

The Decree

OFFICIAL STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF
NORTH CAROLINA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

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Student leadership becoming too elite

North Carolina Wesleyan College averages about 1,700 students a year. Wesleyan also has 300-400 on-campus residents. However, out of all these people it appears that approximately only two percent of the students hold leadership positions.

That is not as disturbing as the fact that the two percent is mostly made of the same students year after year. This two percent have special attention and interest paid to them. They are allowed privileges, respect, and almost a peer-like relationship in some cases with faculty and staff.

These chosen people are drawn in to the information loop of the school when they become privy to only half of what the rest of the student body only speculates about. These students also become alienated from the rest of the student body. Truthfully, how could they not?

They become an exclusive community to themselves; the upper crust, the thinkers among a sea of perceived underachievers.

The College has allowed and in many cases blurred the line between student and staff member by giving these students incredible responsibility and insider information. These students have become the confidants of the school. They are burdened with the staff and faculties' negative

perceptions.

These students also become the dumping ground of criticism about their peers. Many of the close intimate contact the staff and faculty have is with these student leaders so they use these students to level criticism about the shortcomings of the student body. For the student leaders, it can only leave them to either feel guilty for not doing enough to change the negative appearance of their "peers" or to have feelings of intellectual and character superiority over their "peers." In either case, these students are farther removed from the student body.

The college not only embraces these student leaders but uses them in too many cases to the point of burnout. These students shoulder the burden of 1,700 people constantly and often without concern for what it is doing to them. Often these once hard-working, energetic, optimistic people become bitter and cynical.

For every praise from the student body these students receive, the resentment from that same student body rises. Wesleyan has grown a mini-community of students. However, if the gardener spends all his time tending roses, you are left with overwatered roses surrounded by the rest of the garden strangled with weeds.



'She sounds like God'

A national treasure passes

By DR. STEVE FEREBEE

During the spring and summer of 1974, I was finishing college and moving from Florida to New Mexico for graduate school. Hardly ever near a television, I kept up with the Watergate hearings through newspapers and magazines.

As my father, two of my brothers, and I drove to New Mexico, I heard on the car radio what the proceedings sounded like.

Traveling in a car full of men, all but one dogged sports fans, is a cacophonous experience. Baseball crowds roar, fans debate merits and weaknesses, wind woosh, tires sing, bits of music flash by. Add various hot political views and hardly any one noise can cut through the dissonance.

But suddenly, during one of those two-minute news "summaries," a sonorous melody suspended our blather. A report about the Watergate hearings contained maybe 15 seconds of a woman's voice. It commanded that we listen. Even my father's cigar paused in mid-gesture.

"The CON-STI-TUTION DEMANDS NO LESS," she thundered. We didn't need television to show us the deference the committee men were paying; we too nodded in respect and agreement.

"Who was that?" I breathed at last.

"That's Barbara Jordan," answered my Texan brother. "She's from Houston," he said with some pride.

Dr. Steve Muses

"She sounds like God," said my father, echoing a now-familiar comparison about her voice.

Barbara C. Jordan: 1936 child of a poverty-laden Houston neighborhood, Boston University Law School graduate in 1959, Texas Senator 1967-1973, U. S. House of Representatives 1973-1979, keynote speaker for National Democratic Convention in 1976 and 1992. Professor of Law at the University of Texas 1979-1996.

I list her *vita* because when Jordan died on Jan. 17 some of my students didn't know who she was. As Ann Richards, former governor of Texas, said at Jordan's memorial service, Barbara Jordan was a national treasure.

When she declared her faith in the Constitution, even though, she noted dryly, the first draft had left her out, she said, in a voice which chills you and thrills you at the same time: "I am not going to sit here and be an idle specta-

tor to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution." If a drama is what he wanted, Oliver Stone needed to look no further than that moment in American history.

Barbara Jordan gave voice, not to Democrats or women or blacks, but to those who believed, against the grain of the McCarthy-Nixon-Agnew models, that politics could be an honorable and caring community of intellectuals. That politics is not such a community may account for Jordan's premature departure in 1979, just as she had solidified her image as an orator with righteous moral force.

Now we also know that Jordan suffered — first from multiple sclerosis and later leukemia. In 1992 she spoke from a wheelchair to the Democratic convention, but that mesmerizing voice and meticulous intellect and courageous honesty still called us to our better selves, to our belief in a cause greater the momentary reelection. We can not and will not falter in our belief that we should care for each other, she told us.

The echoes are perhaps fading, but the magnificent strength of Barbara C. Jordan remains to remind us of who we might be.

Letters to the editor policy

The Decree accepts only signed letters to the editors. Unsigned letters will not be printed. Letters should not exceed 400 words. Letters need to be placed in the campus post office and marked "Decree" or placed in the Decree office in the Hardees building. Letters must be received by Friday of the week prior to the next issue in order to be printed in that issue. The Decree reserves the right to edit or reject letters for grammar, libel, or good taste.