, actress, director and winner of numerous literary, academic, and community awards, Alice Childress has displayed a mastery of genre and vivid characterization that has brought her universal acclaim. Her plays, short stories, and novels illuminate the problems of prejudice and oppression in America with honesty, compassion, and a refusal to compromise. Childress’ willingness to treat the great social issues has made her an inspiration to a generation of artists. As actress and director, she was a pioneer for equity in the theater for African American artists and technicians. In public life, she continued to be a champion for the freedom of all artists in the world of ideas, and a voice for all the voiceless “have-nots in a have society.”



Source: The City College of New York Archives

## 1992 August Wilson

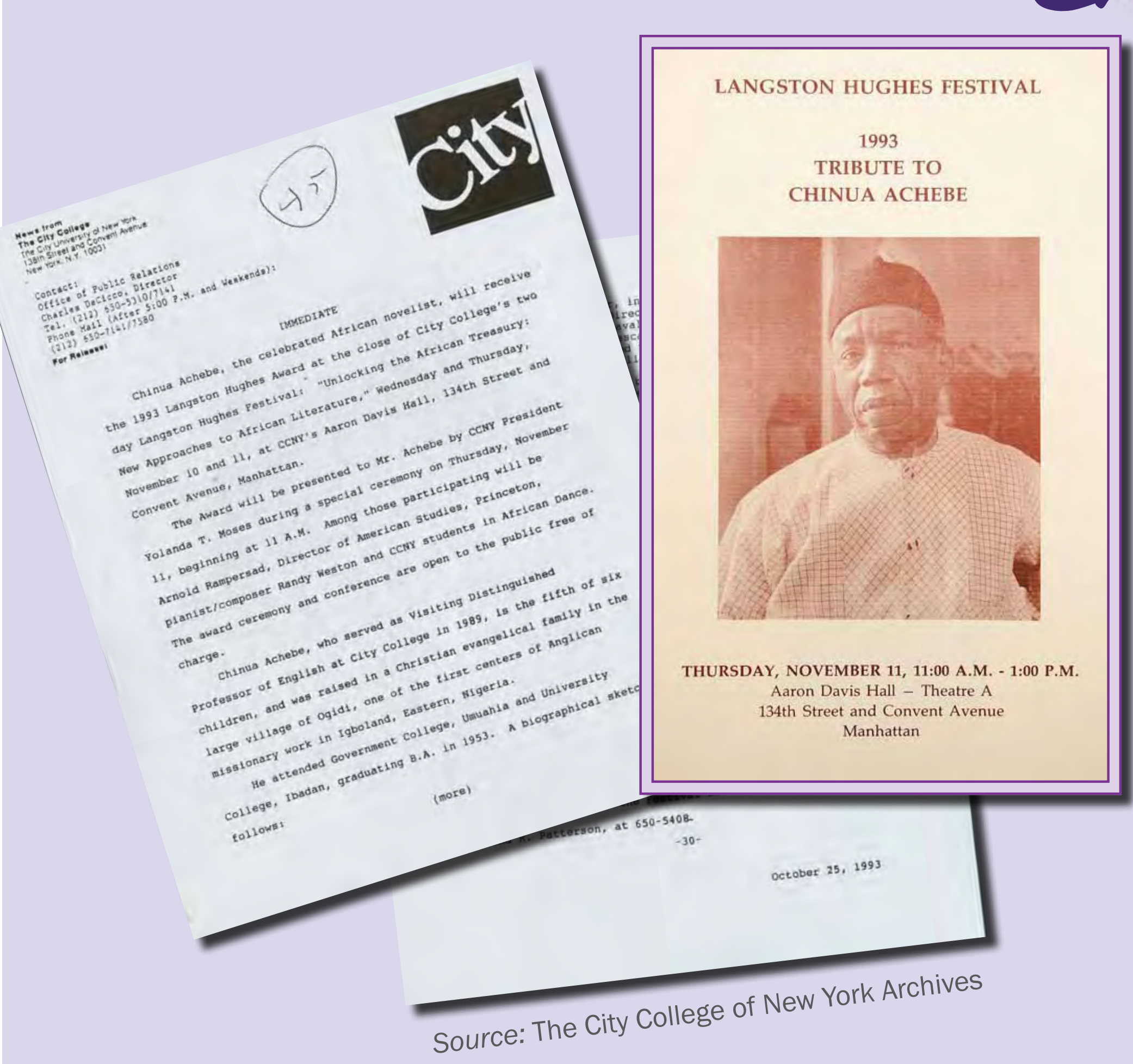
The playwright August Wilson passed away in 2005 at the age of 60, but his rich stories of African American life will live onstage for years to come. The first of his most popular plays was *Jitney!* Wilson ultimately wrote a century cycle of plays presenting black existence within specific decades. His third play, *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*, was the next great success that began a long rich career in theater. African Americans along with the American theater at large appreciate the authentic voice August Wilson gave to black people living in America, a feat other playwrights attempted but usually failed. His plays are read in schools, homes, and libraries, but perhaps most importantly they are performed by major actors. Just in this year, 2010, Denzel Washington won a coveted Tony award for his performance in Wilson’s *Fences*.



Source: The City College of New York Archives

## 1993 Chinua Achebe

Novelist, short story writer, poet, and essayist Chinua Achebe, born in Nigeria in 1930, has become an ambassador and spokesperson for Africa and a citizen of the world. Achebe’s first novel, *Things Fall Apart* (1958), is a classic, with millions of copies published and translated into fifty languages. With *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God*, *A Man of the People*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and other works, Achebe became the first Nigerian artist to shape the novel’s form to the landscape of Africa. He essentially created a new genre and earned the title “Father of the modern African novel.” The themes of his fiction are characteristic of African literature—representing the integrity and grandeur of traditional African culture, exploring the conflict and clash with European imperialism, as well as describing the moral and political challenges of postcolonial independence. Chinua Achebe has been the recipient of many honors and awards, including an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from City College.



Source: The City College of New York Archives

