

# LIFESTYLES

7A  
THURSDAY  
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## Kindness Is Often An Indication Of Strength

"Dear Dr. Faulkner:

I am a good person. I don't abuse anyone, and I try to be kind and respectful to everyone I meet. But, I am getting sick and tired of being nice to other people when all that they do is push me around. They think I'm weak. I'm quiet, but not weak. Why are people like that?"

Ms. S., Denver, Colorado

Dear Ms. S.:

What a lot of people cannot understand is that a person can be kind and strong at the same time. Kindness may, in fact, represent strength rather than weakness. I'll tell you why.

An insecure person might have a need to make everyone feel as weak and insecure as he (or she) does. Pushing others

around, insulting them and degrading them gives this horrible person a sense of psychological control. It is similar to a man who has an argument with his boss, but goes home and takes his frustrations out on his wife by beating her up. Or, like a woman who is rejected by a man, and, in turn, is rude to every other man who approaches her.

This bullying person will eventually meet his (or her) match. There are many so-called "quiet" people who are extremely strong. They may be quiet around people with whom they are not comfortable, or they simply do not know very well.

A person might be quiet because they have exceptional maturity and self-control. They do not find a need to get upset over small, unimportant things. Insecure bullies get upset over some very small, unimportant things. They often create things to argue about. They get upset if you don't agree with them. They really get upset if you ignore them. They might try to trick, or "sucker" you into an argument.

And, while they are creating an unnecessary argument, the quiet, strong person is simply thinking, "This insecure person is really infantile." Also, this bully might try to set you up by do-

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## Riding The Fitness Bandwagon

# Exercise It Has Become A Black Thing

By April C. Turner  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

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ike said "Just do it," and the black community said "consider it done."

National studies show that African Americans have leaped onto the aerobic bandwagon and are exercising more often.

Karen Withrow, an aerobics instructor at the McCrorey branch YMCA, says the number of brothers and sisters in attendance has increased dramati-

cally.

"When I came here (a year and a half ago) we started out with four people and now the class has grown and we have about 30 people. They come and go but they always come back," she said.

Withrow says it is important to recognize how vital exercise is to overall health.

"We all need some type of extra fitness program in our lives so it's important for me to make the class fun," she said.

Class members attend Withrow's class for various reasons. She says that the reasons are usually not cosmetic.

"The main reason that people come to class is not to lose weight. A few people are here because their doctors recommended that they exercise," she said.

High cholesterol and blood pressure levels prompt doctors to encourage patients to work out. Withrow said that exercising has helped improve her students' conditions.

Advising class members about healthy diet practices is an important role that Withrow says she enjoys playing.

"They [students] do ask for dieting tips and my advice to them is to eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables," she said. "Cut out the red meats. If you have to have some type of meat, eat chicken and fish. You don't want them to stop eating or take diet pills unless they are under some type of supervision. If they eat right and cut back on their fatty foods and exercise they're going to lose the weight."

Hubert Tyrelle works out at the Park Road branch YWCA three times a week for a different reason.

"I wanted to give myself some discipline so when I'm 50 I'll feel like I'm 20. I'm a big kid inside," he said.

Tyrelle says that over the last six months he has noticed an improvement in strength and development.

