

CAMPUS NEWS

ECSU celebrates Black history

Penny praises blacks, whites who carried 'torch of freedom'

Speaking to a half-empty auditorium during ECSU's Black History Month Assembly, prominent Elizabeth City attorney Ronald Penny praised the contributions black and white Americans have made to black history, and called on ECSU's students to become more involved in the political process.

"People marched and bled for the right to vote, they felt the power of water hoses and billy clubs, and people like Medger Evers and Schwerner and Goodwin were killed over the right to vote," said Penny, a graduate of A & T University and the North Carolina School of Law.

"On voting day if you're hanging out on the yard or in the cafeteria, you aren't carrying the torch. We must go out and make a difference."

Penny admitted that he had little interest in history when he was in college; however, he added that years later, realizing the importance of history, he went to the library to learn what he had missed.

"This nation was changed by little people you never hear about, who carried the torch of freedom in their hearts," Penny said. "They pass this torch onto you. We must learn from history, and not forget it."

Penny said that a knowledge of Black history "gives all Americans a true picture of the nation, and it gives us the opportunity to learn that this nation was made great by the sweat, toil and sacrifices of all Americans."

Penny praised famous black heroes Crispus Attucks, and Educators Hugh Cale and Booker T. Washington, who founded institutions to "help the disadvantaged."

"A knowledge of African Ameri-

can history helps us know that before Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*, men like Charles Drew and George Washington Carver invented the right thing," Penny said. "And it helps us to know that that before Janet Jackson's 'Rhythm Nation,' men like Adam Clayton Powell and John O'Hara were sitting in Congress setting a rhythm for a nation that did not have a social conscience."

Penny also praised the "unsung heroes" of history, black and white, who have "carried the torch of freedom."

"This nation was made great by itinerant ministers who stood in poorly lighted halls and ignited the flame of freedom in the hearts of hundreds. The destiny of the nation was shaped by carpenters and brickmasons who carried the torch of freedom in their hearts, maids who bowed down so their children would not have to bow down to anyone."

Black Americans were not alone in the struggle, said Penny, adding that many white Americans helped, "joining in to contribute to history."

Penny praised the efforts of white abolitionists, freedom riders, and civil rights workers who died on behalf of the struggle for racial equality.

"During the Greensboro sit-ins, when three students were nervously challenging the segregation in the city," said Penny, "an elderly white lady, who was living in an era when you'd expect her to spit and curse the three young students, instead went up to them and putting her hand on their shoulders, she said, 'sons just sit here, you should have done it twenty years ago.'"

Penny called on ECSU students to get involved in the "political process" and work to change inequitable living

conditions in Eastern North Carolina.

"From the cradle to the grave, the quality of life is defined by the color of our skin and where we live. It's our duty to change the course, the destiny, the future of North Carolina. The torch is yours. You must carry the torch to change the course of the future."

Following Penny's speech, ECSU Chancellor Dr. Jimmy Jenkins praised Penny's contributions to the struggle for equality in Pasquotank County.

"I know what happens when you stand up to do the right thing," the Chancellor continued. "There are those who will pull you down. In fact, they will threaten your very life."

Jenkins said the University is "proud to celebrate black history month, not because we want to be separate, but because America can not be all that it can be until we recognize all people who made it what it is."

Commenting on the low turnout of students, the Chancellor said, "This hall should have been packed today. This is serious business. We are about the business of changing America."

"Look around. People are giving their lives for freedom. How can you take this so nonchalantly? There are people who died so you can be nonchalant. This is not fun and games; this is war—war for the inalienable rights of life against ignorance, bigotry and racism."

"We must have black history month until the true history of America is written. To let us know that our fathers who sharecroppers, and our mothers who scrubbed floors so we can stand here today. Are you going to idle that time away? That is immoral."

During the assembly the University Choir performed "I Thank You Jesus and Fare You Well," directed by Billy C. Hines.



Photo by Jackie Roundtree

Charlotte Peebles, Lynette Bond, Angela Jernigan and Geneca Sutton celebrate Martin Luther King's birthday with posters designed by Jackee Roundtree.

'Know your history, ignore myths' Ms. Redford tells Honors students

ECSU's Honors students presented a Black History forum February 15 in Johnson Hall.

The guest speaker was Dorothy Redford, an ECSU instructor and internationally renowned author and black historian.

Redford spoke on the importance of black pride and of common misconceptions people have had about black history.

"We were taught that we a docile people who needed a paternalistic system to take care of us, for which we should be grateful," said Redford, "However, history teaches us nothing could be farther from the truth."

Redford said "we were taught that Africans are barbarians, but Black Africa is one of the most highly developed nations on the earth."

"Once you know who you are as a people, and you see how far you've come as a people, you will know that there is nothing this world can throw at us that will be worse than what we have already experienced."

Redford exhorted the students to ignore "myths about black America" and to question statisticians who present negative information about blacks.

"When somebody starts talking about how bad we're doing, start telling them how good you're doing."

"Know your history, know who you are," continued Redford. "Once you know who you are, your achievements will surprise you."

