

FSU name change: deeds not words

by John Caldwell
Editor-in-Chief

The Voice reported in its Aug. 24 edition that a change in the name from Fayetteville State University to UNC at Fayetteville was raised again during the summer at a trustee meeting. Dr. J. Wayne Riggins suggested that he raised the point after having spoken with three FSU students. It was also reported that trustee Ben Brown said students expressed opposition to the name change, adding "it warrants a good open discussion."

I'm not too sure that prolonged discussion of a name change is the best use of the trustee's, Administration's, and the UNC system's time considering all that is occurring now - severe budget cuts, gut wrenching staff upheavals, and an imploding economy. And when considered in the larger socio-cultural context, the implications of the suggested name change present an even greater dilemma.

Changing the name of Fayetteville State University is not a problem as long as the new name honors the legacy of this institution. The UNC at Fayetteville moniker does not do that. A name change like this is another step towards making this campus a satellite of UNC at Chapel Hill. Anyone who argues that the legacy of our university will not be impacted is being disingenuous at best.

East Carolina, NC State, Winston-Salem, Elizabeth City, Appalachian, NC A&T, NC Central and Western Carolina are also under the UNC System. Not one of them has adopted UNC as their name on paper or physically on any of their campus buildings. Why? PRIDE is probably the reason why! Being proud of who you are.

NC State was called UNC at Raleigh for about two years, but their alumni would not have it. They made sure NC State would be its official name because they have PRIDE in their school's distinctive history.

FSU is the second oldest public institution in NC, second only to UNC at Chapel Hill, and we deserve respect for such an accomplishment. This move would not be a slap in the face, rather it is worst. To allow the 2nd oldest university to be absorbed by its larger sister (or brother) by blurring the lines of distinction is a travesty of the highest magnitude.

FSU has a long rich history that is rooted in African-Americans' coming together to invest time, effort, and money in education. There are few institutions that have survived that still serve the entire community that black people can lay claim to having started.

The Fayetteville community has relied on the blood, sweat, and tears of many African-Americans for so many years, and FSU has been an integral part of that past. Honoring that past should not be the sole responsibility of Black people. Any moves to distance the present institution from that legacy, regardless of some supposed minor benefit, is to dishonor that legacy.

Imagine FSU being remembered as having been started as a school for Negroes, and then rescued with a name change gimmick. Because some believe it would improve our campus financially, by attracting better students, faculty, and administrators, does FSU require rescuing? Whatever they come up with only reinforces the notion that some are ashamed of the current FSU, and do not believe we can improve on our own merits.

We should ask ourselves what is it about

the present day institution that some find unacceptable in their request to change the name. And why are no other groups of people so readily asked to forget the past like African-Americans have been asked to. "Heritage not hate" and "never forget" are words that resound with many in regards to their ancestors.

FSU's mission has been long ago changed to include educating anyone who wanted to attend. Suggesting that we will somehow gain "prestige" with such a move says what exactly about who we really are today? And what about the many efforts that have been underway for some time now to raise the level and quality of education students receive at FSU?

One only need review the "FSU's Strategic Plan 2009-2014" initiative to see a framework around which the entire Bronco community can rally to lead the way into this new millennium. Or spend some time thoroughly reviewing, then supporting through much needed funding, the "FSU Tomorrow: Economic Transformation through Teaching, Research, and Service" to gain insight into the potential that already exists.

Take time to maximize efficiently and effectively what we do have. To better allocate those precious resources so that professors can deliver the best services they have capacity to provide will make more "sense" as well as more "cents." The "Bang for the Buck" principle ought to be the guiding light of the Board of Trustees, the Chancellors Office, and the UNC President.

Lest we forget, as a public institution, FSU still serves a very unique, somewhat neglected or underserved element of North Carolina. Our mandate concerning who enters this campus may not resemble our "prestigious"

sister campuses, yet that does not mean that the end-product cannot be equal to or exceed the level of output of the other universities. It is only a matter of resolve. Furthermore it is imperative that we redouble our individual and collective efforts to demonstrate a belief in our institution. "Res non Verba."

I believe if you want UNC on your diploma, you should apply to UNC at Chapel Hill. If you're not accepted or it's too far away, try UNC at Pembroke. If you desire to say you work at UNC, send in your resume to one of the five satellite campuses or the main one at Chapel Hill.

If you come to FSU, come to make it a stronger, better, greater institution. Don't come to make it disappear because you don't "feel" comfortable at a historically black university, or because you believe it is too black (whatever that means). If you are not happy with anything on campus, work to change it substantially, by raising your voice, not superficially by changing the name to merge with who you want us to be. Strive to make us all we can be by the merits of our institution, not by the coattails of our sister institution.

Make a greater name for ourselves is what I believe the founders of this institution would be telling us today, not to be absorbed into another. We "all" owe that much to the ancestors who came before us, for it is on their backs - dripping with their blood, sweat and tears - that we all can live in true brotherhood. Anything less is total disrespect of our culture and our heritage. And to be sure, honoring one's heritage should not and is not the exclusive domain of an elite segment(s) of our society.



Voice photo by Antonio Monroe

24 Hour Theater



Jovian Turnbull, senior, and Cressdon Avery, sophomore, work on sound effects for the 24 Hour Theater Project on last Saturday.

Voice photo by
Rasheed McLain

Myka Webster, junior, on stage rehearsing for play number 4 at the 24 Hour Theater Project last Saturday.