

Chronicle Profile

Luellen Curry: She wears two distinct hats

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Luellen Curry wears two hats these days -- one as an up-and-coming attorney and the other as "First Lady" of a local church.

But Curry is hardly your conventional young professional. In fact, the 30-year-old Legal Aid attorney considers herself something of an anachronism, a child of the '60s out of step with the styles of the '80s.

"I'm a throwback to the '60s," Curry says. "You kind of feel like an anachronism because you see the Jheri curls and then Natalie Cole is on this commercial talking about, 'I use this to keep my hair from going back.'"

"The rhetoric of the '60s was that you were beautiful just the way you were," she says. "Straight hair was not the only way to be beautiful."

Because she continues to use her maiden name, many people are unaware that Curry is the wife of the politically-outspoken Rev. Carlton Eversley of Dellabrook Presbyterian Church. They met in the early '70s while both were students at Oberlin College in Ohio and share a common lifestyle, as well as the same religious and political beliefs.

But that hasn't kept her from retaining a strong sense of self-identity and independence.

"My name is Luellen Curry," she says firmly, "and not Mrs. Carlton Eversley."

The more laid-back of the pair, the Lexington native joined the Legal Aid Society of Northwest North Carolina two years ago upon graduating from the law school at Northwestern University.

When Eversley was appointed pastor of Dellabrook Presbyterian in January, Curry was given a new job title -- "First Lady of Dellabrook." But it's a title Curry has trouble accepting.

"I don't think of myself as a first lady," says Curry, a United Methodist by birth. "I want to be part of the church, but I don't like to put myself up like that."

The couple's home -- a spacious, brick parsonage adjacent to the Dellabrook Road church -- is well-kept with a manicured lawn. Inside the house, unpacked boxes abound. Since they moved into the house in March, they've been too busy to set up housekeeping to their satisfaction.

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-- Luellen Curry

Although Curry's shortly cropped Afro might seem out of place today, it suits her well. She speaks of Pan-Africanism and days gone by, when she and Eversley were students and heavily involved in "the Movement."

Their wedding photos on the mantel reflect that involvement. The wedding was an interpretation of a traditional African ceremony, including decorative wedding garb and their own vows.

You may never see Luellen Curry in a posh law firm going after the best-paying clients, because her loyalty lies with the underprivileged.

"I really see a lot of my commitment with the work I do every



Luellen Curry: An anachronism of the 60s living in the 80s (photo by James Parker).

day," she says. "I don't want my job to sound like a political crusade, but working with Legal Aid is a lot closer to my political beliefs."

"The cases we work with benefit low-income people," Curry says, "and that's where my political sympathy is."

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Ben Ruffin

Ruffin-Dr.Gray to address Family Confab

The director of the Institute for Urban Affairs and Research at Howard University will be the keynote speaker for the second annual Conference on Black Families. Dr. Lawrence E. Gary will address the opening session of the conference, scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 11 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Kimberly Park Elementary School.

The public is invited to participate in all sessions at no charge.

Dr. Gary, who is also an associate professor of social work and urban studies at Howard University, is nationally recognized as an authority on the black male and the black family. He earned his undergraduate degree at Tuskegee Institute and his doctorate, as well as other degrees, from the University of Michigan. Dr. Gary has done extensive research in criminal justice, human resources development, mental health, social support systems and substance abuse.

Benjamin S. Ruffin, special assistant to Governor Jim Hunt, will deliver the luncheon address. A native of Durham, Ruffin received his undergraduate degree from North Carolina Central University and his masters in social work and social planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As the governor's special assistant, he serves as the primary conduit between the governor's office and the state's minority population, participates in the appointment of boards and commissions, and assists in the facilitation of the state's affirmative action program.

Several local persons will conduct workshops throughout the day on varied aspects of the black family.

For more information contact Marcella Oglesby at 725-2090 or Shelly Banks at 768-8676.

Fashions: Jonathan Hitchcock for Reuben Thomas



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