

DUP

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Presidential wanna-be talks about civil rights

Edwards says Bush's stance on the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy is wrong

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

U.S. Sen. John Edwards says that he disagrees with President Bush's notion that the affirmative action policy at the University of Michigan is unconstitutional. The Bush White House filed a brief with the Supreme Court recently aimed at striking down the school's policy, which awards points in the admission process to minority students.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the case later this year.

"I think the president is wrong," Edwards said during a visit to Winston-Salem Monday. "I think affirmative action programs like the University of Michigan's have increased diversity at our universities and colleges around the country, and that is a good thing and a positive thing."

Edwards spoke at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Noon Hour Commemoration Service to a crowd of more than 1,000. It was Edwards' first public appearance in Winston-Salem since he announced that he would be seeking the presidency in 2004. Although that race is more than a year away, those who know Edwards are confident that he has what it takes to be commander-in-chief. Ben Ruffin, a Forsyth County resident and good friend of Edwards, introduced Edwards to the crowd as "the next president of the United States."

Edwards' remarks were tailor-made for the mostly African-American crowd. He drew tremendous applause as he talked about the nation's potential and lambasted Bush for taking the easy road when it comes to civil rights.

"Leadership is more than photo ops with black children," Edwards said, taking a jab at the president.

Edwards, who was born in South Carolina and raised here in North Carolina, also

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Gen X writer calls for honest race discussion

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

Kevin Powell, 35, likened the work of Martin Luther King Jr. to the ministry of Jesus Christ, calling both men "truth seekers" in history. Powell was the featured speaker at N.C. A&T State University's Commemorative Observance, "Building a Beloved Community: Bridging Our Diversity of Cultures," a program dedicated to the late civil rights leader.

"People expect that, when you talk about Dr. King, just to come together and sing 'We Shall Overcome,' 'Kumbaya,' (or the saying) 'Can we all just get along?' I'm talking about what Dr. King talked about. Let's have an honest discussion because Dr. King, like Jesus Christ, His savior, was a truth teller. Let's be real about this," Powell said last week.

Best known for his stint on the first season of MTV's reality series "The Real World" (New York City), this journalist, poet and hip-hop historian's writing and essays have appeared in several magazines, including Newsweek, Essence, The Washington Post, Vibe (where he was a senior writer for several years), Rolling Stone, Interview and The Amsterdam News.

Powell has published and written books such as "In the Tradition: An Anthology of Young Black Writers"; "Keepin' It Real: Post MTV Reflections



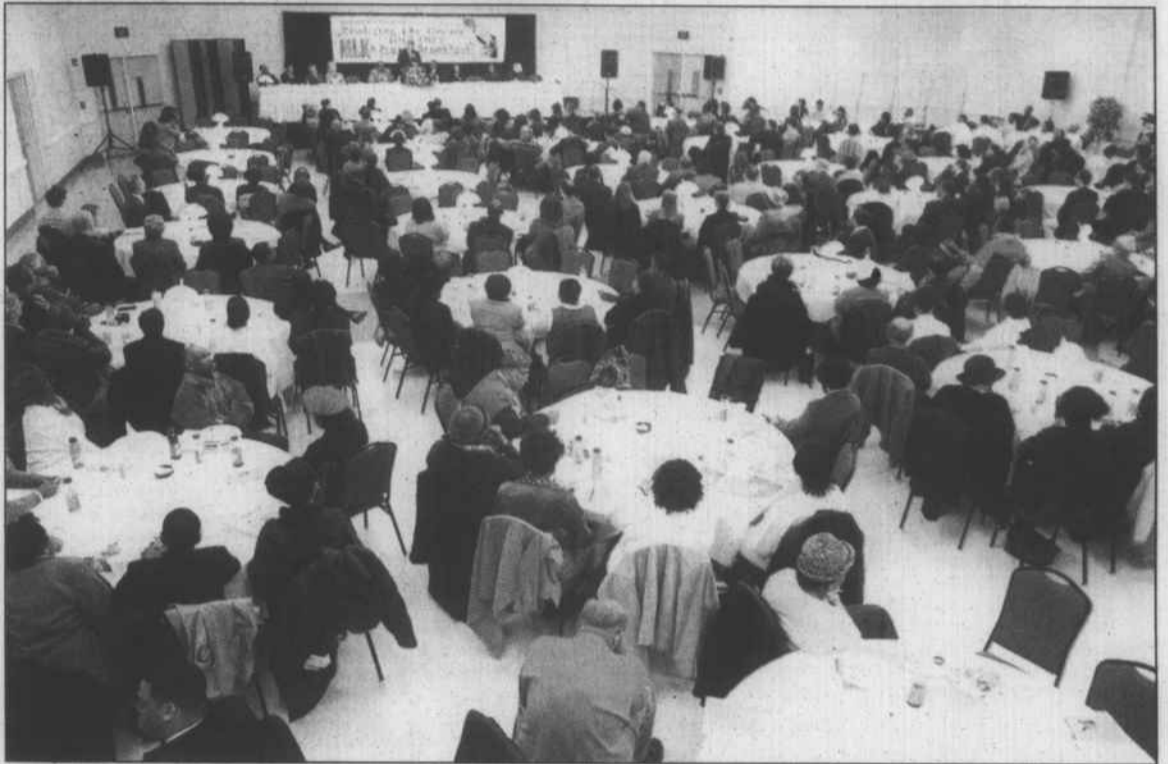
Photo courtesy of N.C. A&T
Kevin Powell

on Race, Sex and Politics"; and, most recently, "Step Into a World: A Global Anthology of the New Black Literature."

