

A Rarity in the Classroom, A Black Male Teacher

By C.J. Clemmons
The Charlotte Observer

CHARLOTTE (AP) - A few days after graduation, Victor Mack was alone in his classroom, picking up the remnants of his first year as a math teacher at Providence High School.

It's been a tumultuous year, said Mack, tired from an early morning "close-out" meeting for teachers. It's been a year rife with paperwork and deadlines, long days and short pay checks and a few moments when he wanted to give it all up.

"Many days I walked in and swore I was going to the principal's office and say 'I QUIT,'" said Mack, 23, who came to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools after graduating from N.C. A&T State University in May 1994.

"I burned myself out in the beginning. When you deal with 100 students a day, it can get to you. Eventually, I learned how to manage my time better. It takes patience and commitment to be an effective educator." Looking relaxed in jeans, a baseball cap and a striped rugby shirt, Mack quickly tidied the tiny trailer where he taught algebra, geometry and integrated mathematics to 11th-graders.

He was eager to finish so he could pick up the sheet music for his wedding Friday to college sweetheart Lori Smith, 23, a kindergarten teacher at Crown Point Elementary School.

The ever meticulous Mack stacked textbooks in precise rows, swept the floor and pushed papers into his briefcase, including a card given to him by a student on the last day of class.

"Thank you for all you've done," read the inscription. "I wish you all the happiness in the world." Mack made such a good impression that he was asked to teach math to middle school students at UNC Charlotte this summer.

In education, Mack is a rarity: a black man.

Blacks make up about 23 percent of the more than 4,000 CMS teachers. African-Americans students account for 40 percent of the school district's 84,000 students.

North Carolina is losing minority teachers at an alarming rate, and the pool of prospective minority teachers is shrinking, according to a 1994 report from the North Carolina Association of Educators.

The state would need at least 15,000 new minority teachers to even the ratio with minority students.

Minority students make up 34.3 percent of the school-age population in North Carolina, but the number of minority teachers declined from 21.6 percent in 1974-75 to 16.7 percent in 1993-94, the NCAE report said.

"There aren't enough role models for the kids there," said Mack, the sole black among the 14 math teachers at Providence. "It doesn't send a good message to our kids when they see an all-black custodial staff but few black teachers." Many blacks who became teachers 20 or 30 years ago when few other careers were open to them are now retiring, said NCAE President Cecil Banks.

"All of the high-caliber people are leaving and not enough are coming in," Banks said.

Why is it so difficult to find black teachers? Even though North Carolina has several predominantly black colleges to recruit from including N.C. Central in Durham, N.C. A&T in Greensboro and Johnson C. Smith in Charlotte, Banks said young people simply aren't interested in the profession.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools recruiter Oscar Bidgood travels to teacher fairs and universities all over the Southeast looking for suitable candidates.

The starting salary in Charlotte is \$22,000. Bidgood said that's competitive with comparable Southern cities, but teachers can move eight hours away to Fairfax, Va., or Washington and add about \$10,000 to their salaries.

The average teacher's salary in North Carolina is \$29,000, 38th in the country.

Banks said more incentives are needed to attract young teachers, starting in high school. Teachers must also do their part to encourage their best students to enter the profession.

"We've got to deal with the real world," Banks said. "The profession must make itself more attractive to young people. High schools

Douglas Wilder To Sue RDU

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - Former Gov. L. Douglas Wilder has filed \$5 million lawsuit against the security guard he says assaulted him in March at Raleigh-Durham International Airport, the airport director said last Thursday.

Wilder allegedly was assaulted March 7 by the guard at the North Carolina airport after his suspender clips set off a metal detector as he prepared to board a USAir flight for Richmond.

Wilder was in northern Virginia last Thursday night, rehearsing for the televised version of his radio talk show. Telephone messages left at his home and office by The Associated Press were not immediately returned.

Paul Turk, a spokesman for USAir in Crystal City, Va., said he was not aware of the lawsuit and declined to comment.

Airport Director John Brantley told the Richmond Times-Dispatch that copies of the lawsuit arrived last Thursday at the airport.

"He named four defendants: the Raleigh-Durham Airport Authority, USAir, Globe Security and the former security checkpoint attendant," Brantley said. The guard was fired the day of the incident.

"There are a number of allegations," Brantley said. "Assault and battery, false imprisonment and negligence." Brantley said Wilder is seeking \$3 million in compensatory damages and \$2 million in punitive damages.

