

Davis Working On Dissertation For Doctorate Degree

By Teresa Simmons
Post Managing Editor
At 33 years of age Gregory Davis remembers that at 12 he could not read or write. Today he is working on his dissertation for his doctorate in Afro-American and Religious Studies.

His story begins in Harlem, New York where he lived until his mother died in 1962. "We then moved to Charlotte and my grandmother, Jamie Davis, raised us."

Upon his arrival in Charlotte Davis was sent to Raleigh's School for the Blind. Even there his leadership and aspirations to achieve surfaced. He didn't feel that being blind was a hindrance in becoming an attorney. In spite of the late start of his education that's what he wanted to achieve. But others did not possess his same optimistic attitude.

"A lot of people told me I'd never be able to attend college or become an attorney. They told me I had only pipe dreams...dreams that I could not achieve."

Because of these comments there was one short time period in Davis' life where his dream began to fade. "I quit. I was 21



Gregory Davis
...Proving his worthiness

years old with a 9th grade education."

But what pulled him out of the slump was his own stubbornness. "I'm stubborn...I had a dream and I believed in God. God didn't put me on this earth without a purpose. I worked hard to achieve...what I

have learned did not come by an inherited process, but by working hard."

Davis put aside the preconceived comments about his limited capabilities and began taking classes at Central Piedmont Community College. He began with a ninth grade educa-

tion. From October of 1972 until March 1973 he worked and completed his high school education. From April '73 to December '74 he fully completed two years of general college work before entering the University of North Carolina Charlotte in 1975, with all A's and one B. By 1976 he had completed his bachelor of arts degree in Religion. His focus by his point in his life had changed from pre-law to ministry.

Davis then received the Benjamin E. Mayes Fellowship to study on the campus of Duke University. There he completed his Master's of Divinity. He is now working on his doctorate in Afro-American and Religious Studies from the Union Graduate School in Cincinnati. He is also a lecturer in the Afro-American-African Studies Department at the University of NC at Charlotte.

In addition to his degrees and position at UNCC, Davis is also an ordained and certified minister. He is an associate minister of First Mayfield Baptist Church, located on Oaklawn Avenue.

His advice to anyone going into either the education field or the ministry is

the following. "In education you can't expect it to be an eight to five job. It's a 24 hour job. You have to take it seriously. In order to help students you have to have patience with those who are not outstanding."

As far as the ministry is concerned you also have to be very serious and dedicated. Don't seek glamour or wealth. The ministry is serving people...and you will face disappointments."

For a sighted person college means attending classes, taking notes and studying. For Davis' degrees, his process was more detailed. "I hired students to read for me. I recorded all lectures and came back to the dorm and listened to them. Then I wrote my notes in Braille."

I depended on others to read the material for me and sometimes the students would show up and sometimes they would not. It wasn't unusual for me to search out a security guard to read material to me."

Today Davis stated that college is perhaps a little easier for the blind because of computer technology.

In addition to his studies Davis has always shown exceptional ability as a

leader. At Central Piedmont Community College he served as Student Body President for two terms. At UNCC he was also considered a student leader. He has received awards and plaques from CPCC for honesty, forthrightness, from UNCC for outstanding qualities of scholarship and leadership as well as unselfishness, and from Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Zeta Delta Chapter for leadership service and dedication. He also received the Senior Class award from Duke University.

With all of these accomplishments behind him one would think that those barriers Davis faced earlier in his life would be broken down by now. But... "The most stressful times in my profession is when people refuse to see me as a man. I want them to judge me as a man in my profession, not as a handicapped person or physically disabled person," Davis commented. "My dream is to make a contribution to society. It's important for me to live a life in which I can look back and say I've contributed to the betterment of the world and served God."

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