

## The Honorable Patricia Goodson Soars To Higher Heights

by Trevor Hudson

Born into this world on September 18, 1954, Patricia Ann Timmons-Goodson, is, to say the least an extraordinary woman of color. When asked to sum herself up in one word, she sat in reflection for a moment, then confidently replied, "Committed."

Judge Goodson is a direct reflection of Martin Luther Kings "Dream". She graduated from Pine Forrest Senior High School, here in Fayetteville. She then went to the University Of North Carolina-CH, where she attained her undergraduate and Law degrees, respectively. Because she attended the University of North Carolina-CH obviously, I questioned her regarding her collegent choices, her answer was simple. "I've always considered UNC to be my school, it was a state school that offered a great education, and I got a good education there. Today, I still consider UNC-CH my school."

Appointed twelve years ago, to the twelfth Judicial District Court in North Carolina, by the Governor, Jim Hunt. She recently received another call from him to fill a seat on the North Carolina Court Appeals. This comes as no surprise for those who know of her dedication to serving our state. However, we are extremely reluctant to let her go, she definitely added dimension to the interpretation of law, and the Courts, not to mention her being the only Afro-American female serving citizens here in Cumberland County. I asked Judge Goodson how she would like the citizens of Cumberland County to remember her services here as a District Court Judge. In an even and sincere tone she stated, "I want folks to remember me as one committed to allow the Judicial system to operate as it should. People should be heard and the Law should be understood when one stands before me. Where mercy was in order it

was rendered." I then asked her how she stayed so grounded regarding her daily duties. Judge Goodson's face donned a warm smile as she told me, "My duty was to apply the law, I'm not the Law."

Over the past twelve years, Judge Goodson has seen more young people than she'd like stand before her. This seemed to concern her greatly. Thus, turning our discussion towards education and her feelings regarding the subject. She conveyed in perfect diction, "Young people should understand the privilege of an education and I urge them not to squander where education is concerned."

With further thought she continued, "It is an insult not to get a first rate education, to those who have worked so hard for us have the opportunity." One doesn't have to look far to feel the compassion this brilliant lady has for humanity. She is warm, wholesome, reassuring, and accurate regarding the law, for those young people who stand accused in her court. Judge Goodson stated, "I want young people to understand there are consequences for their actions and they must accept responsibility for those actions."

Even though Judge Goodson, has been appointed to the North Carolina Court Of Appeals, it will be the citizens of North Carolina who will keep her, help ourselves, then we have to contribute to the "Dream". Again, I urge you to tell your friends and relatives about this extraordinary woman from a small town who has a heart for humanity paired with values that have and will sustain the test of time.

The interview being over, I sit, allowing time for absorption of all that's passed through my ears, on this Monday afternoon. The Honorable Patricia Ann Timmons-Goodson, has left an impression of a strong willed, patient, self-assured woman, who has a big heart big enough to love us all. Her legacy will forever stay etched in my mind, long after the gavel has been put down and her Chambers closed. If asked to sum Judge Goodson up in one word, it would have to be DYNAMIC!



The Honorable Patricia Ann Timmons-Goodson

## Erasing The Myths Of Social Services And the Black Woman

by Scherrie Strayhorn

Can work, but do not want to work. Wants to stay home, live off welfare, and have babies.

The day is January 21, 1997. It is an ordinary day unless you are one of the many African American women downtown at Social Services waiting hour after hour in the AFDC waiting area to hear her name called to enter into a n open cubicle with a case worker who may or may not be willing to help her. In the four hours that I spent in that waiting room to gather information for this newspaper insert my whole perspective for his article changed. I talked with these women. I listened to whatever they wanted to tell. I, along with two other Fayetteville State University students, Kasonya Townsend, a freshman from Fairmont, NC and Davida Simmons, a senior from New Bern, NC, held very in depth conversations with these women.

Much of what these women of various ages and backgrounds revealed disproved the many stereotypes placed around women of all races who come to Social Services for help. Even so more importantly it disprove the many myths society as associated with the African American woman and her need for Social Services. The identities of these ladies will not be released in this article because

it is not important to know their names, but what is important is that we know who they are. They are black women still in the struggle.

Reese's story

The youngest of the group of women is an 18 year old high school senior who will be referred to as Reese. Not only is Reese in high school, but she is also a mother of one and a child of a single parent herself. Reese says that the only thing she wants from Social Services is for them to help her while she's in school finishing her last year. Reese admits that she receives a check from welfare, but she only accepted it at the advice of a case worker. Reese says, "Now she's going to tell me that my school work and completing that is important so Social Services wants to do what it can to help me while I'm in school."

Reese admits that Social Services began helping her last October with a check ever month. She says that the only reason she is down here this morning is because is December her checks stopped coming and no one can give her an answer when she calls.

"I'm an honor student," Reese says, "I did make a mistake, but I plan to correct that by going to college and living for me and my child." "Believe me," she continues, "When I do graduate Social Services will not have to worry about me anymore."

Melody and Gwen's story

The two sisters I met, Melody and Gwen had a very different story indeed. Melody is in

the army and she lives in base housing with her three kids. Gwen lives with Melody, but because of Fort Bragg's policy this can only be a temporary living situation. Army policy only allows base housing residents to have a guest for 30 days. Melody has brought Gwen to Social Services today to seek help.

"I don't understand Social Services here," Gwen says after returning from a cubicle where she was talking with a case worker that couldn't seem to help her. She continues, "they keep asking too many stupid questions. I told them the situation with me and my sister, but they keep asking me about Melody's family. My sister is not the one trying to get help!" While everyone in the waiting area laughs at the way Gwen describes her previous conversation, her name is called again to see another case worker. When she leaves, Melody confides in us that Gwen has a college degree and "she probably knows more than the case worker." "She's not looking for them to help her continuously, she just wants them to help her find somewhere for her and her baby before the 30 day visitation with me is up if she can't find a place herself by then."

Ruth's story

Ruth is an older lady who has a child in college. She works two jobs. The only thing she wants to apply for is Medicaid. Ruth informs everyone that "just because we come to Social Services it does not mean we are down here for food stamps, welfare checks, child support, or whatever they say black people are after." Before Ruth finishes her conversation her name is called.

Others come and go during this four hour period. All come to contribute their stories of confusion, denial, and many other horrors.

As Kasonya, Davida, and I left Social Services we began realizing that the acts of one can have serious repercussions on others. In those women we saw our mothers, our sisters, our friends, and ourselves. Anybody can have done better. I think what Ruth said earlier on in the group's discussion expressed the feeling of ever black woman in that waiting area:

"It's not like we want to ask these people for anything because we know the stereotypes when we come through that door downstairs. If you come here acting like a fool you can get help because you're doing what it takes them a year and a lifetime to even call your name."