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Our Community

This week we are beginning that take a close look at the black community. From our learned that the black community appears to be a wandering battleship in need of a strong hand at the helm. Be sure to read all of these articles and let us know what you think.

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Words Of Wisdom

It is seldom the difficulty that defeats us, but the lack of confidence in ourselves.

—Paul P. Parker, M.D.

Plenty of honest men never discover the truth — their obstinacy prevents.

—David Seabury



J.J. "BABE" HENDERSON, one of Durham's longtime political activists, says the major problem in Durham's black community is constipated action and diarrhea of the mouth. He says also that young blacks have to come out, get involved and take over community leadership.

First Issue In A Series Of Three

The State Of The Black Community

Several years ago, a popular hit song described a runaway child as "...alone and confused, which way will you choose...?" The description aptly applies to the overall state of Durham's black community today.

Despite the fact that there are more than 55,000 blacks in Durham County, loneliness pervades the black community like a heavy cloud of doom.

Black men, dealing with the issue on a personal basis talk of being alone because, in their judgement, many black women, and for the most part other black men, have abandoned the struggle, sold out for material things, or opted for personal oblivion with drugs or booze.

Black women, noting that when they think of black men, they have to

deal with the fact that they have a shorter life expectancy at birth, comprise about 45 per cent of the prison population, though they are but five per cent of the nation's population; and are more apt to be brutal and insensitive, if not married to or dating a white woman.

"Loneliness," exclaimed one professional woman, who asked not be identified. "I'll tell you about loneliness. I'm married. I have two children. I have a good job. But I live with a stranger. My children are strangers because I have

to work like a dog just to help make ends meet and I don't spend a lot of time with them. I work with strangers, and on those rare occasions when I party, I party with strangers. We can't get to know each other because we're living behind a lot of fronts, and that's why we are lonely."

Black politicians talk, too, of loneliness. H.M. "Mickey" Michaux hinted at it when he told members of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People that just a little over 15% of his campaign funds in

his unsuccessful bid for Congress could be directly traced to the black community.

Young blacks in leadership positions talk about it, too. Said Erwin Allen, director of the Durham Business and Professional Chain: "We don't have a team approach to solving problems here in Durham. We have a lot of superstars, but no teamwork. And when you see something that needs to be done, the bottom line is that you're probably going to have to do it yourself."

Older blacks in leader-

ship positions echo a similar lull.

"The biggest problem facing blacks in Durham today," said J.J. "Babe" Henderson, "is our inability to put together a sustained unified effort. We all seem to be headed off in different, self-centered directions, trying to go it alone."

Thus it is understandable that the black community, apparently fraught with loneliness, seems to reel along a tortured path of confusion, headed no where fast.

"I don't believe we are (Continued On Page 3)

By Jackie Lane
During their annual conclave next week, the North Carolina Grand Lodge of Prince Hall Masons are expected to donate more than \$50,000 to various



JACKSON

charities and other causes, according to a spokesman for the organization.

This year, as in the past 10 years, the

number one recipient of the Masons' largesse will be the Central Orphanage of North Carolina in Oxford. It is expected to get a \$20,000 donation.

"This has been the number one charity for nearly 10 years," explained William A. Clement, the lodge's Grand Master, and a former executive with North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company.

The Masons, officially named the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina, will hold their 112th Annual Communication at the Royal Villa Hotel in Raleigh, beginning October 5 and running through October 7.

The keynote speaker will be Maynard Jackson, former mayor of Atlanta, and currently associated with the Chicago law firm of Chapman & Cutler.

Helping to finance worthy causes is a prin-

cipal project for the North Carolina Grand Lodge, the spokesman said.

In addition to financial support, the Masons also volunteer their time throughout the year. For instance, each member of the A.S. Hunter Lodge of Durham adopts a child, brings gifts and participates in Christmas festivities.

The orphanage, funded by several sources, uses the \$20,000 for general administrative purposes, such as moving youngsters from dormitories to cottages to provide a more homelike atmosphere," Clement said.

"Our emphasis is to improve the quality of life for everybody and particularly blacks," Clement continued.

The lodge's assets total close to \$1.5 million. Other gifts slated to be announced include the following: \$10,000 to the NAACP, \$1,000 to the United

Negro College Fund, \$13,750 in scholarships; and \$136,000 in payments to widows of deceased lodge members.

Clement explained the history of Prince Hall, born in Barbados in



CLEMENT

1750, the first American black to hold a Masonic Charter from the Grand Lodge in England.

At 15, Hall came to Boston, according to Clement, and became involved with the Revolutionary struggle for freedom from British tyranny and the freedom of himself and other black Americans from bigotry, discrimination and slavery.

Hall was an abolitionist, a patriot, an educator and an organizer.

One year before the Declaration of Independence was signed, Hall petitioned the Grand Lodge of England for a charter which was granted and delivered in 1787.

It was the only charter issued to blacks on the North American continent and legitimizes Masonry among blacks," Clement said.

Dr. Koontz To Lead Seminar For High School Students

Dr. Elizabeth D. Koontz, former director of the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor and the president of the National Education Association in 1968, will lead a seminar for high school students at North Carolina Central University, Saturday, September 25.

The seminar is sponsored by Kappa Omicron Phi, national home economics honor society and their teachers. It will be held in the Diana S. Dent Home Economics Building from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

The themes for the seminar are scholastic

excellence and shared leadership. In addition to Dr. Koontz, program participants are Ray Merritt and Ralph Mitchell of NCCU's Public Administration Program.

