

Empowering, continued from page 3

community and gave an impression that I'm a leader, a black leader. I don't consider myself a black leader. I consider myself a servant of this community who has given of my time and whatever skills and talents I have. I feel that because of what this community has done for me, the kind of education I was provided, the kind of religious influence that it had upon me, and the kind of sacrifices that I saw black people making for the good of our community...I was obligated to give something back." Sumler is a former classmate with Jessie Jackson at A&T University. He finished cum laude and has attended Howard University, Wake Forest University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Warning that the black community must not be lulled into letting others decide who represents it, he sees much yet to be done to empower it

politically. "The black community in Winston-Salem politically is in total chaos," Sumler believes. "You have people that used to work together in the Democratic party and for the good of the black community as they saw it that can't even speak to each other now...They refuse to meet with each other." The result, in his estimation, is "a total lack of trust on the part of some black elected officials who are so-called 'leaders' and other business leaders and religious leaders."

Pointing out the effect that the political bickering and egos "running rampant" is having on young people who are the next generation of voters, Sumler surmises that "our young people...will suffer because we have black egos that can't get along because of 'I, I' and 'What I've done' attitudes. He also sees blacks who are in a position to recommend

other blacks to boards and commissions continuously selecting the same people from a sort of "inner circle" to serve in those positions. "Time and time again (they) always pick the same people. We overwork the same people to death on these boards and commissions...We need to give other blacks, especially poorer blacks and younger blacks, a chance to serve and learn and grow on boards and commissions and not use the same people over and over again."

Despite attempts to undermine his political and civic involvements, Sumler continues undaunted. "Our system doesn't bother black people who are doing nothing for themselves or black people who are hurting other blacks. Today, in America, any black man who is trying and having any success in helping blacks is a candidate to be investigated."

Aside from his registrar's position in the Lowrance district, Sumler is actively and heavily involved in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). "I spend a fourth of my time working with the NAACP," says Sumler. For 15 years he has been the chairman of the Labor and Industry committee for the local branch. "We've helped thousands of black people over the last 15 years. We have from 5-7 complaints a week coming to us. My responsibility...is such that any time any-

body comes to the NAACP saying they've been discriminated against on their jobs because of race, sex, religion, etc., I head the investigation...so therefore, I have a lot of corporate people and businesses that despise me because I come in to investigate the charges that people bring." He adds that the committee has been instrumental in winning back jobs and monetary settlements for many people.

In addition to his duties as local Labor

chairman, Sumler is the second vice president of the local NAACP chapter, a state board member, chairman of the state NAACP press and media committee, and is on the national committee for Fairshare agreements and economic development. Fairshare agreements provide contract opportunities for minority and women business owners with major corporations, as well as, in Sumler's words, providing "promotions and equity in giving and sharing in all aspects of business with minority communities."



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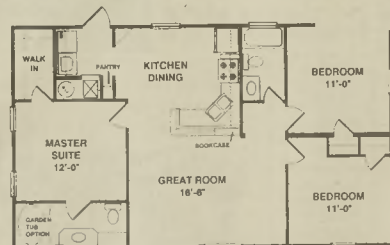
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