

News

When the minority becomes the majority, what happens to your public schools?

by FRED GORHAM
Staff Writer

This question was recently addressed by Dr. Floretta McKenzie in Memorial Hall, relating to education policies in the public school systems. Her experience extends from her bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees and her previous position as Superintendent of Public Schools in the District of Columbia from 1981 to 1987.

Dr. McKenzie gave an enlightening speech on the topic, "what is best for the children." Today's society, she said, is speaking more of excellence instead of equity, and excess and equity are shrinking. Though there are divisions by income, race, and ethnic groups in this society, in many of our school districts, the minority is becoming a majority. The class of the year 2000, which is now in kindergarten, is predominately black.

Dr. McKenzie predicts by the end of the century, one-third of the population will be black, but a majority of them will be unable to read or write well. Of the children in this country, 20% of them live in poverty, and 43% of the people in black and hispanic communities live in poverty.

According to Dr. McKenzie, "This nation is facing a severe crisis in education. We have to be aware of the danger of some of the reform movements, whose efforts to help minorities have been uncoordinated. We must resolve the differences among the people of this country. If the differences are not solved, well that means more uneducated black men will be stuck in the lower classes. More minorities are completing high school, but the decision to attend college is steadily decreasing. Of the high school students who chose to attend college, last year only 1.3% of those who received Ph.D.'s were black for the predominately black and white colleges."

The number of drop-outs is very high. Dr. McKenzie believes that the problem stems from the lack of parent involvement and the need for counseling, tutorials, or the proper role model. "Most children don't do what we say — they do what they see us do," she said. Parent involvement of any kind will increase student achievement because every student who dropped out says it was because no one cared.

At the conclusion of the speech, she answered questions from the audience, and a student asked why she thought the number of minorities are decreasing at this university. Her theory: "Some of the minorities are losing hope, and the experience tires them out. We are not reaching out to each other. Finally, we must do some risk-taking and put these issues on the table."

BSM Rally

by DAWN GIBSON
Staff Writer

"What's the purpose of having black students here if you're not going to help them. Do you just want to fill the quota?" asked Jamesse C. Alston, UNC sophomore from Raleigh.

Alston was one of over 400 black

students who gathered in front of South Building Tuesday to protest the proposal by Gillian Cell, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Alston said that black students are here for the same reasons as everybody else in getting an education, and on campus the Office of Student Counseling is a source of help to minority students who want to get involved in the decision-making on campus.

Alston has become involved with many programs involving black students. One such program is Decision Days, which is set up for high school students to decide between the colleges to which they've been accepted. This year's Decision Days program happened to be scheduled on Wednesday and Thursday after Tuesday's heated rally.

"I'm not going to camouflage what's going on here at the University," Alston said. "I will, however, encourage black students not to allow themselves to be held back for any reason. If we're willing to work hard, strive to reach our goals, and keep abreast of issues concerning us, then success is attainable."

Newly elected Black Student Movement Vice-President Tonya Blanks said that Cell responded after the rally to BSM President Kenneth Perry in a letter stating the retraction of the proposal. Blanks also said that had the Office of Student Counseling been restructured, programs that normally come through the office would have to go through a hierarchy to which black students were opposed.

"I think black students on this campus know that when banding together we can make a change," Blanks said. "It was important to see what the results were,

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Black publisher says struggle isn't over

by GERDA GALLOP
Staff Writer

One of the most respected journalists in the community of Durham, N.C. is Vivian Austin Edmonds, publisher of *The Carolina Times*, a black weekly newspaper.

Edmonds was born and grew up in Durham, N.C. She earned a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in guidance counseling from North Carolina College, which was later renamed North Carolina Central University.

She has been recognized for her outstanding public service to the Durham community and has been honored by the Young Women's Christian Association with its Silver Medallion Award, the Living Legacy Celebration Award from Shaw University, and the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People Award, to name only a few.

Edmonds is an active member of the North Carolina Black Publishers Association and the National Newspaper Publishers Association. She is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and serves as the national journalist for The Links, Inc., a national organization of women.

This spring she will be honored by the School of Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where

a scholarship for minority sophomores who are journalism majors has been established in her name.

The Carolina Times is a black weekly newspaper founded by Edmond's father, Louis E. Austin, in 1927. She has been involved with the newspaper over the past 55 years, having worked in every department.

"I've done everything — janitor included," Edmonds said.

After her father died in the early 1970's, Edmonds was forced to "either get in the paper or sell," she said, so she took over as publisher full-time in 1975.

Edmonds worked at *The Carolina Times* even as a child, when she sold newspapers and wrote "The Kiddie Column" which chronicled the social events of Durham's younger set.

Louis Austin was an independent-minded entrepreneur who recognized the need for a black weekly in Durham.

"My father was the crusader type who wanted to do something about injustice," Edmonds said. "He felt a newspaper was a good way to get the word out about this injustice."

The Carolina Times operates with a small staff of primarily freelance writers and has an approximate circulation of 5,300 readers. However, because some subscribers will "pass along" their newspapers to friends and relatives, cir-

ulation figures can be deceptive, Edmonds said.

"This is a phenomenon that has always existed in the black community," she said.

Edmonds' paper publishes stories about topical issues of local, national, and international interest. She stressed that she does not allow her reporters to use *The Carolina Times* for personal gain.

"This paper has never sold its soul," she said. "We've suffered all kinds of abuses, but no one has ever bought our columns."

In addition, Edmonds cites one of the reasons for the decline of the black press was because after its founders died, many of their successors, in essence, sold their souls.

"My father instilled in me the attitude that I was somebody and taught me the advantages of independence," she said. "Blacks seem to have internalized second-class citizenships, and they need to stop calling themselves minorities. I belong to a majority — I am not minor, less than."

In response to the problem of the lack of minorities in the media, particularly blacks, Edmonds said: "We've got to be two to three times better than whites. Young black people don't realize the struggle isn't over yet."

Edmonds credits her survival and prosperity in the unpredictable business of

newspaper publishing to personal sacrifice.

"Considering that black people have risen from the oppression of slavery and have gotten where they are required physical, mental, social and financial sacrifice to get it going," she said. "We can do anything we want to do, but if we want to dance to the music, we must pay the piper."

For minority students considering the media profession, Edmonds suggested they first find out who they are and what their purpose is because they will need to be twice as good as whites to equal up.

She advised students to start with a small weekly newspaper where they can get into every aspect of its production and hone their skills to then be able to move up to larger newspapers.

One of the problems Edmonds has faced is the lack of preparedness of her

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