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Bennett College celebrates 60 years of student activism

By Delanissa A. Moody
Banner Reporter

Bennett kicked off the celebration of 60 years of Student Activism in Pursuit of Social Justice Oct. 6 in Ida B. Goode Gymnasium.

The week-long series of events began with a reenactment of a mass meeting that could have occurred during the Civil Rights Movement.

A video presentation by Charmaine McKissick-Melton, a speech instructor in the Department of Mass Communications, Speech and Theatre, and one of the coordinators of the program, depicted footage taken during the Civil Rights Movement.

A young Martin Luther King Jr. was shown when he was first introduced to the idea of being a civil rights leader. The "Greensboro Four" and the now famous sit-in at Woolworth's was also shown.

Another figure highlighted in the video was McKissick-Melton's father, Floyd McKissick. McKissick was legal counsel for the Greensboro

Four, director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and assisted Thurgood Marshall in the Brown v. Board of Education trial.

Throughout the program the idea that this ACES would stand out from previous ACES was expressed.

Millicent Brown, a professor in the history program, told the crowd ACES would not passive "Don't be bumps on a log-participate," McKissick-Melton added.

The Rev. Nelson Johnson urged the audience to unite to gain economic and social freedom.

Johnson also reminded the crowd that 30 years ago Bennett Belles stood for unity and peace. "Be proud of your legacy as well as yourselves," Johnson said.

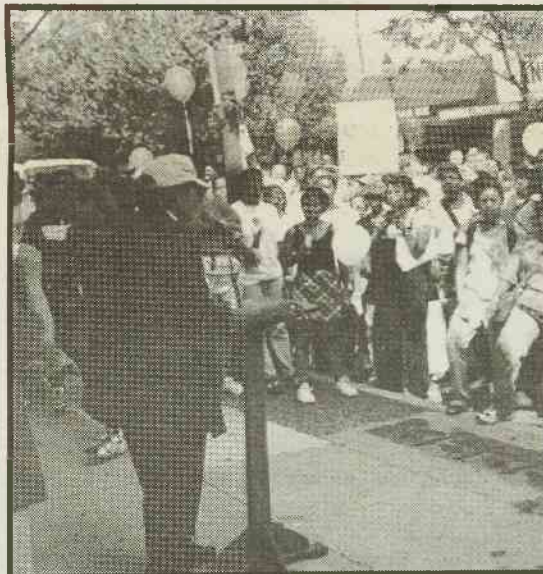
Similar to the original mass meetings, the reenactment ended with a prayer followed by the audience holding hands and singing "We Shall Overcome."

The week's activities ended with a symbolic march by the Bennett College family, joined by others including local politicians, downtown to the once segregated Woolworth's and to the Carolina Theatre.

In remembrance of Bennett students who protested discrimination in the 1960's, the participants of the 60-year Pursuit of Social Justice stop in front of F. W. Woolworth's in downtown Greensboro, to pray. Photo by Camisha Gentry, Banner Photographer.



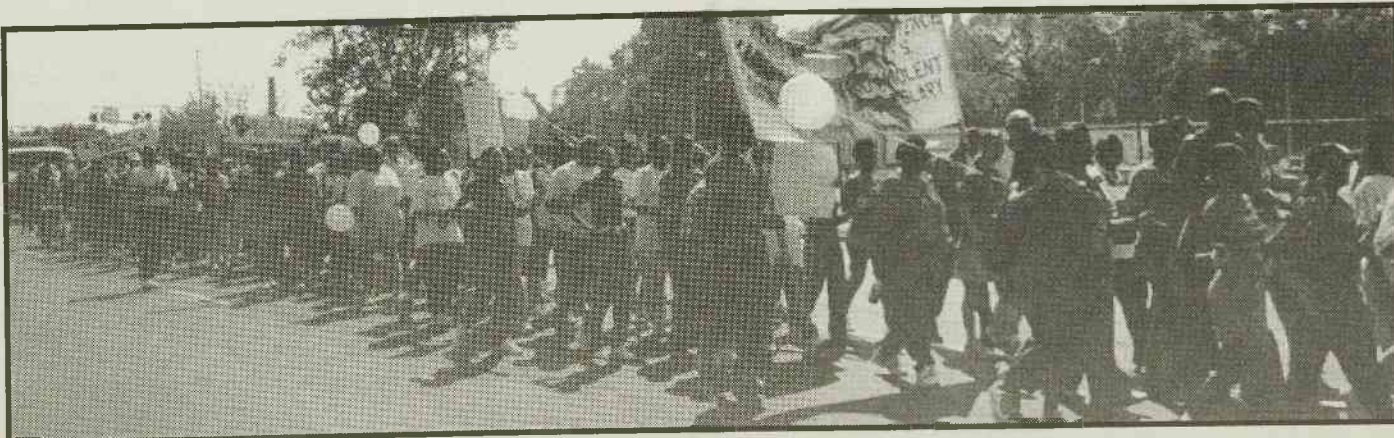
March participants recreate a human cross. Photo by Bruce Clark, director of Telecommunications at Bennett College.



Dr. Alma Adams, chair of Visual Arts and Humane Studies Department and a member of the N.C. House of Representatives speaks to the participants about significance of the march. Photo by Camisha Gentry, Banner Photographer.



Mayor of Greensboro Carolyn Allen speaks to the crowd about the importance of the day and the political impact that Bennett College students made during the movement in the '60s. Photo by Camisha Gentry, Banner Photographer.



Carrying banners and waving placards, Bennett students, faculty, staff, local politicians, civic leaders, and others retrace the routes of the 1960s protesters by marching from Bennett College to South Elm Street in downtown Greensboro. Photo by Camisha Gentry, Banner Photographer.