

Black writers and history celebrated during Feb. teleconference at ECSU

By Bruce D. Copeland

"If anyone should analyze our people, it should be us," said Terri McMillan, author of *Waiting to Exhale*. McMillan was one of five black literary figures who served as panel members for a live special broadcast via satellite viewed by ECSU students on Feb. 3, in Johnson Hall.

"Beyond the Dream V: A Celebration of Black History—The Writers, The Stories, The Legacy" was a two-hour teleconference airing from Washington, D.C. Other panel members were Nikki Giovanni, acclaimed poet and speaker, Houston Baker, President of the Modern Language Association, and novelists Charles Johnson and Marita Golden.

Most of the panel's discussion centered around questions and comments phoned in by students throughout the nation.

The panel agreed that black literature was, and still is, virtually non-existent in our school system.

"There is a complete contrast between my high school education and my college education," said poet Nikki Giovanni who went from a predominately white high school, to Fisk University, a historically black school in Tennessee.

Before entering college, panel members were introduced to black literature

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Nikki Giovanni

through the oral tradition of storytelling. "Storytelling is universal," said Johnson. "It has deep African roots."

"Inventing and re-inventing possibilities is something black people are and have been good at," said Golden.

A female caller stirred emotions on the panel when she criticized

McMillan's bestseller, *Waiting to Exhale*, for putting down black men and "airing all our (black's) dirty laundry." McMillan explained to the caller that the four women in her novel were fictional characters who described fictional male characters in their lives, although she added, "A fiction is somewhat autobiographical."

"If men don't like the image, they need to change the reality," said Giovanni. "Why is it that black people can't analyze each other and maintain?"

"Power is important and we must have it," said Baker, stressing the power in black literature. Baker also advocated the

importance of mandating Black literature at white universities.

"It is important for black students to reach out to one another at white universities," said Golden. "Organizing groups of people with a common interest is important for individuals who want to make a change, particularly in schools and colleges."

Golden and McMillan suggested that students interested in becoming writers should form literary groups to share ideas.

"Many black students write, but don't read," said McMillan. "In order to fully appreciate the written word, you must be knowledgeable of it."

Johnson added, "Writing is not a profession, but a passion."

The group discussed the controversial movie by Spike Lee, *Malcolm X*. Giovanni said she would have had less problems with the movie if it was entitled *Malcolm Little* instead of *Malcolm X*.

"Spike Lee is the last person who should

have tampered with Malcolm's story," Giovanni said, adding that Spike Lee portrayed Malcolm's family as "dufuses."

Giovanni said she felt the movie was inaccurate, and the women were treated poorly "as usual."

"How can you do a movie about Malcolm X and not discuss his relationships with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Marcus Garvey?"

Baker disagreed, saying he enjoyed the movie and felt that Spike did a fine job, considering all that Malcolm's life encompassed. Other panel members agreed with Baker, noting Spike Lee's importance to black people.

Another segment of the conference showed how the relocation of blacks after World War II, The Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Panther Movement, inspired a whole new generation of black writers.

The panel praised the contributions of black writers like James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Toni Morrison and Zora Neal Hurston.

"Beyond the Dream V" was dedicated to the memory of Alex Haley, whose last television appearance was on "Beyond the Dream IV." Haley was also named by panel members as one of their most influential writers.

ECSU honors memory of Martin Luther King Jr.

By Tarsha White

"This is a day for love, not hate," declared Dr. Willie Sullivan, during ECSU's ceremony honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. held Jan. 18, in Moore Hall Auditorium.

Sullivan, who presided at the ceremony, said Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday was a day when people "of all religions, classes, and stations, put aside their differences to honor the slain civil rights leader."

Sullivan introduced the event's guest speaker, W.C. Witherspoon, as "a drum major for peace."

Witherspoon, Chairman of the Pasquotank County Board of Commissioners, praised King as a "man who saw good in his enemies and good in all mankind, and he urged all mankind to come together to love one another."

Witherspoon said that Dr. King "encouraged individuals to be the best that they can be." And he recalled the glory of Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington in 1964.

"Here were blacks and whites together, people of all religions and races holding hands," said Witherspoon. "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said that he had a dream that one day down in Alabama, with the vicious racism going on, he hoped his four little children would be able to sit

down with other children as brothers." Witherspoon said that King's dreams have yet to become a reality in the country today.

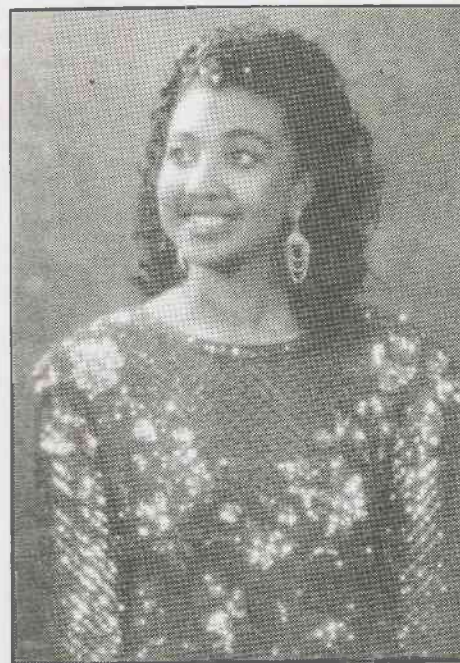
"When we look around the United States, although progress has been made, we still have much to do to accomplish the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

Witherspoon called on his listeners to "work together to make his (King's) dream a reality, that this world and nation would one day rise up to live out the meaning of its creed. We need a few black men who are proud to be people of color. We look to you, young people, for that kind of collective leadership, the kind who will catapult America into living her creed. It's all up to you."

King worked for and gave his life for humanity," said Witherspoon. He was a man of power and love who looked down on no one. If we are to be true men and women we must love each other. We must not let hatred enter our minds and hearts."

Following Witherspoon's speech, ECSU Chancellor Dr. Jimmy Jenkins praised the speaker "as a great leader," and he urged students to "change yourself inside, which will lead to a change in the world."

The ceremony at ECSU followed a morning march from the University to Elizabeth City town hall where several speakers eulogized King,



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