



## Our History

In August 1986, Kalamazoo's first Black Arts Festival was held (Which was inspired by Bertha Barbee-McNeal). The three organizers of the Festival (Gail Sydnor, Lois Jackson and James C. Palmore) wanted to do something to maintain continuity for the next year's Black Arts Festival and to keep African American art and culture in the forefront year round. They decided to create an organization to carry out those desires. They met regularly during the fall of 1986 and in December 1986, they founded the **Black Arts & Cultural Committee**. They obtained volunteers from the community for the Board and management of the organization. Also, in 1986, the organization secured a physical space for its activities. The location at 241 N. Kalamazoo Mall was an old boxing training space.

The organization flourished with art, art exhibits, cultural events, classes, theatrical plays, movies, dance, poetry, resource materials and meeting space. In April 1990, the organization replaced the word "Committee" in its name with "Center". Hence, the organization became the **Black Arts & Cultural Center (BACC)**. Since 2001, BACC has been located in the Epic Center.

BACC continues to carry out its mission by exhibiting artwork of local, regional, national and international artists, providing a wide range of black arts experiences for youth and adults, producing plays through resident theater company, Face Off Theatre Company, providing arts resources to the community, producing the annual Black Arts Festival and interacting with diverse people in the community through partnership, collaboration and engagement. Recently, it has also placed greater emphasis on maintaining balance between the black arts and black culture services, activities, events and programming that it provides.