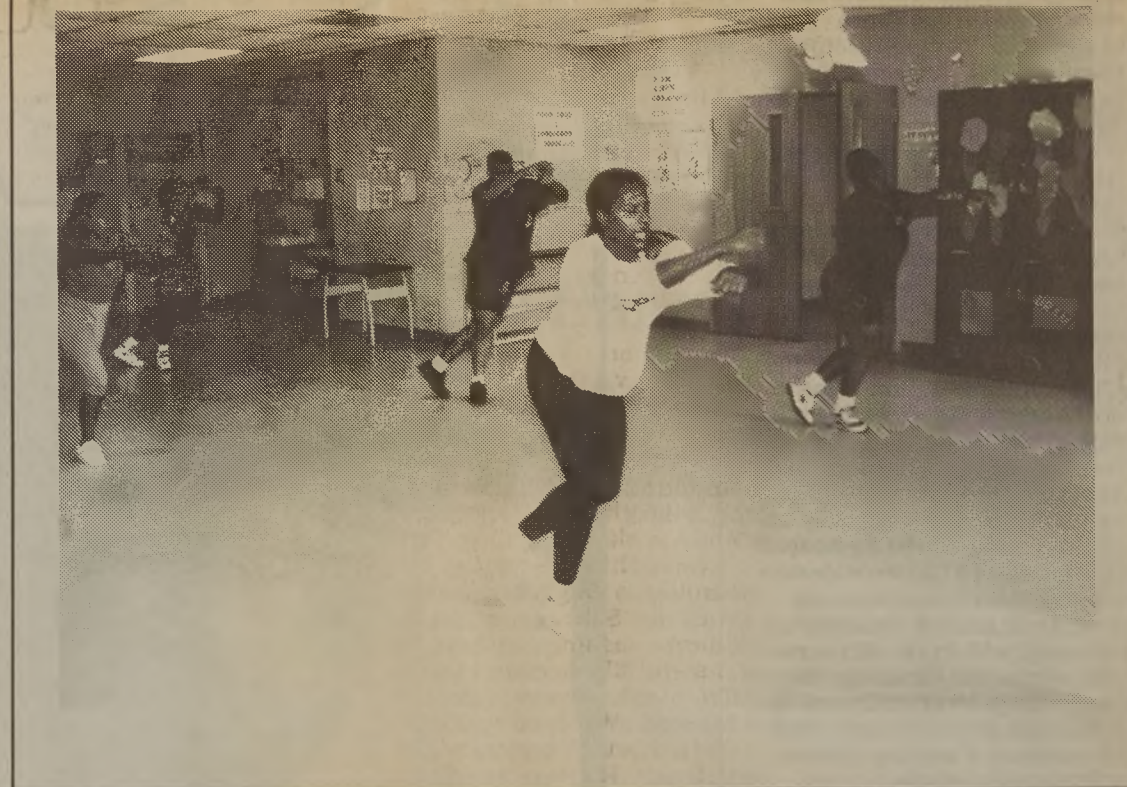
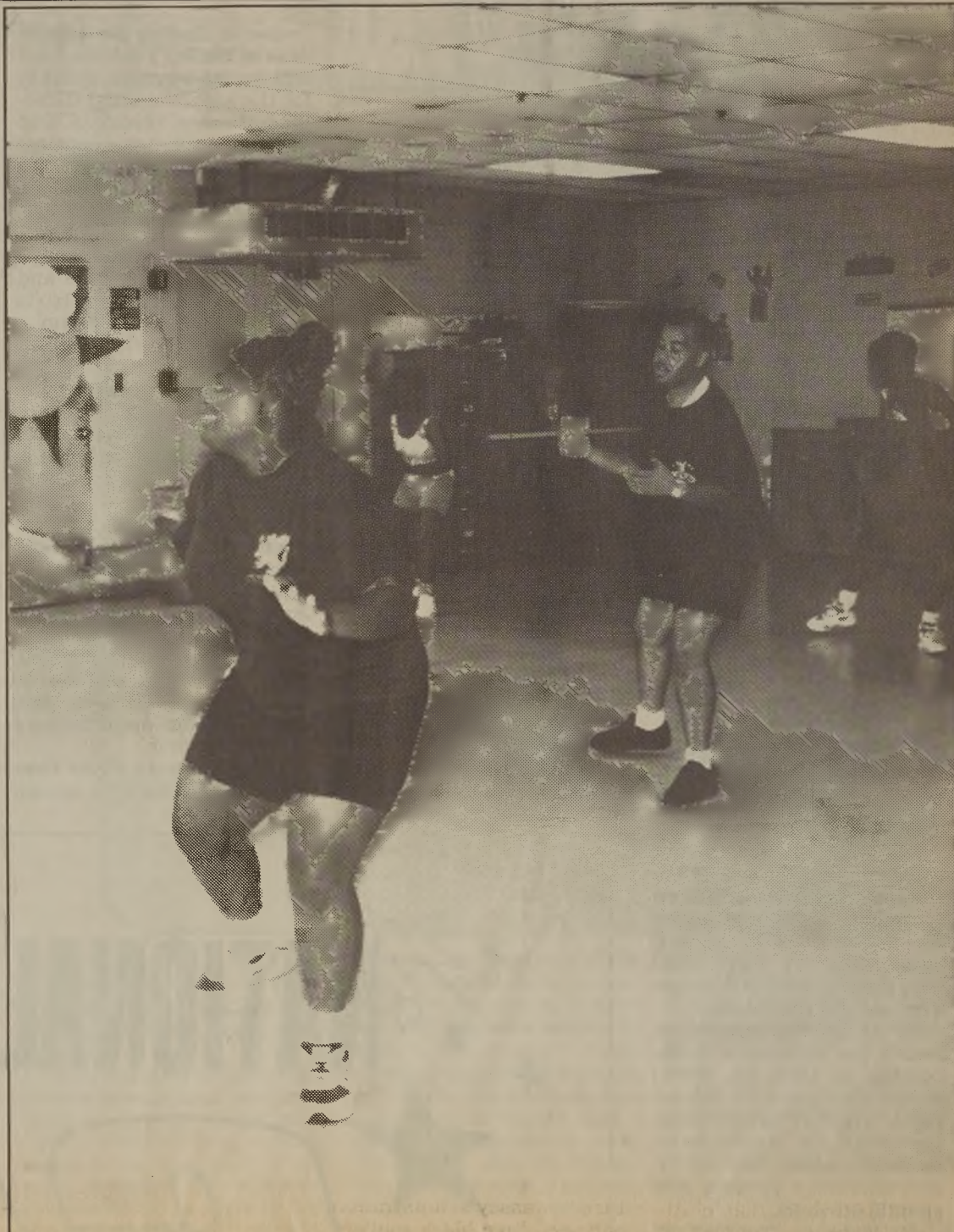
"It's been worth it," he said.

