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The Blue

BANNER

WEATHER: Partly cloudy on Saturday. Mostly sunny on Sunday. Highs in mid 50s. Lows in mid 30s.

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Panelists Discuss Issues Of Racism On Campus

Todd Hagans Staff Writer

Panel and audience members of UNCA's forum on racism discussed last Thursday evening the existence of racism in today's society, and possible ways to eliminate it from society.

Dwight Mullen, chairman of UNCA's political science department, served as the host of the forum, which resembled the current talk show format. The forum, entitled "Racism: Fact or Fiction," was held in the old dining hall in the Highsmith Center at 7 p.m.

"This [the forum] is a conversation, and it is the beginning, I think, of possibly identifying some common ground, as well as identifying some issues that we need to discuss," said Mullen. "Theoretically, there really is no race. We could just as well choose some other variable than skin color. This is an issue that is perpetually found in this country, the issue of race. Obviously, we have not solved it."

During the forum, the panel members were asked by Mullen to define racism, and asked to give a personal experience of racism in their lives. Members of the audience were given the opportunity to ask the panel members questions, and make statements about racism. The panel of 12 people consisted of UNCA students, UNCA faculty, and members of the community.

"Racism is a systematic way of oppressing a group of people based on race, color, creed, or in other cases, financial status," said Tarasai Samuels, a member of the panel, and a UNCA education and spanish major. "It has to do with a group of people who are in a position of power to oppress people."

"I think racism is alive and well here at UNCA, but I'd like to make a distinction between active and passive racism," said Cathy Mitchell, a member of the panel, and chairman of UNCA's mass communication department. "Very few people would actually look you in the face and make a racist statement, or do not when I am present as a faculty member. The lack of African-American faculty, and the lack of African-American students here tells me that we have a serious problem."

"Racism is alive and well in Buncombe County, and it is alive and well within the setting that we are in now," said John Hayes, a member of the panel, and a member of the Asheville community. "You need to turn loose of the fear because the only reason you are holding on to that racism, [is because] it helps you sleep better at night."

"People have been hurt by racism in the past," said Ken Betsalel, a member of the panel, and an assistant professor in UNCA's political science department. "Some people have been treated less than equal, and other people think that certain



A panel of faculty, students and community members discuss racism.

Photo by Tanya Melton

groups get favoritism because of their race. There were a wide variety of perspectives. Not everyone [at the forum] agreed, and I think that was also important. Race relations aren't going to be improved, institutions aren't going to be improved, if people remain silent."

"I still don't know what racism is. I really have absolutely no handle of the concept of racism, even after all that has been said," said Deryl Howard, a

See "Racism," page 8

Man Charged With Murder and Arson Indicted In Mountain Trace Apartment Fire

Will Rothschild Staff Writer

Jamie Lamont Smith, the man charged with arson and two counts of murder in connection with fires at two Asheville apartment complexes, was indicted Mar. 6 on charges stemming from a third fire, set Dec. 11 in a UNCA student's bedroom closet at Mountain Trace Apartments.

Smith, 19, was indicted on one count of first-degree arson, one count of second-degree burglary, and one count of felonious larceny by a grand jury, according to court records. The Mountain Trace fire was set in the bedroom closet of former UNCA student Beth Reneau. UNCA leases Mountain Trace apartments for students who want university housing, but do not receive an on-campus residence.

With Smith still awaiting a grand jury hearing on the other charges against him, Asheville police and the district attorney's office are saying little about the Mountain Trace investigation and subsequent indictment.

"There is not a whole lot I can tell you," Detective Kevin Taylor said Monday. "We believe there was someone with him, but I cannot comment on that. That person will probably be indicted in the next few weeks."

The Mountain Trace fire was set 10 days before the fatal Grace Apartment blaze Smith is charged with setting, and more than a month before the Jan. 18 fire Smith is charged with starting at Woodberry Apartments. Taylor made it clear no one at the Mountain Trace complex saw Smith the night of the fire.

"I don't know where you got your information, but the idea that eyewitnesses saw him there is not correct," Taylor said.

