

Students plan march to Raleigh

◆ The march, which organizers hope will attract at least 100 Guilford students, protests Kwame Cannon's imprisonment and deals with other issues of racial diversity

BY EMILY DINGS
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If you're in the mood for a Jubilee, put on your walking shoes and get on the bus to Raleigh.

The "Jubilee 2000" march, sponsored by the April 4th Survival Coalition, will demand the release of political prisoner Kwame Cannon and others unjustly imprisoned in the state of North Carolina.

The April 4th Survival Coalition, a conglomerate of church officials and community members, will highlight the example of Kwame Cannon in the march as a way to tap into and expose the undercurrent of racial injustice it has perceived in the judicial system of North Carolina.

The visage of Kwame Cannon posted throughout Guilford's halls has been such a mainstay for several years that many students have ceased to notice it. The April 4th "Jubilee 2000" march to Raleigh, North Carolina, established to refresh the history of Greensboro's civil rights activism and call attention to present-day race-related injustices, promises to renew the immediacy of Cannon's plight.

Cannon was imprisoned in 1986 for six accounts of non-violent burglary, the results of which added up to less than \$500.

He was given two life sentences for these crimes, despite the fact that white men guilty of violent burglaries, and even some convicted for manslaughter, have been convicted and released while he has been in prison.

Cannon's sentence is considered by many to be an expression of blatant racism as well as punishment for the role that his mother, Willena Cannon, played in enacting a lawsuit to revenge the deaths (at the hands of Greensboro police, Klu Klux Klan members, and Nazis) of five civil rights activists in a 1985 march. At this time, Ms. Cannon had already made a name for herself as a prominent figure in the civil rights movement in North Carolina.

The struggle to free Kwame Cannon has been a long-standing focus of Guilford activism.

The upcoming march to Raleigh

taking place April 1-4 will provide students with an opportunity to put their concerns into action.

Together with members of the Greensboro community as well as groups from A&T University, UNC-G and Bennett College, Guilford students will travel to Raleigh to rally at the State Capitol building.

The Coalition hopes to have 100 students from Guilford participate.

Although the release of Cannon and other prisoners will fuel the march, broader racial and social issues concern the Coalition as well. Welfare, health care and education reform, as well as a plan to carry out these reforms in the future, will also be highlighted by the April 4th Survival Coalition.

Participants in the march will have the choice to march most of the way to Raleigh beginning on Wed., April 1, or to ride the bus to Raleigh on Sat., April 4 and complete a march to the capitol building.

Those convening in Raleigh will assemble at 10:30 a.m. at the Office Park near I-40, Exit 300.

The march will begin at 11:00 and will take a route that includes the Wake Advancement Minimum Security Prison, the MLK Memorial Gardens, the Women's Prison, the Chavis Heights Public Housing unit, and Shaw University (the birthplace of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), ending in a rally at the State Capitol at 1:00 p.m.

The sojourn to Raleigh commemorates the 30-year anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Additionally, the march holds many layers of symbolic value for Greensboro at large and Guilford in par-

ticular.

For Greensboro, it evokes memories of the nascent fight for civil rights beginning with the SNCC sit-ins at Woolworths in 1960.

For Guilford, the march redirects the attention of the college to its first struggles with race relations and the ones it still suffers from today.

Math professor and Guilford alum Rudy Gordh remembers the admission of the first American student of color to Guilford in 1962 (there were international students of color at Guilford from Kenya prior to this date).

Gordh recalls a spectrum of responses to this event and other race-related ones.

Some students responded negatively by shunning the new student and even moving out of his dormitory.

Others responded supportively by blasting "We Shall Overcome" through stereo speakers loud enough to permeate the campus when racial tension

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came to the fore.

"There were people on the edge of the protest movement on campus," he recalls, "and a lot of folk music that correlated with [racial issues]."

The recent focus on the racism latent at Guilford today parallels the spectrum of responses mentioned by Gordh.

Debbie Kiliru, a student organizer of the Guilford group, discusses her views on the importance of student participation in the event given the volatile environment of late at Guilford.

"[We are] living in a crucial time right now. It's very important to examine where we are and take energy from what's going on on campus and put it into positive work," she states. She adds that the April 4th march involves a concern for "social justice, a thread that weaves through anyone who lives or participates in a system. It is an inclusive movement."

Rob Maggard, also involved in the organization of the movement, claims that the presence of racism in greater North Carolina cannot be ignored by Guilford students.

"As long as racism exists outside of campus, it will seep into our student life. If we want to do something about racism at Guilford, we can't ignore what goes on in our surrounding community," he states. If you are interested in participating in the march, contact Maggard at x3276.

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