

Stallworth Never Should Have Been Happy Living In Southern Town

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WINSTON-SALEM - By all odds and myths of survival, Cheryl Stallworth never should have been happy living in a small Southern town.

An intelligent black woman from Milwaukee by way of Denver, she had been exposed to the best of big city living and had become used to the cultural, social and professional advantages of major metropolitan areas.

But Stallworth is one of the growing numbers of educated black professionals who have chosen to leave the North and Midwest, once leading centers of opportunity for blacks, and seek careers in the South.

The migration of blacks to the North actually began around World

War I. Encouraged by large Northern industrial firms needing workers, about 4 million blacks moved away from the South between 1940 to 1970, according to Dr. Philip J. Perricone, chairman of the sociology department of Wake Wake Forest University.

About 1970, however, a reversal of the long term exodus began. Blacks began returning to the South through the early 1980s.

"Younger, better educated blacks have been attracted by improved living and working conditions in the South. No one can be certain how long this trend will continue, but it is apparent that with the general population shift toward the Sunbelt, blacks are a part of the movement," said Perricone.

Stallworth saw an opportunity to

begin her professional life in the South, against the advice of her peers.

"My friends thought I was crazy when I told them I had studied my options and had chosen to work for a tobacco company in North Carolina," she said. "Many people still hold the misconception that the South is slow, backward and an unfriendly place for blacks. I have found just the opposite."

When she interviewed for a job in the marketing division of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., she was warned there were few of the amenities she was accustomed to in Milwaukee.

"The great climate here is a big attraction for me. I have tried some new outdoor activities, such as horseback riding," she said. "I

definitely have more months to play outside."

Stallworth cites other positive aspects of residing in a small town. "Here, I guess because there aren't a great deal of entertainment or professional sports events to fill my time, I find myself able to participate more in community affairs. I appreciate working with the faculty and students at Winston-Salem State University on marketing seminars, for instance. There's something rewarding about working with historically black colleges that have had a heavy impact on black southern culture and history," she said.

In addition, she led Junior Achievement groups for two semesters, helping students gain a perspective on career options.

After graduating from University of Wisconsin with a degree in radio and television communications, she held jobs as public affairs director and announcer for a local radio station and as a "mixologist" at a jazz nightclub - a fancy word for bartender.

But in 1979, she realized she needed a graduate degree in business. She found a program at the university suited to her needs - the Consortium for Study in Management, a scholarship program designed to get more blacks, Hispanics and American Indians into the business world.

"There are numerous scholarship programs of this type at colleges and universities all over the country. Students who want to further their

education should look around. The programs are there but few people are fully aware of the opportunities," she said.

Acceptance into the consortium program is based on meeting certain academic criteria and performance, not financial need, she said.

During the summer, she worked as an intern at Foote, Cone and Belding, an advertising agency, and decided she wanted a career in marketing, but as a marketer of branded consumer goods.

"Absolutely. After all, I didn't know when I moved to Winston-Salem that it would be named the No. 1 best place to live in the United States," she said.

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