

Noted psychologist shares unique approach to learning

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

"Barack Obama is not the hope of America; YOU are the hope of America."

Those are the words of Afrocentric Scholar Na'im Akbar, who has been hailed by Essence magazine as "one of the world's preeminent psychologists and a pioneer in the development of an African-centered approach in modern psychology."

Akbar says the burden is on every American to embody his or her own ideal of greatness.

"We all have the responsibility during our life period to make the world a better place," he commented. "Every one of us has the responsibility to be what we have kind of projected on Obama."

Akbar, the author of several books and a member of the faculty at Florida State University, shared these and other pearls of wisdom with a group of more than 100 educators and community members from as far away as Virginia in a daylong workshop on "Black History and Black Psychology: Correcting the Miseducation of African American Children" at Carter G. Woodson School of Challenge.

The workshop was presented as part of Project TEACH (Teaching Excellence in American Civic History). Funded by a three year, \$1.9 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education,

Project TEACH was designed to increase the test scores of North Carolina students in the areas of civics, history and economics. The project arose from a grant authored by April Broadway and Aynn Daniels of Nfinity Consulting Group, a locally-based resource development company that specializes in research and grant management and Lianda Resource Solutions.

"What Project TEACH attempted to do is find ways to be creative and experiential in bringing civics and economics alive," Daniels said of the program.

Faculty members from Winston-Salem State University and North Carolina Central University partnered with Nfinity on the project, providing guidance and support to teachers at Carter G. Woodson and other charter schools in the areas of U.S. history, civics and economics, subjects where North Carolina students tend to falter.

"We've met with Project TEACH participants, we've given them strategies and pedagogy and shown them how they can make it more interesting for the students," explained Agnes DeWitt, Project TEACH program coordinator for NCCU. "...the participants have grown in their knowledge and in their strategies for presenting that knowledge."

Students' test scores have risen in the subjects covered by the project, according to Carter G. Woodson Director Ruth Hopkins, who added that



DeWitt



Photos by Layla Farmer

Na'im Akbar shares one of his books with Ruth Hopkins, right, and Hazel Mack.

the school was "very pleased" with the program.

"It was a way to work cooperatively with the state of North Carolina ... to strengthen and increase U.S. history,

civics and economics test scores," Hopkins said of the project. "It was teacher friendly and usable."

The project is designed to be disseminated to teachers who join the roster at participating schools in the coming years, so that its work will extend beyond the life of the grant.

Akbar praised both the school and the project for being committed to enhancing the education of youth.

"It's been an exciting experience for me because the tradition that Carter G. Woodson stood for in both his life and his work was to help us better understand that the real power of effectiveness is in knowing who we are," the scholar said. "I felt almost to be in a sanctuary or a memorial to what his tradition represented."



Photos by Layla Farmer

Black Chamber President Randon Pender gets her blood pressure checked Tuesday.

Hypertension

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evaluate new ones. She is hopeful that building relationships with the people she encounters will help the program to be more effective in the community.

"You get to know (participants) on a little bit more personal basis (with follow up visits). You're establishing a relationship with them," she said. "I think that will make more of a difference in certain respects."

Hypertension on Wheels will target African Americans specifically, Joyner says, because they have a greater risk for high blood pressure.

More than 39 percent of African Americans in Forsyth County have hypertension, as compared to approximately 28 percent of their Caucasian counterparts and 24 percent of English speaking Hispanics in the area. This trend is evident across the nation, Joyner says.

"Across the board nation-



Joyner

wide, (hypertension rates are) higher with African Americans," she stated. "That's just kind of a known phenomenon."

Joyner hopes to see 200-400 individuals participate in the program over the course of a 12-month period.

Winston-Salem Black Chamber of Commerce President Randon Pender invited Joyner to bring Hypertension on Wheels to the organization's meeting Tuesday to test and screen members.

"I'm a health-care professional and I know that to function at your optimum level, you must have a healthy body, mind and spirit," said Pender, a registered nurse. "Keeping a check on the blood pressure will prevent major health issues down the road."

For more information about Hypertension on Wheels or to book a visit, contact Joyner at (336) 716-9522 or jjoyner@wsubmc.edu.

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