Redford ended her speech by saying, "You are the future. You are our leaders. Your challenge for the 90's is to start a positive dialogue."

"Find the good and praise it." During the forum Herbert Johnson presented a dramatic reading of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Shelia Nixon performed "The Black National Anthem," and Herbert Johnson narrated a slide presentation.

King's dream 'still a nightmare for many, Carson tells ECSU

By Kimberly Robinson

The ECSU family honored the memory of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. in an assembly program January 15 in Moore Hall Auditorium.

Senior Class President Reggie Carson was the guest speaker.

"We, my friends, are a struggling people who keep struggling to live King's dream," Carson said. "And one day that dream will be ours."

Pointing out that Dr. King "would be so proud of us today," Carson added, "We have presidential candidates, mayors of metropolitan cities, leaders of defense and educators like the ones at our own university. We are truly blessed to have dreamed and achieved those dreams to get to where we are now."

Carson was quick to add, however, "The struggle is not over. For so many

of us the dream is a nightmare. In Washington D.C. where hundreds of homeless celebrated Christmas alone in the streets of our nation's capitol, the dream remains a nightmare. To children growing up in the gang-infested streets of Los Angeles, where you fear for your life while walking to get an education, the dream remains a nightmare. For the family of Michael Griffith who watched the evening news to hear their son was murdered in Howard Beach, the dream remains a nightmare."

Carson praised all of the "achievers and dreamers" in Black history, including the "the pen of Langston Hughes, the leadership of Frederick Douglas, the music of Quincy Jones, the piano of Duke Ellington and the science of Ernest Just and the patience of Nelson Mandela."

"We must press on an achieve all we can in life," Carson said. "If you

can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl. But by all means keep moving and that rainbow will be yours."

Earlier that morning, ECSU students joined faculty and members of the community for a memorial march from the G.R. Little Library to City hall, where King was honored by local civic leaders. Speakers included W.C. Witherspoon, County Commissioner, Elizabeth City Mayor Sidney Oman, Dr. Jimmy Jenkins, ECSU Chancellor, Rev. Earl Hunt, President of the Elizabeth City NAACP, and ECSU SGA President, Karen Richardson.

"All activities and programs were a great success," said Dr. Willie Sullivan, Chairperson of University's Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee. "I was pleased that so many people took part in the march," Sullivan added. "This year's celebration was one of the best ever."



Photo by Richard McInire

ECSU senior Kelvin Brown's expression captures the seriousness of the civil rights struggle past and present. Brown, an active member of ECSU's NAACP, is shown here carrying a poster of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. Brown was one of nearly 300 students who marched to Elizabeth City city hall on January 15th in honor of King's birthday.

Butler next in line for renovations

By Eric Jones

Although ECSU officials say Butler Hall is "next in line" for renovations, they aren't sure when the work will actually take place.

The problem, officials say, is where to house the students during renovations.

"Elizabeth City is not a metropolitan area, so there's not that much housing," said Kenneth Roberts, the University's Director of Housing.

"We decided to go ahead and put students in Butler, because there was no place to put them during renovations."

The residence hall, built in 1926 and last renovated in 1983, will have new bathrooms and a new plumbing system installed, according to Dr. Leon White, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

The building will also have its floors improved.

"We are trying to get some temporary housing off campus," White said. "We are in the same predicament as other other families that are on a waiting list."

Students living in Butler have complained about problems with plumbing and heating.

"As a student living on campus I feel conditions in Butler Hall are very unacceptable from a living standpoint," said Eric Hall, a senior computer science major. "Upon entering the university, I was not aware that I had to bring my own hot water to take a shower, or my own heater."

"As someone paying out-of-state tuition, I think I deserve better. And I think it would make the University look better and more attractive to prospective students."

In answer to this, White said, "Students need to take more responsibility for the building. Whenever hot water goes out, the students should tell the dorm director, so the problem can be taken care of immediately. If students don't tell the dorm directors, they won't know."

White said dormitories are scheduled to be renovated every six years. Mitchell Lewis was last renovated in 1987, and Bias in 1986, Wamack in 1981, and Symera in 1983.

ECSU houses 65% of its students, White said, and pointed out that it as a high percentage relative to other schools in the UNC system. "No other school houses more than 40% of its students."

In the fall of 1988 the University

began taking steps to ease the housing shortage—constructing the Park Street apartments, and the honors dorm on Hoffer Street.

The University plans to build a new \$3 million residential dorm southeast of the New Complex, to house about 200 female students.

Earlier, officials had reported the new dorm would be completed in the summer of 1990, however construction on the building was held up "because of changes and requirements for the design," according to Roger McLean, Vice Chancellor for Business and Financial Affairs.

"The hold up was behind our control," McLean said.

Construction on the new dormitory will begin within two or three months, according to McLean, who added the new dorm is scheduled for completion in the spring of 1991.

"We are pushing it as hard as we can," he said.

The new dormitory will be approximately 50,000 square feet, according to Skip Saunders, acting building systems engineer for ECSU.

"The ceilings will be higher and the rooms will be brighter, and it will have an elevator and common kitchen area for students," he said.



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