Dr. Koontz, now a consultant and lecturer, retired in 1982 from the post of Assistant State Superintendent for Teacher Education in the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. She served as a teacher in several North Carolina school systems, and was president of the classroom teachers department of the National Education Association in 1965.

A Study In Division

The Black Community — The Old and The New

By Milton Jordan

Generally speaking there are two black communities in Durham — an old one and a young one. "As a matter of fact," explained Lee Johnson, a Mechanics and Farmers Bank vice president, "you can say there are three black communities. One is that elite group that pretty much ran things when I grew up here, and still runs most of it. Then, there's the group of upper middle class and middle class blacks who function as a bridge group from the elite to the masses, and then there are the masses."

Johnson, 38, a Durham native who worked his way from a teller to his current executive position in Durham's only black-owned bank, went on to say that one of the biggest problems posed by these three black communities is the fact that many young people can't move into any leadership posi-

tions because the older crowd clings to them tenaciously.

"For example," Johnson continued, "Maceo Sloan, Jr., and Skeepie Scarborough are the only two relatively young blacks who sit on the boards of directors of Durham's three major black corporations. And it is obvious to me that if we can get the positions, we can't get the experience, and without the experience, we can't do a good job when the time finally comes."

Mrs. Florine Roberson, a longtime community activist, agrees: "There are definitely two black communities in Durham," she said, "and in my opinion we have not given young blacks ample opportunity to be really involved and to help make some of the leadership decisions that have to be made in the black community."

But just as you find Johnson, a member of what can be called the "new" black community, and Mrs. Roberson, a member of the "old" community siding on this question, you can find equal cross-over agreement on the other side of the question.

"I don't agree that there are two black communities, an old one and a new one," said Charles Daye, 38, a Durham native and law school dean at North Carolina Central University. "I also don't believe anyone is keeping young blacks from being involved with the black community. All they have to do is come out and be willing to work. But many of them want to jump right into leadership roles, and they haven't paid enough dues for that. But anyone who wants to make a contribution to the black community can do that and they don't need anyone's permission."

Coming down on the same side of the issue as Daye is J.J. "Babe" Henderson, chairman emeritus of the Durham Committee, thought to be Durham's most powerful black organization.

"That idea is nothing more than a myth," Henderson said, "an empty excuse for not being involved. If young people truly want to be involved, if they want to work for the betterment of the black community, then all they have to do is come out and take over. But to many of us, and this includes some of our young folk, are still fancy dancing. We are past masters at recreation, sports and playing, but when it comes to the hard work and the creative strategizing of nation building, we fall far short, and those who fall the shortest are our young folk."

This argument over the power division in the black community rages under the surface, rarely

surfacing publicly. But it has a devastating effect on the local black community's ability to progress.

"Durham today is in a state of transition," said Erwin Allen, 33, a Durham native and Business Chain director. "And the black community must be in a position to take advantage of the transition, but I fear we are not in that position now."

Transition and positioning, two terms that spell either hope or despair for Durham black community.

Consider the transition. For years, Durham has been hovering on the brink of progress, threatening to get moving, but somehow the progress that everyone seemed to want never got underway. Now, however, there are some new encouraging signs that Durham might be ready to take its place as one of the state's major metropolitan areas.

Despite some constant arguments and quite a number of obstacles, Durham's downtown revitalization program appears to be somewhat underway. A feasibility study is scheduled to get underway so that will ultimately set the tone for what is developed in the former "heart" of Durham's black community, Hayti. City officials recently released an outline of an economic development strategy for Durham, and the city has launched a comprehensive neighborhood development program to help improve the city's livability.

But how does the black community take advantage of this transition, and move forward with the city? Here is where the question of proper positioning moves to the forefront, and proper positioning assumes a strategy.

"But the black community does not have a comprehensive strategy designed to maximize our resources, and to take advantage of certain conditions in the city as they occur," said Henderson. "We don't have such a strategy because we do a lot of talk, but don't do much work. And we're going to have to put up more of the money."

Johnson believes that Durham's black community doesn't have a strong, viable strategy to take advantage of new opportunities because traditionally black community power, planning and policy decisions were made by a handful of people.

The tradition is longstanding.

Twenty-five years ago or more, when anyone in Durham referred to the "black community," an immediate picture emerged.

Principle features of the picture then were a

handful of prominent blacks whose names would be easily recognized in either Durham's black or white communities. For the most part, these people lived in what had come to be seen as the geographical focus of black Durham — south of the railroad tracks, Hayti and beyond.

The leading institutions in this picture included N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company, Mechanics and Farmers Bank, Mutual Savings & Loan, St. Joseph's and White Rock churches, The Durham Committee on Negro Affairs (as it was known then), North Carolina College (as it was known then) and Lincoln Hospital (as it was known then).

The supporting cast in this picture included some black business operators who owned small businesses such as repair shops, service stations,

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LEE JOHNSON, vice president, Mechanics and Farmers Bank, is a member of the young faction in the black community, the new community, so to speak. He says he and other like him would like to be more involved if the older leaders will give them a chance.



CHARLES DAYE, law school dean at NCCU, says that all young people have to do to be involved is pitch in and work hard, and don't expect to be a black leader overnight.