"There is not a whole lot I can tell you. We believe there was someone with him, but I cannot comment on that. That person will probably be indicted in the next few weeks."-- Asheville Police Detective Kevin Taylor

However, Taylor did say investigators do not believe Reneau knew Smith. "It doesn't appear there was any connection [between Reneau and Smith]," Taylor said. "It appeared to be a random act, other than the fact, and this is speculation, that he lived down the street."

At the time of his arrest, Smith listed an Edgewood Knoll Apartments address.

Reneau, who left UNCA and returned to her parent's home in Raeford, N.C. before the spring semester started, has refused to comment on the incident.

Taylor would not comment on how investigators linked Smith to the Mountain Trace fire, saying only that Smith became a suspect sometime after the other two fires he is charged with starting — one at Grace Apartments on Chestnut Street and one at Woodberry Apartments on Alexander Street.

The Dec. 21 fire at Grace Apartments killed a 27-year-old man and injured five others. Officials also believe Smith set the Jan. 18 fire at Woodberry Apartments in an attempt to cover up the murder of Kelli Froemke, the 19-year-old woman who lived there. The Woodberry fire, like the one at Mountain Trace, was set in a bedroom closet.

Programs Focus On Opening Eyes To Rape And Violence

Chris Small Staff Writer

Rape Awareness Week events are underway on campus, offering students a chance to participate in discussions, attend a candlelight vigil, create and view artwork, and learn more about sex in the 90s.

There are programs planned that address issues about violence, including rape and domestic violence, and information will be available in the lobby of

Highsmith and Ramsey Library throughout the week.

"I think it goes beyond stopping it (violence), said Jennifer Ledford, resident director at UNCA.

"I think it goes to being knowledgeable about it, and being educated to know whether it is happening, to know what's available out there as far as resources to help us, and to be knowledgeable enough to help a friend."

The risk for rape is four times higher

for women ages 16-24, the primary dating age, than for any other population group, according to statistics in the book *I Never Called It Rape* by Robin Warshaw.

The most common form of rape is acquaintance rape, a form of sexual assault that occurs between people who know each other, whether from dating relationships or otherwise. According to statistics in Warshaw's book, if you are a woman, your risk of being raped by someone you know is four times greater than your risk of being raped by a stranger.

HELMATE, Inc., a domestic violence service, and the Rape Crisis Center in Asheville are involved in the events on campus. The Clothes Line Project was on display in the Highsmith Student Lounge, symbolizing violence against women through powerful messages on a variety of colorful T-shirts, representing different types of violence.

The UNCA Counseling Center is also involved in providing service and information for victims of current or past incidents of rape, and to provide extra support for those who need it.

"In many situations, having more than one counselor is confusing. In this kind of situation, I think it's just having twice as much support, said Dr. Margaret Weshner, Director of the UNCA Counseling Center.

"Sometimes students don't want to go off campus (to Rape Crisis), sometimes they would rather go off campus, and we work with them on that and try to figure out what is the best situation for them."

Rape Crisis does offer a support

group for victims, and so it is a good resource for students, according to Weshner. Weshner also stresses that any contact with the Counseling Center at UNCA or similar off-campus services is confidential.

Tonight at 7:30 p.m. there will be a program called *Sex Talk* held in the Side Door, below the Highsmith lobby. It is an opportunity to ask questions to a panel of staff and faculty concerning relationships and sex. Students have the option of either asking questions directly to staff, or writing questions down on paper.

"I think, very often, people don't talk to each other about their expectations and their limits, and I think that we need to learn so much more about doing that," said Weshner.

Another important factor besides miscommunication in acquaintance-rape incidents is alcohol. According to the survey statistics in Warshaw's book, about 75 percent of the men and at least 55 percent of the women involved in acquaintance rapes had been drinking or taking drugs just before the attack.

"I hope that this week will be an eye-opener for a lot of students, and they will take more notice of the relationships that they are in and the decisions that they make about those relationships," said Ledford.

There will be a candlelight vigil tonight at 9 p.m. for all students, staff, faculty, and community to demonstrate their support against rape. It will meet in front of the new Dining Hall.

It involves a walk around the campus and a gathering on the quad to hear a speaker, and singing from *Wild Mountain Thyme*, the Asheville Women's Chorus.



The Wall is displayed in Highsmith Center this week. It is one of several exhibits intended to bring more public awareness to the issues of rape and violence, according to organizers.

Photo by Lat Ray