

*The debate continues:*

## Chambers justified to encourage white enrollment

Julius L. Chambers, chancellor of North Carolina Central University, is correct morally, legally, educationally and ethnically when he directs the persuasion and inducement of white students to attend NCCU.

As this nation struggles to become a truly multicultural society, it is unfortunate that a small group of uninformed college students would suggest that a black school erect a wall against white students.

It is preposterous for a group of freshmen, who obviously do not understand the meaning of the word "university," to attempt to interpret the mission and purpose of NCCU.

For their benefit and for all others uninformed about the history of this university, let me say that without the interest and support of white friends, there would be no North Carolina Central University.

In 1915, this school was sold to pay its debts. Mrs. Russell Sage, a white philanthropist, sent Dr. James E. Shepard, founder and first president, money to buy back the property and to pay off the debts.

In 1923, Dr. Shepard faced three options, (1) close the school; (2) offer it to a church affiliation; or (3) offer it to the state.

The state had three normal schools: Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, and Winston-Salem, and did not want another.

After hearing Shepard's plea,

**"It is in our own self-interest to extend a hand of friendship to all who wish to join the North Carolina Central University community."**

A.M. Rivera

the General Assembly (all white) reluctantly agreed to accept the major financial responsibility for the young school.

Shortly after this decision was made, there was a movement to merge the school with the Agricultural and Mechanical School in Greensboro, now A&T State University.

Dr. Shepard convinced the legislators to keep the school in Durham. The legislators (still all white) in 1925 created the first state supported liberal arts college for Negroes in the nation.

In this same year, citizens of Durham (almost all white) saw that the president of the young school did not have a home in which to live.

They built a home for the president on the corner of Brant and Fayetteville Streets. White friends also bought a home for the present chancellor.

In 1929, Governor Clyde R. Hoey, who made the advancement of education among Negroes and especially North Carolina College for Negroes his interest, spearheaded the construction of the administration building, which became the first building of the present campus. It rightfully bears

his name.

He owed the Negroes nothing politically because so few voted and Shepard voted Republican.

In 1937 Gov. A.W. McLean directed his support to the Durham School and in the same year B.N. Duke gave the auditorium which bears his name. And the list goes on and on.

Further for the record, it was almost three decades after the Emancipation Proclamation (1863), before this state became involved in Negro "higher education."

The one school organized in 1867 was nothing but an industrial academy.

The purpose of the state for organizing these black schools was to maintain, perpetuate, and extend segregation: To keep blacks out of the state supported "white" schools. Segregation was legally established in 1896 by the Supreme Court of the United States in Plessy v. Ferguson.

This decision erected a wall between white and black people that would last for six decades until 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. The Topeka Board of Education that segregation based on race was

unconstitutional.

The first person to challenge Plessy v. Ferguson was Thomas R. Hocutt, an NCCU student, who sued the University of North Carolina in 1932, for admission to its school of Pharmacy. The case was lost but groundwork was laid for future cases.

In 1939, Lloyd Gaines sued the state of Missouri for admission to the University of Missouri Law School. He was successful.

This was the first indication that the legal concept of "separate but equal," was legally vulnerable.

This set off an avalanche of graduate programs and professional schools at black state-supported colleges throughout the South.

NCCU got a law school, a graduate school (and later a Ph. D. program), a department of nursing, and a school of library science.

All of this was done to keep segregation intact.

In 1954, we told the U.S. Supreme Court that segregation in education was demeaning, unfair, stigmatizing, humiliating, degrading, despicable, and downright shameful.

The court agreed and said we will have no more of it. Some states are in the process now of either eliminating the segregated black colleges or merging them with a white school.

The state of North Carolina is no different from any other Southern state—don't kid

yourself. Most states only had one or two black colleges, but North Carolina wanted segregation to be safe and they ended up with five black colleges, which amounted to a substantial financial burden to the state.

Chambers knows this and he is doing all he can to save what some students are about to dump anyway.

The tragedy in this episode is that there are faculty and staff who feel threatened in a multicultural environment.

Chambers knows that the salvation of NCCU is to become a regional university serving all of the people.

The nearer we reach parity of the races, the more secure our future becomes. The only consideration should and must be a choice, not race.

These students cannot envision the promise of the future because they have not experienced the pain of the past.

History has proved that walls, including the Great Wall of China, the recent Berlin Wall, to the wall of "separate but equal," are unproductive, immoral, and idiotic

It is in our own self-interest to extend a hand of welcome and friendship to all who wish to join the North Carolina Central University community.

A.M. Rivera,  
Retired Public  
Relations Director

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