Wilder has said the fracas was sparked by the guard's surly manner.

"I went to look at the guard's name, because his tone and his manner alone were worthy of being reported," Wilder said later that day. "He grabbed me and said, 'I just don't like you' and shoved me up against the wall and started choking me." Brantley said the airport should not be a defendant. According to federal aviation regulations, he said, the screening of passengers before boarding is the responsibility of the airlines, not the airport.

"We don't belong in the lawsuit," Brantley said. "Our attorneys will take steps to gain our dismissal from the entire action." Brantley said the airport authority had not discussed the suit with USAir or Globe, but that he thought they probably would try to have the suit moved to a North Carolina court.



Celebrating the 1995 Awards, Kraft Foods and Essence Magazine conducted a luncheon and seminar entitled "Quick tips for busy lifestyles" at the Harlem Branch of the YWCA. The event coincided with the 125th anniversary of the YWCA's Harlem Branch and the 25th anniversary of Essence Magazine. Pictured left to right are: Donna Wilson of WWRL-AM; Jonell Nash, food editor of Essence Magazine; Essence Magazine; Vivian Manning Fox, executive director YWCA of New York City; Rev. Lula Baker of New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, N.J.; Judy White, director of the Harlem Branch YWCA; and Edna Mae Robinson, the aerobics instructor at the Harlem Branch.

must offer challenging programs and a nurturing environment." The state's Teaching Fellows Program and Project Teach are among the state's efforts to bring students - both black and white - into teaching.

The Teaching Fellows program gives students \$5,000 a year for four years if they agree to teach for four years. For the past five years, at least 20 percent of the participants have been minorities, according to the state Department of Public Instruction.

Project Teach is designed to raise the expectations of young black students so they will consider themselves college material.

The lack of respect for teaching angers Mack, who said many college graduates take the job as a last

resort.

"I know people who have trouble in their careers and say, 'Well, I can always go back to teaching,'" said Mack. "That's not getting our kids a quality education. If we take teaching for what it is - preparing young people for the future - then maybe it will finally get the respect

it deserves." While Mack is torn about making teaching a career, he will return to Providence High School for at least another year.

"I like to think I'm giving some thing back," he said. "At least I'm trying to. I won't be at this level forever. I have high expectations for my future."

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**City of Durham
Weekly
Calendar**

WEEKLY CALENDAR: JUNE 26, 1995 - JUNE 30, 1995

The DURHAM CITY COUNCIL holds its regular meetings on the first and third MONDAYS OF EACH MONTH at 7:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber, located on the first floor of City Hall. These meetings are open to the public.

City Government meetings scheduled during the next week include the following:

MONDAY, June 26, 1995
8:30 a.m. CENTRAL SAFETY COMMITTEE (Committee Room/2nd Floor)

TUESDAY, June 27, 1995
8:00 a.m. DURHAM HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (Committee Room/2nd Floor)
8:00 a.m. BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT (Council Chamber/1st Floor)
3:30 p.m. TAXICAB STUDY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (Committee Room/2nd Floor)
4:00 p.m. DURHAM CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS (101 E. Morgan St.)
5:30 p.m. HOUSING APPEALS BOARD (Committee Room/2nd Floor)
6:00 p.m. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION (Theatre Room/1st Floor)

WEDNESDAY, June 28, 1995
9:00 a.m. TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (Committee Room/2nd Floor)
1:00 p.m. CELLULAR TELEPHONE TOWER LOCATION WORKSHOP (Committee Room/2nd Floor)

THURSDAY, June 29, 1995
NO MEETINGS SCHEDULED

FRIDAY, June 30, 1995
8:30 a.m. DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD (Committee Room/2nd Floor)

All meetings are held in City Hall, 101 City Hall Plaza, unless otherwise indicated. Additional meetings may be scheduled after this list is submitted for publication. Free parking is available during the Council Meeting in the Chapel Hill Street Parking Garage, located across Mangum Street from City Hall.

Any citizen wishing to be heard on agenda matters, please call the City Clerk's Office at 560-4166 to place your name on the speakers' list.

Interpreters for the Deaf and the Hearing Impaired are available by giving a 48-hour notice. If needed, please telephone 560-1130 or T.D. No. 560-4345.

CITY LIFE PROGRAM will be on Cable Channel 22 every Wednesday from 7:35 to 8:00 p.m.

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