

The Purpose **The Struggle** The Victory

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Ground will soon be broken for the new free-standing Sonja Haynes Stone Black Culture Center, the first building on campus named solely after an African-American woman. The event is scheduled to take place on Thursday, April 26 at 10 a.m. at the Bell Tower parking lot. The new building, which is a 36,000 square foot, three-story building located on South Road, will be most convenient for faculty, staff and especially students. The new facility will house the offices of a number of programs and organizations here on UNC's campus such as an office suite on the second floor for the Upward Bound Program and an office suite on the third floor

for the Institute of African-American Research. The offices for the UNC Gospel Choir and Harmonyx, Ebony Readers Onyx Theater and Black Ink will also be housed on the third floor of the building. Some of the other features of the facility will include a multi-purpose room with an adjoining dance studio, a 400-seat auditorium, and an independent conference room for general use.

The total cost of the building is \$9 million, with \$6 million coming from the University's Clayton Grant. The free-standing Sonja Haynes Stone Black Culture Center is sure to be a place of comfort for the entire university but what was the struggle behind the now future existence of the free-standing BCC?

The fight started in the early '90s when the African-American students, members of the Black Student

Movement and Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone fought for a Black Cultural Center so that contributions of African-Americans would be acknowledged. The hancellor at that time, Paul Hardin, refused to acknowledge the need for a Black Cultural Center. The students fought harder and the protests continued to grow even after the death of Dr. Stone in

August of 1991. The protests for the Center were nationally recognized when Spike Lee and members of the Nation of Islam protested at the Dean Smith Center. Debates over the purpose of the Center caused a lot of controversy on campus.

Supporters of the Center argued that the Center would give every student the opportunity to learn about "the missing pages of the American Experience." Opponents argued that a free-standing Center would be a "separatist" institution and would re-segregate the campus community. Other opponents argued that the Center was unnecessary and a waste of money. Those in support of the Center continued to fight despite what the opponents said or thought. The establishment of the current BCC took place, while the struggle for a free-standing BCC continued.

The naming of the Center was also a major controversy. The students wanted to name the Center after Dr. Sonja Haynes Stone, while the administration wanted to name it after a benefactor, which is the usual procedure of naming campus buildings. Because students continued to fight to name the Center after Dr. Stone, the University refused to actively campaign for donations for the free-standing BCC.

The good news for the BCC came in 1998. That year it was announced that because of the donation of David Clayton, an alumnus who left a sizeable, yet unspecified amount, the free-standing Black Cultural Center would be built. Donations were also contributed to the effort and today we are preparing for groundbreaking of the new Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center. The beauty and elegance of this building will certainly mean much more to the University because of the struggle that took place in order for this building to stand in the future.

