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Upendo future item of concern

By Albertina Smith

Since 1972 the BSM has used Upendo Lounge to carry out its official functions. Yet, this year there has been cause for student concern over the future of Upendo Lounge and its implications for the functioning of the BSM and the Black Greek system on the UNC campus.

On October 11, Sherrod Banks, President of the BSM, held a press conference to reveal the concerns of his constituency, which include the Central Committee and Black Greek leaders. The arousal of such concern stemmed from the construction of the new South Campus Student Union.

Plans for the renovation of Chase Hall has an extensive history. In 1972, the BSM first gained access to Upendo Lounge. Dean Boulton, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, promised designation of space for BSM functions. Hence, Upendo Lounge provided practice space for the various subgroups, and room for organizational meetings.

In 1976, a decision was made to renovate Chase Hall food service. Donald Boulton formed a Division of Student Affairs Advisory Committee to assist in the planning process of the renovations. The committee consisted of many student representatives including the BSM President and South Campus dorm presidents.

Among the decisions made by the committee were to provide (1) a large area with a 200 seating capacity for lecture purposes, (2) meeting room for the BSM, (3) study areas, and (4) rehearsal rooms. However the plans for renovation were dropped because of the lack of funds for the sound proofing for the speech and hearing facilities.

The most recent plan to renovate did not include an advisory committee such as the one pulled together in 1976. According to Banks, the planning process of the construction and usage of the new Union did not involve communication with the residents of South Campus nor the organizations which use the facilities.

During the conference, Banks stated, "We use Upendo Lounge extensively; weekly, monthly and yearly. Upendo Lounge is vital to the operation of the Black Student Movement. We call it home." As part of their use of Upendo, the BSM has the authority to schedule group functions of the BSM as well as other campus organizations. However, if the BSM is not given the same authority, many believe that it would not only affect the subgroups, but the Black Greeks as well.

According to George Perry, President of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, the Black Greek system would be annihilated if they were not given definite assurance for the use of Upendo. Perry pointed out that Black Greeks have no facilities to conduct fundraising events. "Without access to Upendo, our treasury would be depleted by 50 to 70%."

John Murphy, President of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, agrees that the redesignation of scheduling would affect them financially, in the pocket." He also points out that Black Greeks do not benefit from Alumni contributions as many white fraternities do.

On September 29, Howard Henry, director of the Carolina Union met with the student representatives of the Union Board of Directors to discuss plans to combat student concerns over the new Union. Murphy,

who is also a representative, said that the committee has not met to take effective steps toward communication with the BSM nor Black Greeks. "I think they are taking the issue too lightly. They need to stop procrastinating."

Such procrastination has been the major cause for alarm among the BSM membership and the Black Greeks. According to Vice-Chancellor Harold Wallace, these groups have good reason to be concerned. He believes that for the Union Board and groups outside of the BSM, there is no need for urgency. Hence, by not establishing proper channels of communication, they "missed the opportunity and the ball was dropped" in an effort to establish a good working relationship.

By communicating with the administration, the BSM would like to establish definite details about its future in Upendo Lounge. In the conference, Banks addressed a statement that the BSM would be given priority in matters concerning Upendo. He says that the term is too vague to work with. "What does priority mean? Priority means nothing to us."

Harold Wallace says that the future of Upendo Lounge is not debatable. He says that the promises

in the 1976 Memorandum on Chase Hall will be applied in 1983. Wallace also stated that new space will be made available on the second floor of the new Union. He also maintains that BSM will continue its present relationship with the lounge.

Wallace also cleared the point that the BSM was housed in Chase Hall before the Union was given space there in 1976. Therefore the Union can not uproot the BSM and restrict its functions. As far as use by other groups is concerned, the BSM has always been receptive to scheduling the lounge for other functions. "BSM is ready, willing and able to make space available to other student groups," says Wallace. Moreover, the purpose should be to make the lounge more a part of the community that it serves.

Since the press conference, many positive interactions have taken place to insure BSM input in the issues concerning the Union. On October 18, Sherrod Banks met with Dean Boulton and Dean Edith Elliott to discuss the lounge situation. Also on October 25, representatives from the Union Board of directors and the BSM met with Howard Henry of the Union. These people comprise a committee to assist in the planning process of the South Campus Union.

Thompson says dedication key to good performance

The appearance of black artists and/or performers on the operatic scene is seldom. However, those who do perform in this area are extraordinary. Marilyn Thompson, a LaGrange, North Carolina native, is one of these type performers. To perform and to perform well, one must have a dedication to music, explains Thompson. Her interest in music was aroused before she was in high school.

Thompson says that she had "always loved music and she had always had an interest in it." Her interest was kept alive due to her parent's efforts to expose her to as many performers and performances as possible.

After high school, she attended Hampton Institute with plans to major in English. During her senior year at Hampton, she "developed an interest in music as a career." Many of her instructors were wary of her decision to pursue a music career. Though she did not graduate from Hampton with an undergraduate degree in music, she attended Catholic University in Washington, D.C. where she received a Masters Degree in vocal performance.

Thompson's genre of music includes performance of such selections as Handel's Messiah. This kind of music requires a lot of hard work and consumes a lot of one's time. The rigorousness of a performer's schedule causes one to be taxed mentally and physically. For Thompson, however, the wear and tear of performing and rehearsing constant-

ly has been limited due to the support she receives from her family and friends.

Her main sources of support are her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hadie Thompson and her accompanist, Roland Carter. She states that Carter has supported her in every way possible. This kind of support is helpful because of "the great challenge in performance. There is always the risk of making a fool of oneself." Though there is the element of risk, Thompson states that her "performances are a chance to show her skills and personality" and is a "great opportunity to share."

The fact that she is a black performer in a formally 'white' profession has not affected Thompson. She states that "experiences are objective and are what you make out of them." She does say, however, that "you must be your best at all times because there is a lot of competition." She gives an example of being one of five hundred people auditioning for five parts. She states that she has been working for a long time to get to the top and "if I do get to the top, it will be because of my skill."

Her advice to aspiring singers and musicians is that you can't limit yourself. "People put limits on themselves by what they think. If someone really wants something, she can have it if she is really willing to pay the price."

The concert is being sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council and the Carolina Union. ■

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