

## The Need for a BCC

By Victor Blue

UNC's Black student community was shocked by UNC Trustee John Pope's comments in the Chapel Hill Herald article "Trustee questions effect of, need for black cultural center" (Fri., Oct. 28). From reading the article it is very evident that Mr. Pope made the comments before he had asked any Black students why a Black cultural center might be needed on UNC's campus. He states that a Black cultural center might push races or ethnic groups further apart. He also advised Black students interested in having a center to attend Black universities. In the end Pope just could not see how a BCC could be a plus.

The purpose of the BCC is not to separate the races; that has already happened. The BCC can play a major role in the lives of Black students. It is a place where Black culture, music, dance, literature, drama and people can grow. Black students have something to share, and we are willing to share it with other students. The BCC is a vehicle where the greatest Black minds on this campus can come together and create. The BCC occupies a space that is a constant reminder that Black students and Black culture are here to stay — like Chinatown or Little Italy. The BCC is not a hangout or a bar; we don't promote that type of atmosphere. Black students are respectful of the BCC, and it is probably the cleanest space on campus (only South Building could compare).

UNC has a lot to gain from having a BCC. For one, interested minorities visiting the university during Project Uplift in the summer, High School Honors Day in November, and Decision Days in March could see that the university is committed to the welfare of Black students. This factor could increase the number of qualified Blacks who apply to UNC and help UNC to meet its minority quota. As the flagship school in the University of North Carolina system, other schools would follow UNC's model of commitment to minorities. This commitment could also revitalize UNC's current Black population's faith in the university. Right now UNC's Black students do not think that the university is highly committed to them or other minorities. "Just get them in to fill the quotas and let them fall through the cracks."

During the past couple of years, UNC's minorities have received several

slaps in the face. It started with the "KKK joke" written on the door of two Black students living in Joyner. (Remember that, UNC — Black students really got a good laugh out of that one!!) In February, we learned that Dean Hayden Renwicke of the Office of Student Counseling had found a better job at Fayetteville State University (maybe UNC's Blacks should have gone with him since we want a BCC). The University told us that he would be permanently replaced soon (that was February — it's almost a year later). The hardest slap came in March when Black students learned that Dean Gillian Cell wanted to "restructure" the Office of Student Counseling, the only academic venue for minorities, even though she had not talked to a representative sample of UNC's Black student population. After all these incidents, Black students were called "militant," "violent" and "greedy." Well, thank goodness none of those modifiers apply to UNC's Black students, because if they did who knows what would have happened. (Maybe a race riot on University Day or the armed takeover of South Campus by Black students).

UNC's commitment to the BCC could be another milestone in race relations at the university, similar to the admittance of the first Black student in the '50s and the establishment of a Black Studies Department in the '60s. Unlike the '50s when bigots and racists were not afraid to clearly voice their opinions, the '80s are a decade where covert racists hide behind their beliefs. The BCC could help them overcome their ignorance about the capabilities and attitude of Black students. I commend Chancellor Hardin and Dean Boulton on their efforts in aiding Black students and the BCC, but we have been waiting since 1984. Mr. Pope, I invite you to address your doubts about a BCC to Black students on this campus in the near future, but before you do, take a look at retention rates among UNC's Black students and compare them to White students; review the racial incidents that have happened on our campus during the past two years; and read what Black cultural centers have done for schools like U-Penn, Cal-Berkeley, Cornell and Purdue. When you have done all these things, then you might be able to answer your own question: "What happened to the great melting pot?"

## Black-Owned Businesses of Chapel Hill/Carrboro

Black business owners in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area say high rent costs and lack of adequate financial resources make it difficult for minorities to start businesses here.

Travis Tate, son of George Tate, Jr., who is the owner of Tate Realty & Construction Co., estimates that there are between 20 to 25 Black-owned businesses in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area.

Tate Realty & Construction Co. does sub-contracting work and sells houses.

As with Tate Realty & Construction Co., most Black business owners started their businesses on their own and built them from the ground up.

Stepney Edwards, owner of Midway Barber Shop, said his father, Stephen Edwards, opened his business in 1953.

"We've been around long enough that we don't have to say a word to get customers, because there aren't many Black barber shops to go to," he said.

Most of Edwards' customers come from Chapel Hill, Carrboro and surrounding areas. The majority are Black males, and 30 percent are students, he said.

For some Black business owners, the growth of the Triangle and the opening of the I-40 expansion have improved business as more customers seek them out.

Quality barbers and lack of competition due to high operation costs help keep Edwards in business, he said.

"Our shop is an example of one of the few places where Black men can come and see a Black-owned business," Edwards said. "We hope that this will encourage other Blacks to venture out."

Charles Brooks, president of Brooks & Son Construction Co., said he would like to see more Black-owned businesses in the professional ranks, such as doctors and lawyers.

"It is very difficult and very expensive to own a business in this area," Brooks said. "Whites don't patronize Black-owned businesses as much as they should. Blacks aren't given a fair shake."

Brooks & Son Construction Co. was started 60 years ago by Brook's grandfather as a sub-contracting company and was changed into a construction and real estate company 18 years ago, Brooks said.

Most Black business owners in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area say they strive to provide quality service and to cater to their customers' individual needs.

The Furniture Doctor, an antique and furniture refinishing and repairing store, has a national reputation, and customers come from around the country, said Richard Johnson, an employee.

The business was opened about 12 years ago by owner John Mason.

Johnson says the store does very little advertising and relies on its sales by

customers' word of mouth, which is how most Black business owners say they attract more business.

"You have to be committed to have a self-owned business," said Mildred Council, owner of Dip's Country Kitchen. "When people don't come to work, I have to come in. There are a lot of hassles."

Council and others say they would like to expand their businesses within the next five to ten years or become involved in other ventures.

Mary Kennell, owner of Mary's Hairstyling beauty salon, said she would like to have a shop in her own building rather than having to rent, as she has done for the past three years since her shop opened.

"I would like to see more Black-owned businesses, but people aren't aware how to get funds — I wasn't prepared," she said. "There's no one to tell you what's available and no information on funding."

Ervin Hester, owner of The Shoe Doctor, says he got into the shoe business as "a safety measure" in case his job as a WTVD-Channel 11 reporter didn't work out.

Hester started his business 17 years ago as a shoe repair store and says his biggest problem is having people find its location on the lower level of University Square.

Hester sells shoes at discount prices and also does repairs.

"A business owner needs to be willing to take the chance," Hester said. "He has to give good service, be fast and provide quality work and products."

Hester also owns a shoe store at the indoor flea market at the N.C. State Fairgrounds, a cellular phone business, is co-owner of several FM radio stations around the country, and is host and producer of *Prime Time Sunday*, a community affairs program aired on WTVD-Channel 11.

"Black-owned businesses serve the total community; it's not segmented," Hester said. "These businesses receive the benefits of the community, too."

The following is a partial listing of Black-owned businesses in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. Check the Yellow Pages for locations and phone numbers.

Jenkins Flower Boutique  
Dip's Country Kitchen  
Mary's Hairstyling  
The Furniture Doctor  
Brooks & Son Construction Co.  
Tate Realty & Construction Co.  
The Shoe Doctor  
Sparkle Car Wash  
Jones-Hester Funeral Home  
Midway Barber Shop  
Emma Jean Levi, atty.  
La Donna's Coiffure  
Triangle Detail Services  
3-Points Beverage Outlet  
The Body Shop **By Gerda Gallop**

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