Withrow says men are catching on to the benefits of aerobics and are working out just as much as women.

"Many times black Americans, in general, don't eat right and women don't like to work out because we sweat our hair out," she said.

"But I try to make it fun for everybody so they will come back. I tell everyone to go at their own pace and to just have fun."

## "Just do it"



Photo/James Brown

Karen Withrow (bottom center) leads people to better, healthier lifestyles through aerobic exercise. Above, students who have enrolled in class get a vigorous work out to get fit.

# African Dance Whips Wayward Thighs Into Shape

By April C. Turner  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

For 90 minutes every Wednesday, silence does not exist at Spirit Square. Drums pierce every corner of the room and the atmosphere is alive with laughter.

Christopher Thompson, 33, bounces around the room and the movement begins. Thompson is an African dance teacher, drummer and performer who holds a class each week at Spirit Square.

"Don't think about it, just do it. African dance is very free, so let go." As soon as those words leave his mouth, Thompson lets go and the students in class hold on tight as they swing away on the ride of their lives.



Christopher Thompson teaches dance.

Photo/Calvin Ferguson

"Let's go!" the rhythm speeds up and heels kick higher. "Ba dada da ba dada da ba! You got it, now start over." Thompson demonstrates the feeling. He shuttles back and forth between the dance floor and the drums and his energy level is high enough to raise the roof.

"African dance is the root of every form of communication. The very first form of face-to-face communication is African dance. That face-to-face communication is an expression. An energetic way to talk," Thompson said.

The dances he teaches are traditional combinations that are performed in Africa at ceremonies, festivals

and celebrations. The Spirit Square class focuses on the Sufini dance from the Senegambia region.

Students learn about African customs and how these customs have survived with African people in America.

But with this learning comes sweat. Knowledge is earned in Thompson's class. Students are encouraged to care about the movements to the dance and to commit to them fully.

Thompson pleads with his class to remember the steps from week to week and to respect the ancestors that were forbidden to do the same traditional steps during slavery.

The rewards of this hard work are cultural enlighten-

ment and healthier bodies.

Vickie Torrey, a participant in the class, says the benefits are well worth the work.

"I really believe in the positive advantages of African dance... in this class you get a pretty good workout, it's fun, very healthy and very healing," Torrey said.

Thompson has been teaching dance for 13 years. He says he started his career as a dancer under the tutelage of N.C. School of the Arts, Tobias School of the Arts, Cleo Parker Robinson and Chuck Davis.

Thompson recommends African dance as a stress-relieving tool and a great way to whip wayward thighs

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