

# The Nation's Night Of Elegance: History In The Making

By Darryl Muhammad

It was an event to be etched in the walls of history. The evening buzzed with glee, high spirit and exuberant energy. All present were bedecked in the attire reminiscent of royal elegance: and it all happened right in Kernersville N.C.

It was The Nation's Night Of Elegance sponsored by the Nation of Islam, an event dedicated to the solidarity of the family, education and excellence in leadership in the Black community.

It would be a night to remember with such special attendees as, John Ray of Dudley Products, Queen Mother Lea Faye Mack, Ruth Hopkins, Kenneth Muahmmad, Mayor-Pro-Tem of East Spencer, Keith Wilkes football coach of the state champions Carver High and a host of others.

The evening began with The Faafiki African Dance Troop gracefully expressing the soulful antics of ancient Africa that inspired the crowd as they watched in excitement and anticipation. The program was chart full of provocative public speakers, spiritual teachers and educators. Among them was Nation Of Islam Minister and Greensboro Representative, Willie Muhammad who delivered a reviting statement in support of the special and honored guest, Nation of Islam High School Football Coach of the year, Keith Wilkes. In a highly spirited manner he stated, "...our brother was overlooked.

Sam Davis, one of the assisitant coaches called me and conducted a telephone interview with me about the team, this conversation sparked the idea of the "Perfect Cyle Award" because it was 36 years ago when I was on the first champinship team which was all Black and thirty-six years later a all Black team acheived a 16-0 record. This feat went virtually uncelebrated by the media. He didn't even get an honorable mention for c oach of the year. But by us (Nation Of Islam)being on point and in sink with scripture we recognized him as the begining of a new cycle and chose him as our coach of the year." The award was a fiber glass box with an engraved plaque on the face. Inside was a burgundy and football signed by Nation Of Islam's Representatives and a designated spot for the signature of The Honorable Louis Farrakhan.

Nation Of Islam Wintson Salem Representaitive, Mikal Muhammad did the honors of introducing the honored guest. In his presentation he recited a story that demonstrated the leadership ability of coach Wilkes which spoke to his being more than a football coach but a coach of life, a teacher, and a noble man."He allowed his defensive coach to bench the whole first team in one game,

though he may have been a little irritat-ed, and puzzled he allowed it without pulling rank and it proved to be very favorable. Not only did they win but they shut out the opponents 28-0."

With that on came Coach Kieth Wilkes. Humbled by the whole experience, he approached the podium with humility and optimism. "As-Salaam Alaikum," he uttered with confidence. The crowd with majority muslims responded with cheers and the return greeting of, "Walaikum Salaam!"

"First I would to give thanks to God for without Him none of this would be possible...Though I didn't get recognized by the mainstream, I would much rather be recognized by my own community any day! I enjoy it when Black people come together in peace and harmony for a good cause. I am just honored beyond words and I would like to thank The Nation Of Islam for this opportunity."

Coach Wilkes went on to cite the apparent double standard in selecting

and recognizing talented high school players. He mentioned that there was one other team in the state of North Carolina that finished with a 16-0 season. Apparently this team was mostly white and they were lavished with alcalades, state All-Star selections and the coach received at least an honorable mention for Coach of The Year. The Carver



Coach Keith Wilkes

High School team was also 16-0 and had some of the most talented players in the state, like Shawn Peebles and others.

"Football is really a white inistitution and I realize that and they didn't even acknowledge us and we won the state championship." Coach Wilkes had the insight, in light of this, to establish the first nation wide High School Black Coaches Association. The night was one of history making propotion.

The honor and recognition shown to coach Wilkes that evening was of the magnitude of any ritzy, high class gala disgnated for people who acheive high hours in any feild of human endeavor.

Also among awards given was the insightful "Perfect Cycle Award" attributed to the football players by the Nation of Islam. "This is the only place in America you can receive an award with such name and such profound implication as it represents the rise of the oppressed as they make a perfect life cycle," said Minister Willie Muhammad as he presented it to the championship team.

In addition to this, Queen Mother Lea Faye Mack, the Mother of Faithful, a long time leader and activist in Winston Salem was equally as honored when she received the "Life Time Achievement Award" for her undying commitment and dedicated service to the Black community. As usausl, Mother Mack dazzled the crowd with her spiriual sentiments, thunder-bolt statements of correction, love and family solidarity. Also in a breif apperence at the podium, Ruth Hopkins, Administrative Director of Carter G. Woodson School challenged the crowd to take charge of their children's education and teach them the truth of Black heritage.

Overall, it was night that will live in the minds and hearts of all who were present as they carry this experience with them through life inspired by bold, courageous, noble leadership and a new since of racial solidarity.

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