

THIS MONTAGE OF PICTURES depicts a sight that has grown far too familiar, according to some people. A great many black men in this country are either killing each other, being killed by police, or rotting in jail and prison. The number of widowed black women in Durham, for example, is more than twice the number of widowed black men.



ERVIN ALLEN, JR., one of Durham's young black leaders, calls for more teamwork in solving the political, social and economic problems that face black people here.

### Durham's Black Community Today

(Continued From Front)

going to get anywhere in this town without a comprehensive strategy," said Mrs. Mertice Monroe, a paraprofessional educator, and chairman of the Durham Committee's youth subcommittee, "and we don't have a strategy. We just seem to be confused."

And if the "aloneness" is evident in almost all aspects of black life in Durham, the confusion, if anything, is even more pronounced.

Consider some recent examples:

\* When faced with a decision on how to vote on a \$10.5 million bond issue for the downtown civic center earlier this year, many blacks said a favorable vote must depend upon assurances from city officials that Hayti would be redeveloped. For the uninitiated, Hayti was a thriving, bustling black neighborhood, practically the heart of Durham's black community, that

was destroyed by Durham's urban renewal program.

But while the more vocal black leaders argued for Hayti, other blacks said it was more important to tie the civic center vote to a program to save two living black neighborhoods — East End and Edgemont — rather than trying to resurrect a dead one.

But their voices and that position went largely unheard in the black community's principle political war councils. The Durham Committee and the Durham Branch of the NAACP.

Ervin Allen, Jr. explains why: "It's sad to say, but it is still true that if you aren't in the right family, or don't know the right people, your position or opinion generally won't get a fair hearing in the black community, and especially in the major organizations."

Consider another example of confusion.

\* At a press conference the day following his loss to I.T. "Tim" Valentine in the race for the 2nd District Democratic congressional nomination, Mickey Michaux said, among other things, "...some people take pencils to the polls."

The write-in hint struck a responsive chord among some Michaux supporters, but later Michaux was to say that he was simply sending a message to white Democrats not to take black Democrats for granted. Now there are some black Democrats, apparently confused, trying to put together a write-in campaign without the candidate's blessing. Some blacks in Durham support the write-in, while some others see it as a dangerous ploy that could alienate blacks from the Democratic Party. Ultimately, Michaux endorsed Valentine, according to public statement, in the name of party unity. Some sources say, however, that Michaux's moves, all of them, from the write-in hint to the endorsement, were aimed at solidifying his personal and political position.

The confusion marches on.

Consider the Durham County Commission where two blacks — Mrs. Elna Spaulding and William Bell — have been on the short end of a disproportionate number of 3-2 votes. Now that Mrs. Becky Heron, perceived to be more likely to vote with the two blacks than with the two whites on the board on a great many issues, blacks here hope to reverse the trend. But again confusion reigns.

The question facing the black community generally and the Durham Committee specifically is whether or

not to endorse Mrs. Heron who appears favorable to many positions advocated by the black community. There are those who say that to endorse Mrs. Heron would doom one of the black candidates, probably Bell.

But then some argue that not to endorse Mrs. Heron would be tantamount to forsaking her and what she stands for and would force her to team up with Dillard Teer and Clement, if she's elected. But far worse, some political observers say, that without the Durham Committee's endorsement, Mrs. Heron could lose the race to Republican Paul T. Nance.

According to several activists interviewed for this series, the confusion in the black community has a number of negative effects on the ability of Durham's blacks to seize and wield real power.

"We just don't seem willing to play hard, cold politics in Durham," said John Hudgins, a social worker who is working on his Ph.D. in sociology. "We wind up playing symbolic politics, mainly because we have been unable to translate political gains into practical gains. Many of the people who follow the Durham Committee's ballot don't wind up seeing any specific benefits for themselves."

But "aloneness" and confusion don't spring full bloom from innocence. Rather, they come from many other factors, factors often overlooked and ignored. One of the factors is black people themselves.

First, let's look at the people.

