

Heath

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singing and acting talents in numerous productions such as "Don't Bother Me Brother, I Can't Cope." NCBCR Artistic Director Mabel Robinson said he was more than just a great talent on stage; he was an example and mentor to the young talents around him.



Bishop Heath

When he couldn't perform on stage, Heath could be found in the audience of any Black Rep production he was able to go to. Heath would also find other talents to sing for the Black Rep, including his daughter, Bethany, who is also an accomplished singer.

"There are certain elements in people and energies that you expect will be in your life forever. I couldn't believe it," she said. "So I had to just take a deep breath and pray on it and say, 'OK, it was evidently time for him to go'."

Jones said it was while touring with a production that he was moved to start his own church. She said he founded Greater Higher Ground in 1994 in a storefront location off South Main Street with a handful of members. Now the church is located on Moat Drive with about 300 members.

Heath struggled with complications from diabetes over the years. He was on dialysis for eight years after his kidneys failed before receiving a kidney from a deacon at his church, DeForest LaGrone.

After the surgery, he released a CD, "Get Right Church," and told The Chronicle in 2006 he wanted his music to inspire others.

"I've been through a lot, but I kept my hand in God's hand" he said. "People need to hear this music so that they can be encouraged. They need to know that they can make it and better days are on the way regardless of their situation."

His health greatly improved with the kidney transplant, but later complications from diabetes caused him to have a leg amputation, leading him to use a prosthesis to walk. Jones said Heath didn't let his health challenges keep him from the pulpit or from visiting sick members of his church.

She said the family and church have received an outpouring of condolences from the many people whose lives Heath touched.

"He was able to make each person feel special," she said.

"He had a special gift to make each person feel worthy no matter who they were or what was going on in their lives. He looked at the good in people and he made them know that they could do better and be better."

On Friday, Jan. 30 from noon-6 p.m., Heath will lie in state at Greater Higher Ground, 4175 Moat Drive, followed by a family viewing at 6-7 p.m. and a Celebration of Life Service at 7 p.m. On Saturday Jan. 31, there will be a viewing from 10 a.m.-noon at Union Baptist Church, 1200 N. Trade St., with a Homegoing service at noon. The interment will follow at Piedmont Memorial Gardens.



WSSU Photo by Garrett Garmis

Dick Gregory sits and talks with students, Martreze Meachum (center) and Christopher Johnson.

Gregory

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the joint WSSU and Wake Forest University's annual Dr. Martin Luther King Day event on Jan. 20.

The event, which was free and open to the public, included songs from WSSU's Burke Singers and the Wake Forest University's Gospel Choir.

Following those selections, attendees settled in their seats to listen to Gregory explain everything from his thoughts on the Bible, his reflection on Martin Luther King Jr. and what the youth can do to change the world. His lecture lasted just under an hour.

A viral video has been circulating around Facebook that shows Gregory lecturing and showing a minister claiming that he had to remember to "move out of the way so that he (the shooter) can get a good shot," indicating that he knew King was going to be shot on April 4, 1968.

"Three weeks before he died, we were in Chicago. He said 'They're going to kill me. Aren't they?' and I said 'Doc, they're gonna kill us all. Come on, we've got a show to do,'" he said. He went on to thank King for his service and said that he was grateful he "bumped into the movement."

He also urged those residents who were students at WFU and WSSU during the Civil Rights Movement to make sure their efforts were acknowledged.

"Ya'll need to organize and let the world know what you did here," Gregory said.

Gregory often broke up the seriousness of his lecture with jokes, like saying his worst enemy was his mother lying to him.

"My mother told me that Santa Claus bought me these toys. A white man," he said, pausing. "Everybody know ain't no white man coming in the ghetto after midnight."

Even through his humor the seriousness of the message hit home for

WSSU student Rodie Lamb Jr. He had never seen Gregory perform, but had heard that he was great.

The junior said that he didn't always know how to take Gregory's mixture of jokes with substantive material.

"I didn't know if I should laugh or be serious," he said. "He was definitely straightforward and captured the audience's attention immediately."

He said that the part that caught his attention was when Gregory spoke about King.

"One of the portions that stood out for me the most was when he said that Dr. King knew he was going to die. I put myself in Dr. King's shoes, asking myself would I be willing to die for what I believed in," Lamb said. "To know that you're about to die, that's a very hard feeling to put into words."

Gregory, being the social activist that he is, encouraged African-Americans to stand up for their rights.

"You ain't never turned on the radio or read the newspaper where a white mother or father crying 'cause some black cop has shot their white son in the back of the head 40 times. Is that because we are more spiritual? No. You know white folks aren't going to

tolerate it. It's happening because we tolerate it," he said.

He said that the best way for African-Americans to liberate themselves is to stop playing the economic game and boycott. He feels that cutting off America's funds will cause the nation to step in and protect African-Americans.

"You know what we have to do to shut this down? All you have to do is call for a boycott on Thanksgiving and Christmas, but you not going to do that because you want your little children to have some toys, but those are the ones they're killing," he said. "Between 70 and 80 percent of retail in America happens between Thanksgiving and Christmas. We have the power to do it but we won't because we've never been liberated."

Lamb said that he was in awe to be in the room with someone who marched with King and that Gregory taught him to question the information given to him, especially when it came to King's death.

"Not only did he challenge me to look at life beyond myself and what I think I know, he also challenged me to make sure those around me are good (taken care of)," Lamb said.

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Parmon

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Her job would allow her to work out of the Greensboro office and provide services to not only Forsyth County residents, but those in Guilford and Davidson counties as well. She would be working with residents who need help such as getting their benefits from Veteran's Affairs or those having issues with Medicare.

"I will primarily be a liaison between Washington and the district," she said. "I'll definitely be a voice and advocate for the people on behalf of the congresswoman."

Parmon said that her new job is no different than what she did as a senator.

"That's one of the reasons why I see it as a great opportunity. It will allow me to work with more people in the district and community addressing concerns and helping people figure out how to be advocates for themselves," she said. "I'm still a public servant with the concerns of the people as the root of what I'm doing."

She would not name who she wanted to replace her, citing it as inappropriate and she is not endorsing one candidate over the other. However, Parmon did say that she has an idea of the type of person she would like to see replace her, even though it will be up to the executive committee of the Forsyth County Democratic Party.

"The environment in Raleigh is going to be as such that whomever is selected needs to be a strong voice and person that's willing to stand up and be heard," she said. "I want to see the executive committee elect someone who understands the issues and can deal with the kind of unbalanced government that we see in Raleigh at this time."

The Forsyth County Democratic Party will



Photo by Ariana Daniels

Contenders for Parmon's seat (from left) Rev. Dr. Paul Lowe, Joycelyn Johnson and Wilbert Banks take part in a public forum Monday.

hold a meeting today (Jan. 29) to determine who will complete Parmon's term. The meeting will be held at Kennedy High School, 890 E. 11th St., beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Each member of the party's county executive committee who lives in Senate District 32 gets a vote. There will be nominating speeches and candidate speeches before the voting begins. The person who gets at least 51 percent of the vote is the nominee. The governor

will ultimately appoint the nominee.

Parmon said that she is excited to help elect someone to take her seat and that she is glad to have a voice in the selection. She also vows to help that person as a mentor.

"I'm going to be here to help whomever because this is going to be something new (most candidates do not have legislative experience). Whatever I can do to help, I'm going to do."

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Nubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636 Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

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