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75 CENTS

Controversial slave ship exhibit docks at Spirit Square

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The Henrietta Marie slave ship exhibit will come to Charlotte's Spirit Square in November.

Dawn Womack, Spirit Square's vice president, was instrumental in securing the Henrietta Marie, which was spurned by Discovery Place and Museum of the New South. Those museums cited

the lack of scientific and cultural relevance as factors in rejecting the exhibit.



Womack

The ship's wreckage was discovered in 1972, nearly 300 years after it sank. The Henrietta Marie disappeared in

1700, 35 miles south of Key West, Fla. after dropping off its human cargo. It's the only known recovery of an actual slave ship in the Eastern Hemisphere.

The November showing makes Charlotte the third stop on the ship's national tour. The exhibit is currently showing in Detroit and will spend the summer in Chicago.

Womack said she decided to seek permission to bring the

Henrietta Marie's unique display of artifacts to Spirit Square after it was turned down by Discovery Place and Museum of the New South.

"I started to investigate why we weren't doing it in Charlotte," Womack said. "I couldn't find any reason why, so I made some calls."

She said the exhibit will appear in the Knight Gallery at Spirit Square Nov. 3 through Jan. 26. It will

include a series of educational lectures by African American history experts, including author Cornel West and Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Michael H. Cottman.

About \$35,000 is needed to fund the exhibit and the lecture series planned during the exhibit, Womack said. Spirit Square is providing \$5,000 for the project.

Womack said U.S. Rep. Mel Watt of Charlotte has already

agreed to help lead a grassroots fundraising drive and that dozens of callers have already promised to help.

Wendy Mills, a member of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers, said she's elated that the exhibit is coming to Charlotte. She's already planning presentation on African American inventions before and during slavery.

"The Henrietta Marie will See SHIP page 2A

Robinson set to run again for state post

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Vernon Robinson hopes his message of reforming how North Carolina educates its children will be better received during his second run for the state's highest education job.



Robinson

Robinson, a former Winston-Salem State University

professor, said public education isn't doing enough to ensure student safety or help them compete in the world economy. As Superintendent of Public Instruction, he would force them to do more or help put them out of business.

"Public schools have moved further and further away from parents so that it is no longer clear whose values are taught," he said. "Parents fear for the children's safety and many believe that their children are not learning enough to secure their future in the 21st century."

Robinson, who lost the Republican nomination for the same office in 1992, advocates empowering parents to make education decisions for students by eliminated public schools' domination of state funds.

"We must change the incentives in the system so that it responds to the parents as customers. We must tie education money to the child so that parents have the power to get better learning opportunities and take power from politicians and bureaucrats who don't even know the child's name."

Public schools should be forced to compete for students and funding, Robinson contends. Schools that prove to be safe learning environments will get more money than those who don't. That stance has its strongest support among conservatives, while teachers groups have been among its staunchest opponents. Robinson doesn't offer any apologies, saying that a free market approach to education would be especially beneficial for African Americans.

"Competition is the only likely way to restore discipline in the classroom, restore higher levels of academic achievement and to stop the erosion of parental authority," he said. "I am not an advocate for public schools or for private schools. I advocate defining public education as learning opportunities for children rather than tenure opportunities for bureaucrats."

BLACK, WHITE, OTHER



PHOTO/ CALVIN FERGUSON

Edward Shalati blends in physically with whites, but identifies more with African Americans. He's one of a growing number of mixed race people who claim ties to both races.

Ethnic category debate stirs passions

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Edward Shalati has been defacing government forms.

When he's asked to indicate his "race," he adds the word "mixed" in parenthesis, next to the "Other" category.

The federal government and most states only recognize four ethnic classifications - black, white, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian and Pacific Islander. There's also the added "Hispanic origin."

But for Shalati, 28, and a

growing number of people, race is not a matter of black, white or other, it's black and white, black and red or black and yellow.

"It's hard to define myself by race," said Shalati. "It's so hard trying to belong, but everyone is afraid of something. There's not a single race that is perfect. Race has nothing to do with behavior."

