

Unrestricted, Media Cover Vigil For Truth & Decency

FROM PAGE 1

dent of Charlotte's ACLU chapter; and QCQ president Robert Sheets joined Storch, King and Fleschner as official speakers.

Sheets paralleled what is happening to gay men in America today with Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews that eventually led to concentration camps and gas chambers.

Interspersed with the brief speeches were Fleschner's singing, sadly, of the National Anthem, *God Bless America* and *America, The Beautiful*. Many in attendance sang along as they held candles in the growing darkness of a cloud-shrouded dusk following Charlotte's first hard rain in months.

During an open-mike period, several in the crowd spoke, including Diana Travis, who announced work

on a monthly television program on public-access cable that could begin sometime this fall.

And Ed Depasquale of Acceptance, who passed through the audience accepting donations for One Nation Indivisible in an open umbrella, said that a remarkable \$145 had been collected.

Toward the end, Fleschner, pastor of Charlotte's New Life MCC, told the audience that his church's participation in a national AIDS vigil — sponsored by the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches — will include his writing to churches throughout Charlotte asking them to pray for AIDS patients and for a cure to the disease.

"We won't be asking them to support gay rights," he said. "But we'll be asking them for a response to our

request for participation in the national AIDS vigil."

Then he asked the crowd to douse their candles as a symbol of the darkness falling over America and to join in singing the venerable civil rights song *We Shall Overcome*.

With that, the vigil ended.

Just before it ended, a man who had attended Cameron's appearance handed Fleschner four books and a dozen pamphlets authored by Cameron — nearly all with hate-filled titles.

Three late arrivals also said they had just come from Cameron's speech.

"It looked like a good number of the audience were gay men or les-

bians," one said. "Several couples of women left together during the speech. And during a question and answer period, two men who seemed to be gay asked questions. The rest of the audience appeared to be people mainly over 50 years old."

The Charlotte Observer estimated the Cameron audience at "nearly 100."

Television coverage on 11 o'clock news reports was even-handed. The Charlotte Observer's in its July 26 final edition was, too, though it identified a picture of Cameron as Fleschner and Fleschner as Cameron.

None explained, however, why gay/lesbian community leaders felt a response was needed now after decades of tolerating distortion and untruth about homosexuals.

"Concerned Charlotteans," King said, "has opened up a new front. They are trying to add scientific legitimacy to their religious antigay claims, and we can't let that go unanswered."

One Nation Indivisible Makes Splashy Debut

Charlotte has a new organization, and it started with a resounding media splash by organizing the highly successful July 25 vigil that countered Dr. Paul Cameron's Charlotte appearance the same night.

The group is One Nation Indivisible, a name symbolizing the hope that Americans will start treating each other with respect and integrity rather than lies and distortion when they disagree.

A new group wasn't the primary idea in mind when community leaders were called together by Joy Adult Bookstore manager Rick Wilds and New Life MCC pastor Art Fleschner. Responding to Cameron's appearance was their first concern.

But as the first meeting wore on, it became apparent that a larger issue than a one-time protest of a bigot's appearance was at stake. It was obvious that the community needed an organization founded specifically to counter antigay rhetoric. Fleschner suggested the name.

The group distributed news releases about the vigil on Sunday, July 20, to WSOC-TV, WBTV, The Charlotte Observer and several radio stations. On Monday, July 21,

one radio station and one television station attended a press conference to announce the new group.

Part of each release was a list of "Paul Cameron's sins." Included were the facts that because of his distortions he has been expelled from the American Psychological Association, and that the Nebraska Psychological Association and the Midwest Sociological Association have both officially disassociated themselves from his writings and statements.

A federal district court judge in Texas and a prison official in Connecticut have both gone on record as assailing him for distortions. National gay group have tried to counter his comments wherever they could.

Examples of his many comments are these: that a "substantial number" of gay men eat feces and that lesbians are 29 times more likely to deliberately infest a sex partner with a disease than nongay women.

The lesbian comment is based on a survey that included a sample of seven lesbian or bisexual women, two (29%) of whom said they in the past had had sex knowing they had a venereal disease. Only 1% of the heterosexual women admitted the same thing. Cameron applies this tiny finding to the entire U.S. lesbian population. True scientists would never consider such a small sample as applicable to the general population.

Use of "statistics" such as these are Cameron's basic operating procedure.

One Nation Indivisible feels obligated to counter such use of "scientific" data when it appears in the media, and has pledged that it will continue to do so.

One Nation Indivisible is searching for a board of directors and will meet at 8 p.m., Monday, Aug. 18, at New Life MCC. Persons wishing to participate may call Fleschner at 373-1817.

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