



Katie Allen - Staff Photographer

Hart Crane, James "Bo" Ferguson and political science chair Linda Cornett talk in a meet and greet at a reception celebrating Ferguson's civil rights work.

Local civil rights leader heads equality efforts

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Fifty years after the initial desegregation of Pack Library, the UNC Asheville Intercultural Center will join forces with the community and prominent civil rights attorney James "Bo" Ferguson to shape public awareness surrounding remaining racial inequality in Western North Carolina.

"There are divisions," said Deborah Miles, director for the center for diversity education. "Legal standings, economic divides, who goes to college, who gets internships, race and networking influences all these things."

With the city of Asheville celebrating 50 years of racial equality in public libraries, Miles said he feels like now is the time for the current inequalities to be brought to light and social changes to be made.

"Movements don't just happen, all kinds of things have to take place," Miles said. "We are still in that progression. We haven't gotten (to equality) yet."

This semester, UNCA has brought on Ferguson as an honorary professor.

Ferguson is a founding member of the Asheville Student Committee on Racial Equality, the student organization which fought for African American

"It was a position born in necessity and opportunity that we were able to get involved and make a difference, and we did."

James "Bo" Ferguson
civil rights lawyer

equality in the '50s and '60s.

Ferguson said he hopes empowering students with communication skills will increase civic engagement concerning civil rights issues, as it did dur-

ing the civil rights movement.

"We wanted to become involved. We wanted to learn about the problem, negotiate the problem and then take the proper direct action to resolve it," Ferguson said.

These steps are the building blocks towards a program to increase opportunities for minority groups and equalize the social and economical disparities, according to Miles.

Miles said she hopes to use the progress of the movement to instruct a conference of middle-schoolers and UNCA students. Ferguson said the conference will improve networking skills and give students the tools to become leaders in the public

arena.

"The cool thing about AS-CORE is that it is a peer-to-peer model," Miles said. "We hope to instrument various programs that will allow children to be mentored, build networks, prepare for college and teach them how to identify the problems and solve them."

Involvement in the programs supports diversity education for students and teachers, Ferguson said.

"Sometimes teachers are the only guidance students have," said Devin Gaynor, a UNCA junior and a teaching fellow. "The bottom line is to teach kids to have healthy relationships see **RIGHTS** on page 4