

The Carolina Times

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Durham Committee to Hold 66th Founder's Anniversary Banquet August 25

The Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People (DCABP) will celebrate its 66th Founders Anniversary Banquet on Saturday, August 25, at 6:00 p.m. in the W. Pearson Cafeteria on the campus of North Carolina Central University.

The distinguished community leaders being honored are: Dr. Thomas B. Bass, a long-serving practicing dentist, and *The Carolina Times* Family, Mrs. Vivian Louise Austin Edmonds and Kenneth W. Edmonds who, through

professional sacrifice and dedicated commitment, have ensured the continuous publication of the seventy-nine (79) year old *Carolina Times*. This independent, community-oriented weekly newspaper primarily, but not exclusively, serves the African American population of Durham and Durham County.

The honorees in their respective ways have been beacons of light in the continuing struggles to make the aspirations and ideals of the DCABP founders reality. In August

1935, these visionary founders saw the need to establish "a permanent organization to represent the Negro citizenship of Durham in all matters pertaining to their educational, economic, political, civic, and social welfare." The principal function of DCABP "shall be to work toward the elimination of racial discrimination or distinction in public and general private affairs." Great progress has been made; yet, much remains to be achieved.

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Mrs. Ernestine Holmes, president of NCCU's Goldsboro/Wayne Alumni Association, left, Mrs. Judy Ammons, Chancellor James Ammons and Dr. Orlando Stovall meet in Goldsboro. Chancellor Ammons was the keynote speaker at the annual Goldsboro/Wayne Alumni Banquet held at the First African Church. (NCCU Photo by Lawson)

Blacks in State Voting at Lower Rate Than Whites

CHARLOTTE (AP) - Blacks in North Carolina vote at a lower rate than whites despite constant registration drives and laws making it easier to cast ballots, according to a newspaper study.

In Mecklenburg County, 56 percent of voting-age whites went to the polls in November compared to 45 percent of blacks. Overall, North Carolina's gap was more than 12 percentage points, the *Charlotte Observer* reported Monday.

"We're well aware of the gap," said Fred Yates, political action chairman for the NAACP's N.C. chapter. "We've got a long way to go."

The study reflected a national pattern caused primarily by socio-economic factors. Poor and low-educated people are less likely to vote than others, studies show, and blacks make up a disproportionate share of that group.

Black voting rises at the higher end of the socio-economic ladder.

"If you could correct for (income) nationwide, then blacks are actually more likely to participate than whites in the same status," said political scientist John Aldrich of Duke University. "(The gap) is almost all class and educational background."

The *Observer* reviewed data for 82 of the state's 100 counties. Nowhere did the black participation rate top that of whites.

Experts cite several reasons for the voting gap, including historical discrimination, the number of black men in prison or on parole, and feelings among black residents they have little at stake in an election.

"If for years you've been told your vote doesn't matter, that you don't count, then why should you go to the polls?" asked the

Rev. Charlene Hendricks, pastor of Solid Rock Missionary Baptist Church in Charlotte.

Angelo Sharpless, a 40-year-old black truck driver from the Charlotte area, said he doesn't vote because "everybody lies and tells you what they're going to do, and then when they get up there, they don't do nothing."

Yet Duane Muhammad, a leader of Hickory's predominantly black Ridgeview community, said he votes out of respect for his family. His mother marched in Detroit with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and other relatives also felt passionately about civil rights.

"Those who have gone before us literally died for us to be able to vote," Muhammad said. "For that alone, we should vote."

Also contributing to the gap is the fact that a disproportionate number of people in prison, probation or parole in the Carolinas - about 59 percent - are black. They cannot apply to vote until their sentence has expired, which contributes to the gap.

Because politicians reflect their voters' agendas, experts said the gap means that black interests are underrepresented in city halls, legislatures and Congress.

Add the fact that lower-income voters are less likely to contribute to campaigns or get active politically and you have the makings of a system geared toward the wealthy, said Claudine Gay, a Stanford University political scientist who studies ethnic voting patterns.

"One should be concerned about how to engage otherwise unengaged Americans," she said. "And among the most unengaged Americans are African Americans."



DR. BASS



EDMONDS



EDMONDS

Bill Would Give More Money To Help AIDS Patients, Prevention Among Blacks

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - With blacks accounting for most HIV and AIDS cases in North Carolina, the state seeks to put more money and emphasis on disease prevention, health experts told a House panel.

While blacks make up about one-fifth of the state population, they account for 70 percent of the 22,500 HIV-related cases since AIDS was first reported through the end of last year, according to the figures. Women and Latinos also make up a greater percentage of the cases compared to 1999.

