

**IN OUR SCHOOLS**  
**EXPULSIONS:**  
**Are Black Students Targeted?**

# AN UPLIFTING PROGRAM

## ▲ "A Black Person Knows Where I'm Coming From"

By MARK R. MOSS  
 Chronicle Staff Writer

If you're looking for an example of the type of person who gets expelled from the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School system, you don't have to look far.

That example would include an 18-year-old who was once in the class for the academically gifted, a 16-year-old unwed mother and a 12-year-old soon-to-be mother.

These and 45 other students who for one reason or another have been removed from the school system, can be found on the second floor of an old building on the corner of 17th and Ivy streets in East Winston.

They're students at LIFT — for "Learning Is Fun, Too" — and they're there, in most cases, because they ran afoul of the system and school officials ran out of patience in dealing with them.

The school system, however, is just as responsible for the trouble these students have gotten in as much as the students themselves.

Earline W. Parmon, the program's director, said.

"The majority of our students have totally lost hope in the educational system," said Parmon, who is Forsyth County commissioner. "School is not important to them. They've been called 'black,' 'stupid' and told 'they can't learn anything.'"

At LIFT, Parmon said, she tries to "re-program" the students.

**Large, black students intimidate**

At six-foot-four, J Owens — "just J," he replies when you asked to spell it) towers over everybody at LIFT. It's his height, he claims, and the scowl he can adopt when angry that has proven disconcerting to school officials. But Owens is very engaging, with a ready smile and is extremely mannerly.

As an 11th-grader last year at Mt. Tabor High School, Owens was kicked out for fighting two school officials and the liaison officer. A fight, he said, that was the culmination of frustration that stemmed from being called a "nigger" by a

white student.

West Forsyth High School, where he was re-assigned, "was just an extension of my problems at Mt. Tabor," he said. After a confrontation with some white students at a basketball game, he said, he was singled out as the trouble-maker. He was later expelled for disorderly conduct.

"There's a race problem in the schools," Owens says. "There's this undertone. If you try to talk about it, you get in trouble."

**Was in academically gifted classes**

Owens, now a senior, explained that as one of the few blacks in the academically gifted classes, he was considered part of an elite group of mostly whites and that students in regular classes were looked down upon. Most of his friends, however, were in the regular classes. The attitude his teachers had, he said, was that because he was in the special classes he was no longer black.

"There are so many black teachers who won't say anything because they're concerned about their jobs or scared of messing up," he said.

The great thing about LIFT, he said, was that the school has "black role models."

Lashannon Brown, 16, was attending Independence High School, when she was kicked out for fighting. She was assigned to Independence after she became pregnant while attending R. J. Reynolds High School. She said her troubles began at Reynolds because there was no one there to talk to.

"You just can't talk to a white person like you can talk to a black person," she said. "A black person knows where I'm coming from. I feel more comfortable talking to someone from my own race."

**.25-caliber falls from pocket**

Derrick Highsmith, 17, broke one of school's staunchest rules: he had guns. He carried a .25-caliber handgun and .12-gauge, pistol-grip shotgun to school because someone was "messing" with his sister. The handgun fell from his pocket in class. Police were called. Highsmith



Lashanna Brown, student at LIFT Academy.

has also spent six months in the Forsyth County jail on drug charges. He spoke of other run-ins with the law, and frequently placed the blame on those he was with.



**Learning Is Fun Too**  
 Earline W. Parmon (center), director of LIFT Academy, poses with some of the 48 students who have come to the school after being permanently expelled from the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School system. Benjamin Robinson (left), an instructor, teaches social studies at LIFT.

### Black Girls Suspended More Than Whites

By RICHARD L. WILLIAMS  
 Chronicle Managing Editor

In the first semester of this year, African-American female students were recommended for expulsion at a rate four times that of white female students in the Forsyth County middle and high schools.

Of the 29 female students recommended for expulsion prior to the Christmas break, 23 were African-American. Twenty-one black girls from the middle schools were recommended for expulsion and two from the high schools. Over the same period a year earlier, black females at middle schools were

recommended for expulsion by a 2-to-1 ratio — 10 black female students to 5 whites. In the high schools, during the same period, three blacks and no whites were recommended for expulsion.

In first half of the 1990-91 school year, the figures again were lopsided. African-American girls accounted for all 12 of the students recommended for expulsion from the middle schools. In the high schools, African-American females were recommended for expulsion 21 times out of a total number of 24. Over the three-year period, African-American girls were recommended for expulsion 111 times out of the total number of 139.

### Blacks Are Expelled

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group." Of the 1,510 students at North Forsyth, 62 percent of white and 38 percent are black.

Walter Marshall, one of two black members on the city/county school board, said he became concerned about the numbers after he received several calls from upset black parents.

"I was getting all these calls about students getting put out of school," Marshall said. "I wanted to see if this was some kind of trend. My intention is not to point fingers at any one school or principal, but to find out what's behind it."

Marshall said he hopes the school board looks into the matter.

G. F. Sakran, program manager for assignment and student hearings for the school system, said the 286 students who were recommended for expulsion had committed serious infractions, which were defined as

fighting, possessing drugs or alcohol or having a weapon on school grounds.

High school students who commit serious infractions can be transferred to another mainstream school or to Independence High School, which is an optional school. Middle school students expelled from mainstream schools also can transfer to another school or be sent to Petree Middle School, another optional school. Independence and Petree schools represent the last stop before a student is kicked out of the school system for the remainder of the year. The student, however, can re-apply for admission at the beginning of the next school year.

Only students who committed weapon and drug infractions are expelled for the remainder of the year, Sakran said.

In part because Independence High is the last option before a stu-

dent is permanently expelled, it recorded the highest number — 18. The total number of students recommended for expulsion was 23, of which 18 were black.

Principal Dan Piggott said the black-white expulsion ratio pretty much reflects the racial makeup of the student body. Of 368 students, 251 are African Americans. But what concerns him most, he said, is that while enrollment has remained consistent, the number of students permanently expelled this year is higher than at the same time last year.

"I have observed that in the last few years we seem to be dealing more and more with kids who do not respond well to authority," Piggott said. "They don't respond to adults at home, if there is an adult."

He said the students who are causing the most trouble seem to be getting younger every year.

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