According to figures from the 1980 census, there are 55,424 black living in Durham. There are 30,493 females and 24,931 males. The top

three age groups are 20-24 years old for women, with 3,871 living here; 15-19 years old, with 3,277; and 25-29 years old, with 3,032.

For black men here, the top three age groups are 15-19 years old with 2,840; 20-24 years old with 2,784; and 25-29 years old, with 2,298. This totals 10,180 black women in Durham between 15 and 29 years old, compared with 7,922 men.

The pattern of loneliness is clear.

In those critical years when lasting relationships are formed or not formed, there are 2,158 more women in Durham than there are men. Ironically, that disparity, however, is not a matter of birth.

In Durham, in the under five years old category, there are 2,157 males and 2,247 females. In the 5-9 years old category, there are 2,454 males and 2,325 females.

In the 10-14 years old category, there are 2,578 males and 2,501 females. And then in one more year, in the 15-19 years old category, the disparity begins showing up. The difference is 3,277 females and 2,840 males.

The men seem to just disappear.

"They are in training schools, in jails and buried in the sands of Viet Nam," said Ms. Barbara Taylor, a staffer with the N.C. Prison and Jail Project. "Something has to be done about the rate that we put black men in prison in this state."

The figures back up Ms. Taylor's assertion. According to the draft of a report to be released later this year, published by the Citizens Commission on Alternatives to Incarceration: Black men make up more than 50% of the state's prison population, though they are only about 20% of the population. More

than 40% of the prison population is under 25 years old, and almost 70% is under 30 years old.

"Though we don't have any specific figures on how many black men in prison are specifically from Durham, Ms. Taylor said, "We do know that metropolitan areas tend to have higher rates of incarceration than do rural areas. So it's reasonable to conclude that jails, training schools and prisons contribute significantly to the disparity in number between black men and black women here."

But even among the black men and women who remain, there are some ironic relationships when you consider the numbers. For example, in the area of marital relationships, the numbers are comparably equal except in one significant category. Consider the following:

Black Men		Black Women	
Single	7,363 8,965	Married	7,744 7,736
Separated	1,025 1,862	Divorced	985 1,765

While these categories are somewhat even, in the widowed category, the difference is startling. According to the 1980 census, there are 625 black men in Durham who are widowed, while there are 3,092 black women in the same category.

Black men in Durham are dying at record rates.

Writing recently in a national magazine, well-known black psychiatrist, Dr. Alvin F. Poussaint gives some national statistics that come very close to answering the question: "The social and health status of the black male is alarming. The life expectancy at birth is about 65 years for black men, 70 years for white men, 73 years for black women and over 77 years for white women. Black

males have a higher age-adjusted death rate for cancer, heart disease, cirrhosis of the liver, strokes, accidents and lung diseases than do white males, white females and black females. In the last decade the leading cause of death among young black men has become black-on-black homicide, and significantly, about 45 per cent of police killings in recent years have been of black men, who are, in general, frequent victims of police brutality. The suicide rate of young black males has more than doubled since the 1960's, and is more than four times the suicide rate of a comparable group of black females."

All of this, according to experts, translates into two words: unique stress, and as Poussaint puts it: "...The embattled black man is his share of stress and is frequently unable to surmount it."

So the loneliness and confusion that is a part of the black struggle, the political and social activism, grows from

pathologies that have been firmly implanted in black people by centuries of conditioning.

Durham is no exception.

Allen says it this way: "Durham is in a state of transition from old leadership to new. But the young people realize that they can't afford to alienate the views of the older leaders. But by the same token, you can't wait too long to assert yourself, or you run the risk of being just like them."

Henderson says: "Black people are just going to have to stop doing so much talking and put in a lot more hard work. We're going to have to dig deep in our own pockets and come up with the money to do it with, too. And the young people have got to stop griping and just get on out here and take over."

But both views are contingent upon blacks in Durham being able to overcome and master what Poussaint calls "the high risk of being black in America."



Rep. Kenneth B. Spaulding

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11:00 A.M. Morning Worship

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