

Students urged to 'help tackle life'

by James L. Perry

"I came to recruit students to join the team that helps tackle life," declared the Honorable Jerrauld Jones during the Honors Convocation, held April 18 in Moore Hall. "If you look around it is not difficult to find areas where you're needed."

In his speech Jones, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, focused on America's social ills and the need for students to get more involved in helping to relieve them.

"The struggle for equal opportunity and equal justice continues and indeed has never seemed more necessary than it does today," said Jones. He addressed problems like homelessness, poverty, unemployment, and the rise in the amount of prison inmates.

"These ugly disparities must stop," said Jones. "They represent a growing nightmare and not an expanding dream."

"The winds of hostility, hate, hurt, and violence are still blowing across our land. We can not forget the Mark Furman tapes or the Rodney King video, even 33 years after Martin Luther King marched on Washington."

Jones told the students that they rep-

resent the future of the nation.

"I believe that you are the force of positive change in this country," he said. "We need you and we need you now. What kind of world do you want to live in—a world where genocide is still practiced, where thousands of your fellow citizens are homeless and children have to be fingerprinted in case they disappear?"

Jones urged his listeners to have confidence in themselves and their possibilities as well as in their schools, churches and people around them.

"You have confidence deep down within you. It might not always seem so but believe me it is there. Because confidence allows us to do what we dream to do and be what we dream to be. It allows us to be more than average."

Jones recalled his mother saying, "Being average is just as close to the bottom as it is to the top." He stressed the importance of establishing goals and having convictions, and urged his listeners to understand that their successes as well as their failures build confidence.

"Our successes convince us that it is possible to succeed in the future. Our



Photo by Jamie Jordan

Stacey L. Baker (right) presents the E.M. Spellman Award to Latisha Edwards during the Honors Convocation, held April 18. Edwards, a senior English/ News Media major, received the award for her accomplishments as news editor of The Compass, ECSU's award-winning student newspaper.

failures tell us it is possible to survive and go on. Both are absolutely necessary in developing that sense of assurance that in the end, things are going to be okay."

Jones also advised students to get in touch with their inner lives.

"Listen to the voice inside you," he said. "It usually gives you the best advice. Just have faith in yourself."

The Honors Convocation is held each year to honor students who have achieved academic excellence during the year. Seniors Tonya Blair, Helga Brown, NaKeisha Sylver, Kimberly Walston and Roslyn White received the Chancellor's Distinguished Em-

blem Awards, Scholar's Blazer.

Certificates of merit were presented to 56 students in the Honors Program. Students also received awards from individual departments and campus clubs and organizations.

Awards were presented by Dr. Rachel W. Gragson, chairperson of the Honors Council, Dr. Carol C. Jones, director of the Honors Program, and Stacey Baker, a sophomore in the Honors Program. Dr. Helen M. Caldwell, vice chancellor of academic affairs, presided.

The University Choir performed "Sweet Home," Tonekia Stephens, soloist.

White student crosses over amid jeers; 'In my heart I know I am a S.G. Rho'

by Yushawnda Thomas

The crowd stirred restlessly as the spring '96 line of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. approached their blue and gold plot to introduce themselves to the ECSU campus.

However, this probate show—an annual Greek tradition on the yard—wasn't a typical event. Number four on the line was Dana Wood, a white honor student at ECSU.

"There was a guy directly in front of me while we were doing our probate show saying, 'You need to get it together,'" recalled Wood. "He said, 'You don't know what you're doing. What are you doing out here? You look stupid.' But I just kept on doing my stuff. What he said pumped me up even more."

The night Wood crossed over, she became the first white member of the Delta Tau chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho.

Black sororities and fraternities were established because blacks were unwelcome in white Greek-letter organizations. Since then, black Greek organizations have established themselves nationally and created a lasting legacy.

"I don't look at people based on the color of their skin"

— Dana Wood

It is a tradition in which few white students participate.

Many black Greeks say their organizations should be reserved for black people only.

"It's not right for Caucasians to join what we strived so hard and worked hard for to obtain on our own after being turned away from them," said Christie L. Kearney, a member of Zeta Phi Beta.

"We need to keep something whole to ourselves," said Andrae Brown, a member of Omega Psi Phi. "My goal is to help black men better themselves."

"For so long blacks haven't really had anything to call their own," said Stacia McFadden, a Delta. "I don't think that whites should try to break into our tradition."

Wood, however, defended the

sorority's willingness to admit her as a member.

"I realize that black sororities were founded to promote and encourage the black woman to be a better person," she said, "but I feel I can educate the black woman on the white woman. If I want to be enriched and learn from you, why not give me the opportunity? And why not take the opportunity to learn from me?"

"I hope to bring something more to my sorority," continued Wood. "I don't look at people based on the color of their skin."

Members of black sororities and frats insist that they are not carrying on a racist tradition by excluding whites, but promoting black unity and leadership. If black Greeks freely admitted whites and other minorities they say some of their valuable traditions

would be lost.

"I respect the fact that blacks want to hold on to their sororities and fraternities because they want something pure to pass on for generations to come," said Wood. "However, you are passing on a prejudiced point of view."

Some Greeks are ambivalent about admitting white members in historically black Greek-letter organizations.

"I have two views," said Omar Marks, a member of Phi Beta Sigma. "I don't think they (whites) should be in black fraternities or sororities because of the basis those fraternities or sororities were founded on. But to some degree we should open up the doors to them because then maybe they will understand us more as people."

One Greek said she had no problems with whites joining her organization.

"I don't think we're going to get anywhere if we keep saying this is black and this is white," said this member of Alpha Kappa Alpha. "Things are not going to be resolved."

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