

Focus On Public Education: Dudley Flood

By Birshari C. Greene
Staff

Dr. Dudley Eargith Flood said he would not take a job that didn't deal with human problems. He said one reason is that he said he would do it anyway, no matter what the job description. The second is that he said he would be bored elsewhere. But it doesn't take long to realize that the position of Ombudsman for the state Department of Public Instruction is where he wants to be.

Seeing Flood in action is proof that he fits the unique title given him. Flood said the Ombudsman is the link for the public with the department, for it to correspond to needs within the field of public instruction. The Ombudsman handles internal and external complaints against the department, ranging from a parent wanting a school principal fired, to a teacher not receiving her rightful certification, Flood said.

Flood handles complaints about the state budget cuts and how they would affect public education.

Last year several school district superintendents and other citizens thought that schools might have to close down for a few days, and that programs like summer school would be cut out completely this year.

The calls Flood received were more out of concern than out of alarm. "They expected me to assure them that schools wouldn't close. And I did."

Flood said the General Assembly is the only governing body with enough authority to issue a school closing, and to his knowledge, there was no such order on its agenda.

Flood is not only concerned about the budget, but all aspects of public education. Flood said he always knew education was important, and he knew he wanted to be an educator at the age of 12.

"The people I admired most were teachers. The people I respected most were teachers. The people that I was certain that meant most in my life were teachers."

As a result of his admiration and respect for teachers, Flood said he learned his most important lessons about education at C.S. Brown High School in Winton, North Carolina. He earned his B.A. in Psychology and Political Science at North Carolina Central University. Flood earned his doctorate Degree at Duke University in the School of Administration.

Flood worked as a professional educator for the first time in 1955, as a teacher, and later as a high school principal. Flood next went to the Department of Public Instruction in 1970, as the Associate Director for (then) the Division of Human Relations.

Flood said the division was created as a technical assistance team with the purpose

of aiding the implement of desegregation in the public schools of North Carolina.

At that time, North Carolina had a tri-school segregated system for blacks, Indians, and whites. Flood's job along with the two other members of the team was to assure the smooth desegregation of the public schools. After 1 1/2 years as Associate Director of that unit, Flood became its director.

Between 1970 and 1973, the state of North Carolina acquired the most desegregated public school system in the country. Flood said the state was known as a national model, and received calls about its plan for desegregation from all other states, except five.

Flood said he then became the symbol of desegregation in the public schools. Daily, he faced slanderous name-calling, received death threats, and threatening phone calls from those who did not want desegregation. Yet, because he said desegregation was the right thing to do for children, Flood put a great deal of effort into accomplishing his goals.

In 1973, Flood became the Assistant State Superintendent for Support Services. At that time, the desegregation program was under Flood's guidance, yet the new director Flood hired, Lee Grier, would govern the actions of the program. Together, the men re-directed the nature of the desegregation unit.

Flood said the fundamental phase of desegregation had been accomplished. "It was getting people to comply with the law, and getting presence, meaning black, white, and Indian children in the same facility. The goal of the next phase was integration."

Flood said, "Integration is the process by which you acclimate attitudes, minds, and lifestyles, and help people to adapt new moral standards for the advocacy of school business."

Flood said the integration of North Carolina public schools included staff development, workshopping, interaction skills, interpersonal communication skills, conflict resolution skills, group dynamics, one-to-one communication, curricula modification, and dealing with diversity. Flood kept this position for ten years.

In 1983, Flood became the Associate State Superintendent. While assisting the State

Superintendent, Flood said the position had more global impact as well as being a coordinating position.

Although he was no longer directly involved with the integration process, people continued to call him when there was a problem in their schools.

Then in 1988, when the 20-year Phillips administration ended, the new administration re-structured the cabinet positions in the department. Although Flood's former position, Associate State Superintendent, was specific to the old administration, Etheridge wanted to keep Flood in the department. Etheridge, then the newly elected state school superintendent, created the Ombudsman position especially for Flood.

Politics does play a role in how Flood makes his decisions. Here's one example. A principal called him and said that there was a problem with racism in his school, and wanted Flood to speak at the school. Flood explained that his current position as Ombudsman required him to handle all problems from behind his desk. Flood continued that although he used to do lectures and legwork in his immediate past position, he simply could not show favoritism for one school, and referred him to someone else.

Flood said the principal told him that there was no one else who could reach the children and that there was no one else who wanted to talk to the children, because they had lower levels of skills. Flood said, "Before he had time to complete the statement I said, 'I'll be there'."

Kim Hoke, assistant to the superintendent for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System said, "He's a wonderful speaker. He is able to draw the audience in and take them with him. I know nothing but good things to say about him."

Flood said, "The greatest challenge in my job is to realize the anxiety level about educational things that are not obvious to people, or things that worry people, because someone with a problem has great intensity."

Calendar

December 3-9 Kwanzaa Activities

December 3 Orientation Leader Interest Session 4pm-205 Union.

Maulana Karenga 8pm-100 Hamilton.

December 4 Orientation Leader Interest Session 6pm-Upendo Lounge.

"Three Nights of Kwanzaa" 6:30pm Toy Lounge.

Study with Theta Pi 6-8pm-BCC.

December 5 Resume Writing Workshop 4:30pm-203 Howell.

BSM Meeting 5pm-Upendo Lounge.

Candle Light Vigil 7pm-Union Auditorium.

Meet the Players Night 7:30pm-100 Hamilton.

December 6 African & African American Vendors 12-4pm-211 & 212 Union.

Candle Lighting Ceremony 5:30pm -BCC.

Umoja Series 6pm-Lenoir North Dining Hall.

December 7 Story Telling Activity 12:30pm-Great Hall.

Ebony Readers Fall Performance 8pm-Union Cabaret.

December 8 Talent Show 7pm-Gerrad Hall.

December 9 Kwanzaa Extravaganza 2pm-Great Hall.

To place an announcement in the events calendar call Raquel Bushnell (933-0609) or leave an announcement in the *Black Ink* office.

Native Expressions
The Performance Theory of Women of Color Class
Presents:
All I Have Is My Story
A Performance of Literature by Native and Latin American Women
Dec. 5 8:00 pm Union Cabaret
Presented by the Theatre Art Committee of the Union Activities Board

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