

Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone:

Remembering a pioneer

Story by Antoinette Kerr

Most buildings on UNC's campus are named for pioneers in academia. However, when students walk past the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center, they should stop and remember the woman behind the name. The legacy behind the naming of the Sonja H. Stone Black Cultural Center continues to serve as an inspiration to students here at UNC. Following Dr. Stone's unexpected death on August 10, 1991, students passionately gathered and formed a task

force dedicated to preserving the memory of a woman deeply committed to social justice. The Dr. Sonja H. Stone Task Force demanded the university rename the existing BCC in her honor as well as rename the future free-standing center for

Stone. The task force also requested an endowed chair in Stone's name as well as an African and Afro-American Studies program of departmental status. Students, faculty, and friends of Stone vowed to ensure that future generations would know the impact she had on our university.

Dr. Stone's 17 years of service to the university clearly reflected her loyalty to UNC. While at UNC, Stone involved herself in a wide range of activities enabling her to be well connected to the student and cultural life on campus. Through 1974-1979, Stone served as Director of the Curriculum of Afro-American Studies at UNC. Dr. Stone served on the planning committee for the BCC, the Committee of the Recruitment of Black faculty, and the Campus Y Advisory Board. Stone acted as Advisor to the Black Student Movement, many Black Greek organizations, the UNC Collegiate Black Caucus, and the African-American Studies club, as well as an informal advisor to the Students for the Advancement of Race Relations (S.A.R.R.). Xenobia Woods, current director of the Campus Y and friend to Stone, said she admired Stone's bond with the students. "Sonja generated excitement about the work she taught," Woods said. "She was always working with all people, students, faculty, and staff."

Stone's parents, Wendell and Doris Haynes pointed out that their daughter's concern for students was genuine. "She was very much interested in the students, very seldom was she home early," Hayes said. "She was always working with a student outside of class and not just with her course." That would explain why no other building named on campus received as much student support than the nam-

ing of the BCC in Stone's memory. "Each year there should be some event to remind the students who Dr. Stone was and why the students felt so impassioned to have the BCC named after her," Woods said.

Her life-long commitment to education began December 13, 1938 in Chicago. Stone grew up in Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Ohio. Sonja exhibited an interest in human rights and learned many lessons from her parents

who believe in dignity and equality for African Americans. Stone's parents explained that she always seemed interested in public speaking. "She was always very good at public speaking. She enjoyed that," Ms. Haynes said.

Stone began her college career at Sarah Lawrence College, majoring in social science. There she

worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (N.A.A.C.P) and was inducted into Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She received her master's degree in Social Ethical Philosophy from the University of Illinois at Chicago. There she served as Assistant Director at Northwestern Illinois University center of Inner City Studies. Dr. Stone later received her Ph.D. in History and Philosophy at Northwestern University.

Dr. Stone's numerous awards and recognitions indicate that she was well respected by her peers on a national level as well as at UNC. They include the 1983 Black Student Movement Faculty Award, the 1978 National Council of Black Studies Dedicated Service Award, the 1990 Outstanding Black Faculty Award, and the 1981 NAACP Woman of the Year Award. Dr. Sonja H. Stone will always remain an inspirational African-American woman known for grace, beauty, and an extraordinary commitment to battle social injustice. Her interest paralleled those struggling to improve race relations on campus today. The mere mention of her name retrieves passion for a cause many sources deemed forgotten. "Each year a new group of students take on a new cause," explains Woods. "For students that never knew her, reading about Dr. Stone is like reading about history. Students must be aware of the struggle from 1991-1993 to have the BCC named after Stone."

Dr. Stone served as a pioneer advocate of the Black Cultural Center and as an inspiration to her students and peers, now and forever. During the 30th Anniversary celebration of the BSM, remember the woman behind the name of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center.