

All Hail the Queen

WSSU alumna receives royal title from dad's African tribe

BY CHANEL DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

Winston-Salem State University students heard from one of their very own about how she became a queen.

Nuekie Aku Oyata, a 1998 WSSU alumna, returned to campus Thursday, Nov. 13 to detail her summer installation as Queen Mother of her father's tribe in Ghana.

"Everyone has seen the movie 'Coming to America.' That is not an exaggeration. I literally didn't do anything for two weeks. They waited on me hand and foot," she said of her visit to her father's homeland.

As Queen Mother of Development in the village of Doryumu, where her father, Frederick Kweku Oyata, lives, Nuekie is charged with encouraging the girls in the village to get their education.

Her name - Nuekie - means "Princess," and her family's royal line extends back several generations. Oyata, who was born in Laurinburg,

said her father extended the queen mother title to her to make amends for being absent for much of her life.

Her parents met when they were students at N.C. A&T State University. Their relationship ended shortly after their daughter was born. Oyata said her father's constant traveling prevented them from developing a relationship. She said she reached out to him, after a failed marriage and having two children of her own.

"I told him that I know we hadn't had the best relationship, but I want us to have a better relationship and I wanted him to have a relationship with the children," she told an audience of about 40 or so. "He said that he never knew that I felt like that, and he can't make up



Photos by Chanel Davis
Nuekie Aku Oyata graduated from WSSU in 1998.

visit repaired her long-damaged relationship with her father.

"My dad literally had a shrine of me. He had everything up on that wall that I had done from birth until I was a grown woman. I felt crazy because I had been mad at him for so long for not being there, and he didn't know how to show that he loved me," she said.

Though her queen mother title is largely ceremonial, Oyata plans to serve as an ambassador for the village.

She is currently working with the Laurinburg City Council to make Laurinburg and Tema, her father's hometown, sister cities. She also wants to establish an African/American cultural resource center in Tema and start international cultural pageant and an African/American cultural club at a school in Laurinburg. She has also created a line of Ghanaian-inspired garments.

African American Studies major David Price was inspired by Oyata's story and hopes to visit Ghana himself one day.

"I think that it was very interesting that someone was able to connect to their culture," the sophomore said. "I feel like every African American should have been here and heard this."

Senior Candice Helton said Oyata helped her view Africa in a different light.

"It really opened my eyes about the culture there," said Helton, who admitted that her view of Africa didn't include the modern-day advances Oyata described.

Oyata visit was part of WSSU's International Education Week, which was from Nov. 10-14 and also included a global art exhibit and presentations by students and faculty who have studied and taught abroad.



Helton

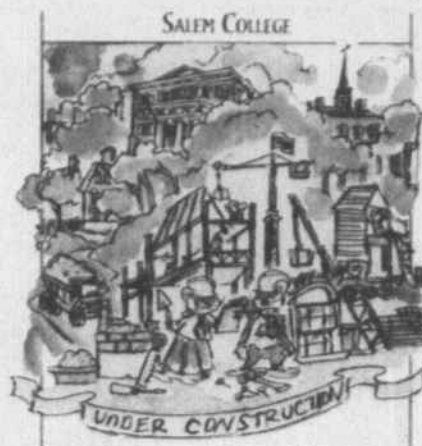


Image by Professor John Hamon

Salem getting first new dorm in 50 years

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Salem College will break ground on a new residence hall on Friday, Dec. 5 at 4 p.m. on north campus, at the corner of Church and Cemetery streets. Construction is slated for completion in the late summer of 2015.

Salem's Board of Trustees recently approved new residence halls and the renovation of existing ones as part of the Master Campus Plan. The college and its academy (for high school students) has seen three consecutive years of enrollment growth, including the largest incoming class in the history of Salem College.

"We have repurposed many spaces on campus in order to accommodate our record-breaking enrollment," said President Lorraine Sterritt. "We are delighted with the Board's authorization to move forward with a new residence. As we contemplate a judicious increase in the size of our undergraduate student body, this will make it possible for more women with the highest potential for success to benefit from a Salem College education."

The new residence hall will be a four-floor, 32,000-square-foot rectangular building with 92 beds in an apartment-style configuration. It will cost an estimated \$5.5 million. It will be Salem's first apartment-style housing and the first residential construction in nearly 50 years, since the construction of Gramley Residence Hall in 1965.

Salem has engaged Frank L. Blum Construction to develop the residence hall through a design-build agreement. The team also includes CJMW Architecture and Stimmel Associates, PA.

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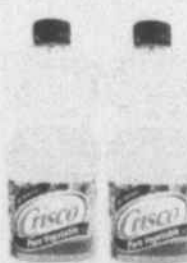
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