No stranger to the South, Powell's mother, who raised him as a single parent, hails from South Carolina. His mother, says Powell, grew up in the Jim Crow South, with no education beyond the fifth grade. "When she moved north (New York), she moved with the spirit of Dr. King...and all of the sisters and brothers who made it possible for us to be sitting here," Powell said.

Powell referred to the evening's theme of "Building Bridges," pointing out that at the

See Powell on A4



Photos by Bruce Chapman

More than 400 people attended the second annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast at Winston-Salem State University.

Dream Believers

Martin Luther King Jr. remembered through song, sermons at prayer breakfast

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would still have a lot on his plate if he were alive today, many said Monday morning during a prayer breakfast designed to honor the legacy of the slain civil rights leader.

While speakers at the breakfast still subscribe to King's dream of racial equity and peace, they were quick to emphasize that those goals still remain dreams. Some speakers even verbalized their fears that progress may even be stagnant or being pushed back.

Julianne Thrift, president of Salem College, told the nearly 400 people in the crowd, to speak out against issues that could be detrimental to civil rights. Thrift passionately spoke out against President Bush's recent decision to challenge the affirmative action policy at the University of Michigan. Bush has said the policy, which gives extra points in the admission process to minorities, is biased against whites.

Thrift said diversity makes the educational experiences of everyone better. She



Larry Leon Hamlin delivers Dr. King's passionate "I Have a Dream" speech.

also said different forms of affirmative action have existed for years.

"If you think George W. Bush got into Yale because of his smarts, get over it," she said, generating a hearty applause from the crowd. "There is affirmative action for whites....There is affirmative action for those people who have granddaddies in power."

Monday's event was the second annual

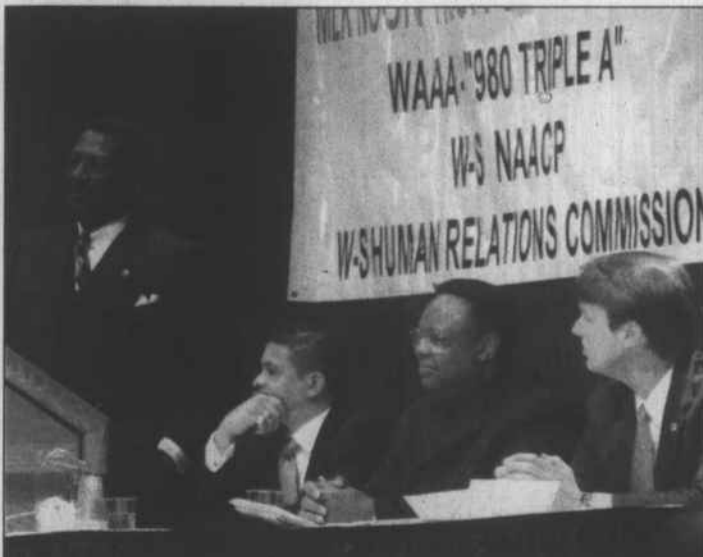
Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast. The breakfast was conceived by Chronicle publisher Ernie Pitt, who said the primary mission of the breakfast was to bring a diverse community together on issues that are of great importance to all.

"I think it is important that we emphasize what we have in common," he said.

While politics was a main theme, the

See Breakfast on A9

Bush, racism targets at annual service



Ben Ruffin prepares to introduce U.S. Sen. John Edwards at the annual MLK Noon Hour Commemoration Monday at the Benton Convention Center.

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Azalee Vinson and her eight grandchildren had an early day on Monday. They gathered in the morning with hundreds of others at Mt. Zion Baptist Church to march downtown. The march has become a Martin Luther King Jr. Day tradition. Vinson and her grandkids, who range in age from 5 to 13, have been regular participants, often making their own MLK signs to carry along the route.

"Even though they were not born during the Civil Rights Movement, they are still a part of this movement," Vinson said, keeping a watchful eye on her grands as she spoke.

Vinson is of that generation that took King's words as gospel. She believes the dream of the late civil rights icon has the ability to still inspire. "Any time you express love and peace, that is something that will help all generations," Vinson said.

Vinson's grandchildren were not the only little ones who took part in the march. Even more youngsters were at the Benton Convention Center - the march's ending point - where the 23rd annual Noon Hour Commemoration of King's

See Noon on A5