

# Black Academic Department Heads Say Self-Confidence Is Key to Success

by Joy Thompson  
Staff Writer

Joseph Edozien, Colin Palmer, Frank Brown, John Turner through self-confidence, hardwork and determination, these Black men have attained prominent academic positions at UNC—CH.

The success of these men support the notion that success is achieved partly by believing in yourself. None of them are originally from North Carolina, nor were they educated here; however, here they reap the benefits of the many years of hard work and dedication.

Dr. Edozien came to UNC in 1971 as the head of the Nutrition Department of the School of Public Health. Born in Asaba, Nigeria, Edozien received his higher education primarily in England.

Edozien, a physician, has taught at a number of Universities in Nigeria, England and other parts of the world and was a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has also served on numerous United Nations and other international committees.

He said his background in England and Nigeria was advantageous to him in terms of his success. "Racism as you see it here was not the same in Nigeria and England," he said. "It was different in that people treated you like another person and you could see opportunities open to you. The perception of race is different here."

Many Black people here feel intimidated by the pressure of prejudice, he said. "I did not see myself as being an underdog or being handicapped" as many Blacks see themselves in the United States, he said. "I see one of the major problems of many Black people here is that Black people have less confidence in themselves than they should have, and this affects their performance."

"Black people are as equal and talented as white people. Once Black people get equal opportunities they will have their fair share of high positions."

Like Edozien, Dr. Palmer, chairman of the African and Afro-American curriculum, is not a native born American. Receiving his elementary and secondary education in Jamaica, he came to United States to further his education.

Prior to coming here in 1980 he worked at Oakland University in Michigan. "Professionally, I came here to accept the challenge of building an Afro-American program in a major research institution," he said.

Palmer said he was extremely sure of himself as a student. "In a sense I felt intellectually superior to many of the students whom I came in contact. When I was in Wisconsin, I never for a moment doubted my ability to succeed.

"I think that is the key to one's success--confidence in one's self and not being shaken by racism," Palmer said.

Racism did not exist in Jamaica as it did in the U.S., he said. So he was not hindered in his aspirations by negative racist attitudes. However, he contended prejudice in this country had not hindered Black people from success in the past. "One of the hall marks of the Black race has been its resilience and strength, because no group of people has had to confront and surmount the problems that Black people have."

He noted that Black people could also achieve today at the University. "There is a continuing mode for Black men and Black women to occupy important leadership positions on campus. As the University becomes more responsive to the needs of the community, the University will have to diversify its faculty."

Dr. Brown, dean of the School of Education since 1983, is a native of Alabama. Educated around the country, he spent most of his professional career in California and New York.

"After teaching for several years I decided to go back to graduate school and teach at the graduate level and research," Brown said. "From that point I took advantage of opportunities as they came."

Brown attributed his success to his family, several "outstanding" teachers and his ability to win several graduate fellowships which were scarce when he was in school.

Success for Brown also involved discipline and some important goal setting and risk taking. "I had to do what was necessary to move up the academic ladder;" he called it a "publish or perish mode of operation."

"Blacks have to have a good feel for what the game plans are in academia. If you have realistic expectations then you can work up from them."

Dr. Turner, dean of the School of Social Work and a William R. Kenan professor, was born in Fort Valley, Ga. A Morehouse College graduate, he received his masters and doctoral degrees in social administration from Case Western Reserve University. He had most of this professional experience in Georgia and Ohio, but has spent time working in Africa.

Like Edozien, Palmer and Brown, Turner said racism and prejudice has not affected his career. "I lived in a Black community and I went to a Black school," he said. "I had some idea of what I could do and what I could be. (As a result) I am a little bit more sure of myself and what I can do."

Turner said his experiences reinforced positive attitudes within him and gave him confidence. "It is good (for Blacks) to get a sense of what you can do before getting into integrated society," he said. "I think as Blacks, we are so used to being hit over the head, we expect to be hit over the head."

"I'm a very competitive person," he said. "I like to do things well. Even when I'm not competing against any person, I am competing with myself. A person has to have that inner drive to excell."

Blacks will be able to attain more positions like his in the future, he maintained. "It will happen because there are Blacks who can compete in the area of leadership and scholarship and who are willing to conquer racist behavior on the part of others."

Turner noted that as long as there were differences between people there will be some sort of prejudice, whether it is racism or sexism. However, he said Blacks could effectively deal with it.

## UNC Journalism Graduates

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Black Ink editor, who also earned a master's in journalism from the school. Other UNC-CH graduates are James Parker, Turner Smith and Elaine Pitt.

The story of the newspaper's success in just 10 short years is also a tribute to Pitt's determination and conviction in the cause of the Black Press. Despite his success, Pitt said the Black voice was still under-represented in the U.S.

"There are only three Black daily papers in the U.S.," Pitt explained, "As large as the Black community is, there ought to be more Black daily publications."

In addition to the scarcity of Black papers, Pitt also objected to the type of coverage Black people and Black issues had traditionally gotten in the news. For many years now, he has kept a file of unjust and undignified depictions of Blacks in the press.

He said his awareness of the problem encouraged him to continue when things seemed hopeless. He added that a responsible Black press encouraged better Black images.

Pitt said he had received inspiration from other sources during his journalism career. While still a student at UNC-CH, Pitt recalled listening to a radio station in Durham, which covered Black events in an exciting, upbeat manner.

Among the despairing things, Pitt said he was dissatisfied with the fact that there was no course on the Black Press when he attended UNC-CH.

He was also unhappy with his thwarted efforts to get a story he wrote about N.C. Central University students' performance on the state Law Scholastic Aptitude Test published in a local paper.

The Black paper in Durham and the daily paper refused to publish Pitt's story. Afterward, the daily paper, which had kept the story for a month before returning it, published a similar, staff-written story, he said.

With only \$1,300, Pitt moved to Winston-Salem only a few short months after graduation to co-found with Ndubisi Egemonye the *Winston-Salem Chronicle*.

"I had no money, no business background. My classmates thought I was crazy," Pitt said.

Today, Pitt, who once did everything from filling racks to selling advertising, supervises a staff of 21 full-time workers, including seven women and four whites. And in June the paper moved into its new, modern office facility after spending years in a make-shift building just a few blocks away.

The paper, Pitt said, is representative of the Winston-Salem Black community.

"When you come to Winston-Salem and read the *Chronicle* you will get a good idea of what the Black community is like here," he said.

To keep abreast of happenings in the community, Pitt and his staff members are involved in several community organizations including the YMCA, the Chamber of Commerce and cultural and civic organizations.

And with the strength of David, Ernie Pitt and his staff continue in the crusade begun by Frederick Douglass and John Russworm - two Black press pioneers - for Black journalism and freedom of speech.

For the future, Pitt contemplates daily publication and increased circulation of the *Black College Sports Review*, a tabloid that the *Chronicle* sells to other papers.