

BSM President-Elect Thomas W

Until They Give the Word, the Hardin Adm

Michelle Thomas, Black Student Movement President-Elect, will take office April 1. She comes at a tumultuous time, as the Black Cultural Center Movement heats up. Comprised of members of the BSM, Campus Y and Student Government, this multiracial coalition has confronted UNC Chancellor Paul Hardin with their demands for a free-standing BCC, higher wages for the University housekeepers, and an endowed chair for Sonja Stone, the late professor of Afro-American studies. The administration responded with a memo signed by Donald Boulton, dean of student affairs, and later a public message delivered by the Chancellor. Thomas and other coalition members found both responses inadequate. She talks about her plans for the BSM and her position on current campus issues. Black Ink Editor Myron B. Pitts conducted the interview.

BLACK INK: What are some of the goals that you have for the year?

MICHELLE THOMAS: My main goal is to increase (BSM) membership and in doing that increase the activity and decrease the number of nominal members and try to make everyone feel it's their organization. I would like for the general body to be involved in decision-making. I want to decrease the role of the central committee and increase the power of the general body.

INK: Why do you want to decrease the power of the Central Committee?

THOMAS: Because in an organization that has 350 members with 24 members on the central committee, I don't think that those 24 members are heterogeneous enough actually to be able to speak for 350 black people. Contrary to popular belief we are not a monolithic people and I think that if I'm a general body member and I paid my \$3 I should have some say in what direction my organization goes.



Kelly Greene/Black Ink

Thomas helps a student enrolled in Communiversity, a Saturday BCC-sponsored program designed to teach young blacks about their roots and culture.

INK: Would it be correct to say you're planning on cutting the Central Committee in half?

THOMAS: It will be less than half of what it is this year.

INK: How will it be organized?

THOMAS: The Central Committee will consist of five elected officials plus a minister of information, one executive assistant, a program coordinator and a sub-group coordinator. The sub-group coordinator will get dates and different information from the various sub-groups that needs to go to the general body. And the program coordinator will do the same for the different committees. If at any point one of the sub-groups or the committees has a concern that they wish addressed, the chair (of that committee) is more than welcome to come to a Central Committee meeting or a general body meeting to discuss it. So (trimming the Central Committee) is not to close anyone out. For example, the gospel choir

meets twice a week and usually sings every weekend. It's just an unnecessary burden them have to attend a CC meeting and a general body meeting and a meeting of their organization. So its seemingly adding a level of bureaucracy by creating the positions of program coordinator and sub-group coordinator, but it's actually relieving the committee chairs and sub-group presidents or leaders of extra duties. The sub-group coordinator will also be responsible for getting information from the CC to the Black Ink. Instead of somebody from the Black Ink having to chase somebody from the CC down, that person will be responsible for chasing somebody from the Black Ink down.

INK: Explain this process involving floor leaders.

THOMAS: The executive assistant will be in charge of the dorm activation plan. For the four dorms on South Campus, there will be one dorm lieutenant for every dorm. In mid-campus there will be one dorm

lieutenant for Carmichael and Whitehead and one for Teague, Avery and Parker, and for North Campus it will be according to the residence colleges they have set up. The dorm lieutenants will be in charge of getting information from the executive assistant and giving it to the floor sergeants. For every floor of every dorm that has a BSM member and/or African-American student, there will be a person on that floor to disseminate information to them. Any information that needs to be given to all BSM members that won't appear in the Black Ink, like administrative things, will be in the BSM office by Friday afternoon. Over the weekend, a fact sheet will be typed up. Floor sergeants will have go to their dorm lieutenants and pick up the information sheets and on Monday nights the floor sergeants will have to go to every BSM member and African-American student on their floor and give them a Black Ink and a newsletter. It will be kind of like the minority advisor program and the way that's set up, a little bit.

INK: How will this help in terms of organizing?

THOMAS: There are a lot of BSM members, who don't, for some reason or another, come to BSM meetings. So, this will be a way of getting information out to them. Plus, if there's a need for some type of action where BSM members need to be informed as to what's going on, it's something that will be in place to get information to the members.

INK: Let's talk about that action. What kind of plans do you have?

THOMAS: Well, basically I want the BSM to do what the BSM members want to do. Next year is the 25th anniversary of the BSM, so we'll have different programs. One of the things I want to bring back is the coronation ball they used to do, where we will crown Miss BSM to go in in the Homecoming (Queen) Pageant. Next year special projects will take on Kwanzaa, and hopefully that will become a permanent part of the BSM — a week-long Kwanzaa celebration. We're hoping to have several cultural programs and things like that to. As far as action goes, whatever the members want to do. I mean if the members want to go out and take over a building...maybe that shouldn't be in the paper, but if that's what they want to do, then that's what we're going to do.

INK: Let's turn to current issues. What do you see as the BSM's role in issues that are currently going on on campus surrounding the endowed chair, the free standing Black Cultural Center, etc.?

THOMAS: I think the BSM role is increasing in importance as the movement progresses. In order for us to achieve victory as a coalition — and this includes the Campus Y and Student Government — the black students on this campus are going to have to really come out and show that they are in support. I think that as the movement