



Dick Gregory addresses the crowd.

Photos by Todd Luck

C2C

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event that offers a way out for men and women who are fed-up with living the life.

Gregory proudly stood on stage beside the graduates, who were clad in caps and gowns. It was far from Gregory's first commencement address. In fact, he told the crowd packed in the Union Baptist sanctuary that his 1975 speech at Harvard was the first time the school had a black commencement speaker. Gregory said he'd take the C2C graduation over Harvard any day.

"Most folks that go to Harvard, 90 percent of them knew they were going there before they were born," said Gregory. "And, here (at C2C), they reach backwards and pick up folks."

Like at many graduations, a C2C alumnus shared his story of success during the ceremony. K.P. Rice attended the conference four years ago after being released from prison. He's been working in the Union Baptist Security Ministry since then. He called the conference a major turning point in his attempt to reintegrate into society.

"You see, after five years of being held in a federal correctional institution, I didn't just walk in here, I ran in here, looking for a church home," said Rice, who added that his church family at Union does not treat him any differently because of his criminal past.

About 100 people attended this year's conference, taking part in faith-based self-improvement workshops, job training classes and spiritual renewal seminars. The church will continue to monitor C2C participants on a weekly basis.

Union Baptist Pastor Dr. Sir Walker Mack Jr. created the program as a way to change the fortunes of the many men and women who have given up hope and turned to the streets. Mack said the graduation is an essential aspect of the program because it gives participants a sense of accomplishment — something that many of them have never felt before.

"The graduation is designed to help celebrate their life and their tenacity to complete the classes, many of them have not completed anything in their lives," said Mack, who warmly greeted each graduate as they marched across the stage.

The crowd that watched the service packed every pew. They hung on Gregory's every word. Gregory has been many things — a comedian; a major



Wallene Gaither performs during the service.

player in the Civil Rights Movement; and even a presidential candidate. So it's no surprise that his speech was a mix of satire and commentary.

He had the crowd in stitches as he described what he would do if he ever became president. Gregory said he would paint the White House black. His cabinet would be made up of all African-Americans who had as little education as possible, because he said people with a lot of academic degrees have steered the country into such a mess. He would also dig up the Rose Garden and replace it with a watermelon patch.

"I like watermelon," said Gregory. "I ain't never ate a rose."

There were serious moments as well. He said that it was unfair for Senator Hillary Clinton to ask why Barack Obama stayed in the church of the controversial Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Gregory said that similarly, Clinton could have been asked why she stayed with her husband, President Bill Clinton, after his affair and a cover-up that resulted in a criminal probe.

Gregory railed against elite universities like Harvard, saying that they are not the only places where great knowledge can be gained. He said that most African-Americans haven't needed the help of such schools to achieve greatness. He credits the rise of so many successful blacks in such a short time to two things.

"The two strongest forces in the history of America have always been the black woman and the black church," said Gregory.

Gregory used the many, many elections lost by Abraham Lincoln before he became president as an example of persistence paying off. He told the graduates to be like Lincoln and don't focus on past failures, only future successes.



Some of the graduates weep as they are honored.

HEADS OF STATE



N.C. Museum of History

From left: Former North Carolina Governors James G. Martin, James E. Holshouser Jr. and James B. Hunt Jr. officially open the exhibit, "Elected to Serve: North Carolina's Governors" at the N.C. Museum of History on Oct. 24. The men also took part in a panel discussion moderated by William Friday, president emeritus of the University of North Carolina system. The exhibit will be on display at the Raleigh museum through September 2009.

White House

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Virginia.

They also turned out bricks used for the temporary worker huts that were built on the grounds. Much of the lumber came from a slave managed mill at White Oak Swamp near Richmond. Many of the slaves were rented out by their owners to help construct the landmark, documents from the period show.

The owners were paid \$5 a month. Slaves "handled carpentry, cleared the

grounds, worked in the quarries and lumber mills and poured concrete," according to a 2005 article in "The Crisis," the national NAACP's magazine. "Fed cornbread, beef and pork and living in huts on the Capitol grounds, the slaves were also given medical attention. The cost of clothing and inoculations were docked from the slaveowners' rent," the article stated. When the White House was nearly finished in late 1800s, President John Adams of Massachusetts was its first occupant. The second occupant, Thomas Jefferson

of Virginia, started a tradition that continued with other slave-holding presidents — they brought their personal slaves to help staff the White House.

In 1801, President Jefferson took about a dozen slaves from Monticello with him as he set up occupancy in the White House. Many lived in quarters on the White House's first floor, while others slept on the second floor in the first family's quarters. While largely overlooked, the role of slaves in building the president's home has drawn some attention in

recent years. In 2005, Congress created a task force to recognize the role of slaves in the construction of the White House, the Capitol and other government buildings in the nation's capital. A proposal to build a memorial to slaves later was introduced in Congress, but not approved.

However, Congress has authorized the Smithsonian to develop the National Museum of African-American History and Culture.

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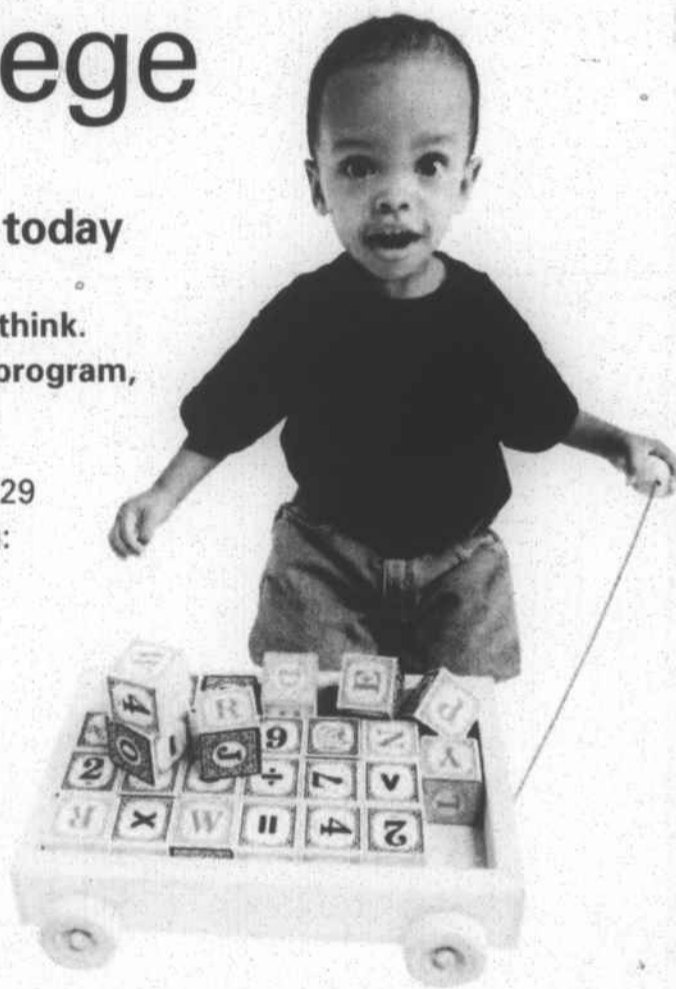
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