Shalati came to Charlotte 12 years ago from Europe, where he grew up with a black father from North Africa and a French mother.

In Europe and most parts of

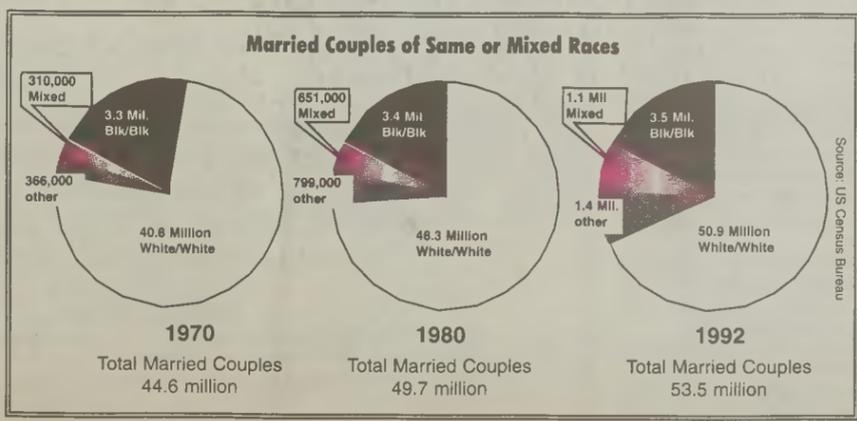
the world, people are not classified by race, but by religion or socio-economic status, Shalati said.

After coming to the United States, he became conscious of his racial status and has since identified himself with blacks more than whites.

"I'm being steered like a ship in the current," Shalati laments. "I've become part of it. It affects you in your everyday life."

Of course, the number of undocumented non-wedded

See MIXED page 2A



Center aids anti-drug programs

By Andrea R. Richards
THE CHARLOTTE POST

A northwest Charlotte drug prevention center is taking a new approach to helping its community.

Fighting Back Cluster One Resource Center, 2730 Rozzelle's Ferry Road, not only offers information on substance abuse prevention but now includes other services to residents. Services include summer internships for students, computer training, monthly guest speakers, job fairs and health care services.

By making access to general services available from one location, the center meets the needs of the 17 neighborhoods in the cluster.

"The resource center is really designed to serve as an anchor for all of the neighborhoods in this area," said Rock Johnson, a member of Fighting Back's executive committee. "Because different neighborhoods are at different levels of development, we've been able to learn, nurture and support each other."

Helping individuals solve problems without turning to drugs is the major objective of the center. However, the center also offers shelter for people who have been burned out of their homes, acts as a sign-up point for youngsters to join an innovative work program through the Job Training Partnership Act and educates residents on the importance of voting.

"People need to know that when we start voting again, then a lot of our other problems will be addressed," Johnson said. "We want people to understand more about the system and how it works. We want to help them make (the system) work for them."

Several services operate out of the facility: the Children's Law Center, Drug Education Center, Charter Pines Outreach Center, Project Aspire and a Charlotte-Mecklenburg community police substation.

The neighborhood assistant and service providers are eager about the new additions at the center.

"The cluster centers are basically the wave of the future," said Winston Lassiter, who works for Fighting Back. "Especially in the northeastern states, people can go to a specific center and get all of their needs met. This is something that is going to happen in years to come. Community centers are going to be the focal point for people to get their needs met."

Maceo Mayo, also a Fighting Back employee, agreed that having several services within the community center is bound to become popular.

"With the decentralization of services, you have a positive impact on high risk factors that manifest themselves in destructive behaviors, like substance abuse, crime and teenage pregnancies," he said. "We're pushing for them to have empowerment. Empowerment means not teaching them how to fish, but how to own the pond that the fish are in."

"Eventually, we can get to that point, and we'll be the least likely to engage in those destructive behaviors."

Inside



Braids part of rich heritage of hairstyles for African American women. Story on page 8A.

Editorials 4A-5A
Community News 3A
Lifestyles 8A
Religion 10A
Healthy Body/Healthy Mind 13A
Arts/Entertainment 1B
What's Up 5B
Sports 8B
Classified 12B

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