A bill before a House panel would declare HIV/AIDS a public health crisis in North Carolina. A controversial provision asks the state department of Health and Human Services to study needle exchange programs for drug users in an attempt to reduce the spread of HIV.

"We're seeing a whole society being devastated by disease," Dr. Primm, chairman of the National Minority AIDS Council, told the House Health Committee. "We need so much more education."

Primm led a presentation about the effect of AIDS on North Carolina as lawmakers began hearing the bill that would allocate more money to help with prevention and education efforts as well as to pay for medicine.

The state supervises a program that helps uninsured, HIV positive individuals pay for drugs designed to keep their disease in check.

Last fiscal year, nearly 1,900 residents received help to pay for "drug cocktails" and protease inhibitors from a budget of \$12.3 million. About \$8 million came from the federal government.

The House measure seeks \$4.5 million annually for the next two years to expand those eligible for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program from those with incomes up to 125 percent of the poverty level to 250 percent of the poverty level. A single person at 250 percent of the poverty level makes about \$24,500 per year. The current 125 percent rate is one of the lowest among the states.

"People who are making under \$20,000 per year, they're faced with not getting a job in order to keep getting the drugs, or getting a job not being assured of the drugs," state AIDS director Evelyn Foust said. "I don't think we ought to put people in that dilemma."

The bill also would set aside \$2 million over the next two years to fund community-based programs to educate the public more about how the disease is spread. The money also would expand testing and treatment facilities.

New testing tools are making it easier and quicker to diagnose individuals with HIV and treat them, Bill Hinchey, a vice president at OraSure Technologies, told the committee.

Hinchey touted a new testing product that would take only 20 minutes to test for HIV and other sexually-transmitted diseases using a saliva or blood sample.

Injecting drugs with used, tainted syringes is the second-leading known cause of HIV cases in North Carolina, according to the Division of Public Health. Homosexual sex is the leading cause.

House Republicans have been opposed to state funding of such programs they say promotes drug use.

Pilots proposed in the 1997 and 1999 sessions didn't clear the House.

Rep. Thomas Wright, the bill sponsor, said he's not going to amend the bill to add pilot programs as he did two years ago, angering Republicans.

But he believed the HHS study could prompt private organizations to implement needle programs. A needle exchange program in Asheville has been praised by some for lowering HIV cases among blacks.

"It's not a government sanctioned program," said Wright, D-New Hanover.

Several public health groups support needle exchanges, although studies have mixed. There was no debate by the committee on the needle-exchange study provision.

Health and Human Services Secretary Carmen Hooker Buell said the department supports the bill.

"Clearly HIV/AIDS is an example of the health disparities in North Carolina between white North Carolinians and minority black North Carolinians," Buell said. Eliminating these kind of disparities "is without a doubt my top priority within the department."

High Court Sustains Victory for Award-Winning Louisiana Inmate

By Anne Gearan

WASHINGTON (AP) - The U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider a Louisiana prosecutor's attempt to reinstate a murder sentence for an award-winning prison journalist.

The high court's action, taken without comment June 18, means Wilbert Rideau will either be retried or set free after four decades behind bars.

A federal appeals court overturned Rideau's conviction last December for the abduction and killing of a white bank teller because blacks were improperly excluded from the grand jury that indicted Rideau, who is black.

The 20-member jury had only one black member.

District Attorney Rick Bryant has said he would seek a new conviction if the Supreme Court refused to reinstate Rideau's verdict.

"In this case, there were two living victim witnesses, several confessions and much physical evidence," Bryant said in December. "No grand jury in the history of the world would not have indicted."

The facts of Rideau's crime are not in dispute. In 1961, when he was 19, Rideau robbed a Lake Charles bank of \$14,000, took three hostages and shot them as they begged for their lives. Two

lived; teller Julia Ferguson died.

Rideau arrived at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola with an eighth-grade education and a death sentence. While waiting for his date in the electric chair, he taught himself to read and began writing. His sentence was changed to life in prison without parole after the U.S. Supreme Court threw out Louisiana's death penalty in 1972.

Under his editorship, the prison magazine, *The Angolite*, has won the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award and the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award. It has

included articles about rape and a killing in prison, inmate suicides, riots, prisoner rights and executions.

Rideau also co-directed a 1998 documentary about the Louisiana State Penitentiary called "The Farm," which won the Grand Jury Prize at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival.

Despite recommendations for a commutation, four governors have

refused to free Rideau.

While Rideau has never denied killing the bank clerk, his attorney has said a new and fair trial could result in conviction for a lesser crime, perhaps manslaughter, resulting in a shorter sentence and Rideau's ultimate release.

Durham Branch NAACP Monthly Meeting
Sunday, June 24, 4 p.m.
Bell-Yeager FWB Church
128 East Cornwallis Road
• The Public Is Invited •