

## AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WNC

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dresses belonged to people who had some connection to Asheville, Waters said.

Attorney James Ferguson, a prominent civil rights attorney, was the first speaker. He was one of the principle organizers of the civil rights organization Asheville Student Commission on Racial Equality (ASCORE). The second year speaker was North Carolina Senator Floyd Mckissick Jr., whose father was a prominent civil rights leader, was born and raised in Asheville. Judge Yvonne Evans, this year's keynote speaker, went to the all-girls Allen School that was in Asheville, according to Waters.

In her closing remarks, the Hendersonville native recalls her yesterday, today and tomorrow.

"I was telling Phyllis before we started that there was a little community on the North Carolina-South Carolina border in Gaston County called Kingdom of the Happy Land, and I had been interested in learning more about their history, so that is my yesterday," Evans said. "My today is my involvement as a superior court judge at the state, but that's about to end because I have completed 25 years of service in December, and I will retire. My tomorrow is open."

As she goes into her tomorrow, Evans said she has a lot of concerns. There are changes being made in the general assembly about how the public may appoint their judges. Evans said she is concerned the changes are based on politics and not the concerns of the people.

Evans then detailed her concerns for African Americans entering the court system under charges based around drug use. A cycle seems to occur, where addicts not treated, forced out of public housing and abandoned by their families.

The only option for many, she said, is for them to keep using and returning to jails or prisons. She ended her discussion with advice for all African Americans to make reading a family value.

"Reading is just so fundamental, and if there could be a way that we entice our children to enjoy reading by third grade," Evans said. "That'd be so important."

The second day focused on African American Appalachian culture, exploring music, public media image, and theological practices with three panels throughout the day.

Ajani Purnell, a 20 year old junior at UNCA, said statistics presented at the conference confirmed observations he's made as a black person living in Asheville.

"I felt a sense of ease being in

a room where people who looked like me were able to exchange ideas freely," Purnell said. "This was a sharp contrast to the mostly white classes I am a part of."

The rooms of each panel and presentation at the conference were filled with people from diverse demographics. UNCA students sat among their professors, community leaders and citizens of a wide range of age, race and background.

Purnell said being a part of conversations with black people from the Asheville community was a unique experience. He said getting their perspective on how the city was changing was eye opening.

During the last day, the conference room was still buzzing with the same excitement as the first evening. Five panels went on throughout the day, with topics centered around the future.

Nicole Townsend, local organizer in Asheville and administrative assistant at Dogwood Alliance, spoke about bringing a fresh way of getting results in her keynote address.

Participatory budgeting, accountability conversations and learning from the national organization Black Lives Matter were a few ideas she offered.

One of the panels enlisted seven UNCA graduates to speak on their vision for the future with the State

of Black Asheville project completed in 2014 in mind. Dwight Mullen, professor at UNCA, lead the potent discussion.

The nine panelists not only offered opinions, but backed up their opinion with data and observation.

Janessa Slaughter, UNCA alumna, answers Mullen's final question with a sigh.

"So talking about adaptations, I'm going to speak about a radical and a disappointed optimist," Slaughter said. "What Stephanie called a good 'ole boy system, I'm going to call capitalism. And it's working exactly how it's supposed to and it's not going to stop itself."

A perspective of a different sentiment yet similar call to action was offered by UNCA alumna Kate Wilton.

"As the population of this city increases, I don't think this system needs to adapt," Wilton said. "It needs to lean on what it's doing a little bit more. It's doing that very effectively. It's working as it's intended to, and those of us who are aware of the problem need to reach out to those of us who are not aware of the problem and strategize, and work together to move forward."

Mullen's closing statement was simple.

"You all do me proud."

## HALLOWEEN

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Lawrence in downtown Asheville, said All Saints' Day precedes All Souls' Day.

"All Saints' Day is Feast Day on which the Catholic Church remembers and honors all the saints who have been designated by the Church as worthy to emulate or imitate so we can grow in holiness," Girton said. "All Souls' Day follows on the next day when we honor and remember all the dead who have gone before us to eternal life."

She said the difference between the two is All Saints' Day, celebrat-

ed on Nov.1, honors those who have been deemed as Saints who serve as holy examples to Catholics.

All Souls' Day remembers the rest of loved ones who have passed. Celebrations include mass held on All Saints Day' and picnics at the graves of deceased loved ones.

According to the NEH, these practices were then adapted by Mexicans to Día de los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead, when Spanish Catholics conquered Mexico. Their festivities also include festivals, parades and picnics in honor of the dead.

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