

Book by W-S native explores race, religion and reconciliation

BY KYUNG JIN LEE
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

"GIVE UP on North Carolina? Can any of us really uproot what's deeply embedded?" writes Cedric Brown, in his new book, "Tar Heel Born."

Published in 2015 by Junie's Mood Press, the book is a collection of seven narrative poems about his relationship with his home state of North Carolina. Brown was born and raised in Winston-Salem and moved to the San Francisco Bay Area just after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1989.



Brown

He has reflected on his the state since then, but the real impetus to begin writing came after the 2012 passage of Amendment One, which made it unconstitutional for the state to recognize or perform same-sex marriages or civil unions.

"Here is a place that I love but couldn't live there," he said, touching on the fundamental conflict he felt at the time as a gay man. A U.S. District Judge ruled the amendment unconstitutional in 2014.

In "Tar Heel Born," Brown smoothly flows between pain and joy, anger and love, and the ephemeral crevices in between to find his personal truth about the complexities of North Carolina. He not only tackles tough topics like his sexual identity, but also racism, Christianity, limitations and growing into a man in college.

Given the ongoing debates around the Black Lives Matter movement and marriage equality versus religious liberty, the book speaks to historical issues that continue to have relevance today.

"It's about how we think about identity, the future of this nation, how we relate to being citizens and residents in this country," he said.

Brown said compiling memories of racist incidents he experienced as a child was difficult.

"A white girl naming her pet Nigger Kitty. 'Not because it's a black cat,' she said, 'but because it's stupid,'" reads another poem, "Scars."

In fact, it still makes him uncomfortable.

"Talking about what I saw and how dehumanized I felt by the arrogance and unawareness I witnessed around race was the most painful part," he said.

At the same time, Brown found joy in writing about discovering North Carolina and its history, symbolism and geography during a four-day field trip in the fourth grade. From the Blue Ridge Parkway to Jockey's Ridge State Park, Brown said that's when the state came alive to him.

"It gives me a warm feeling about home," he said. "The memories are still very vivid. And that's when I discovered there was a bigger world than my hometown and I wanted to learn more about it."

He said he loves to visit the state several times a year.

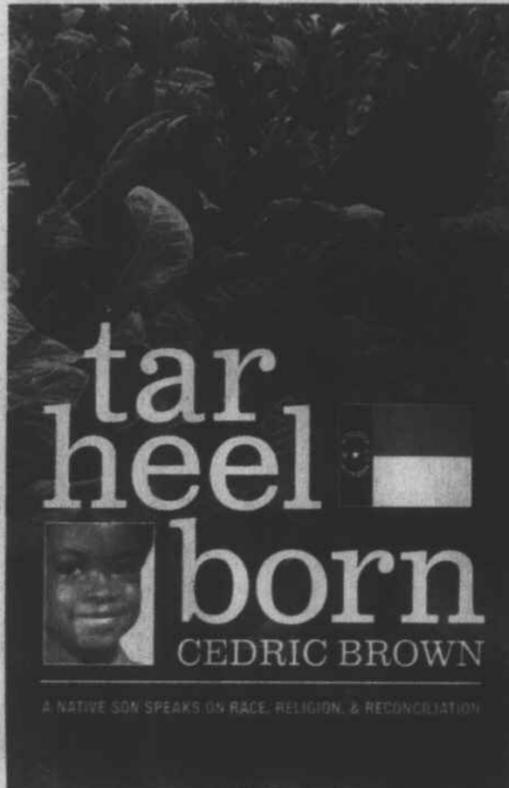
Brown still thinks of North Carolina as home, and still considers himself a Southern gentleman. He feels so connected to the Winston-Salem community that he recently established the Archie-Brown Springboard Fund, which awards a \$1,000 prize to an African-American high-school aged young man in Winston-Salem, as well as in his current hometown of Oakland.

"[North Carolina] taught me so many practical things about being human, how to treat other people, how to navigate life," he said. "I carry a lot of that upbringing with me now. It helps shape who I am and how I exist in the world."

Brown said his most of his readers responded to the larger message of home and what it means to leave home.

"However you describe what home is: whether it's a house, a family, a community or a state, what does home mean and what does it mean to leave home?" he asks. "The story resonates with anyone who had a home they felt like they had to leave because it didn't represent the values they came to learn."

Brown had a booth at the Bookmarks Festival of Books and Authors last week in Winston-Salem, and did a reading at Reynolds High School, his alma mater. More information is available at Juniesmood.com.



Forsyth Tech supports Global Logistics students

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth Tech fulfills its mission to help students graduate in a number of significant ways. Recently, two graduates of the Global Logistics Technology program experienced first-hand how the college goes above and beyond to help students complete their degree.

Demetria Ledbetter, program coordinator for Global Logistics Technology, discovered that two of her students weren't eligible for graduation, because job commitments prevented them from taking the final course in their program, a face-to-face evening class, Math 110.

Calissa Hooper is a store manager at two McDonald's stores and mother to five daughters, two of whom are school age. Stacy Bradley works as an account manager for a Third Party Logistics Company (3PL) and has an unpredictable work schedule. Neither student could attend the evening math class, which was the only requirement that stood in the way between them and their diploma.

Hooper remembers, "I'm not the kind of person to give up, but I felt like I was out of options."



Bradley



Submitted Photo

Calissa Hooper shows her graduation gown and diploma

In order to help these students complete their degree, Ledbetter worked with Dr. Sharilyn Owens, department chair of the Math Department, to set up an online course for the summer session. Working quickly and efficiently this past spring, Owens put the class together in about two months, including hiring a new instructor. The class filled to capacity, meeting the needs of other students as well.

Both Hooper and Bradley aced the Math 110 class while maintaining their job responsibilities. They graduated on July 31 and plan to use their new degree to advance their careers in global logistics.

"This means a lot to me," says Bradley. "Ms. Ledbetter sought me out,

listened to my situation, and cared enough to do something about it. With my degree, I feel better equipped for my job, and stand as an example for my children.

"I've faced lots of challenges getting my degree, but in the end, it was a true success," says Hooper. "And I know it doesn't stop with me. I'm confident Forsyth Tech will continue to help students where they are."



\$3.9 billion for education over the last nine years. That's right. Together, North Carolinians have added classrooms, funded pre-K programs, sent kids to college, kept teachers and teacher assistants teaching, and helped schools have more of the technology they need. Last year alone, more than half a billion dollars was contributed to the \$11 billion N.C. education budget. To see what the money has done in your community, visit WeAllDidThis.com.



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