

Group tackles problems of court cases

By YVETTE N. FREEMAN
Chronicle Staff Writer

There is now a support group in Winston-Salem just for men and women who are divorced and have been allocated to pay child support.

Divorced Fathers of Forsyth County was formed Tuesday night, Aug. 27, at 7 p.m., at the East Winston branch public library, with a group of five men in attendance.

The purpose of the group, which was convened by Shedrick Adams, is to provide moral support, information and a voice to speak out for "family-friendly" policies in divorce cases where children are involved.

"I call myself a convener to call together other men who may have had similar experiences as to mine in the court," said Adams, who has two children. "It's a painful experience where I feel that the court should look at the broader picture in assigning custody; of physical custody of the child. I believe both parents should have equal access to their children. And we (fathers) should not be denied the right to parent."

During the meeting, the group discussed personal experiences in how the courts handled each of their custody cases, and how, in most child support and custody cases, judges tend to rule in favor of the mothers.

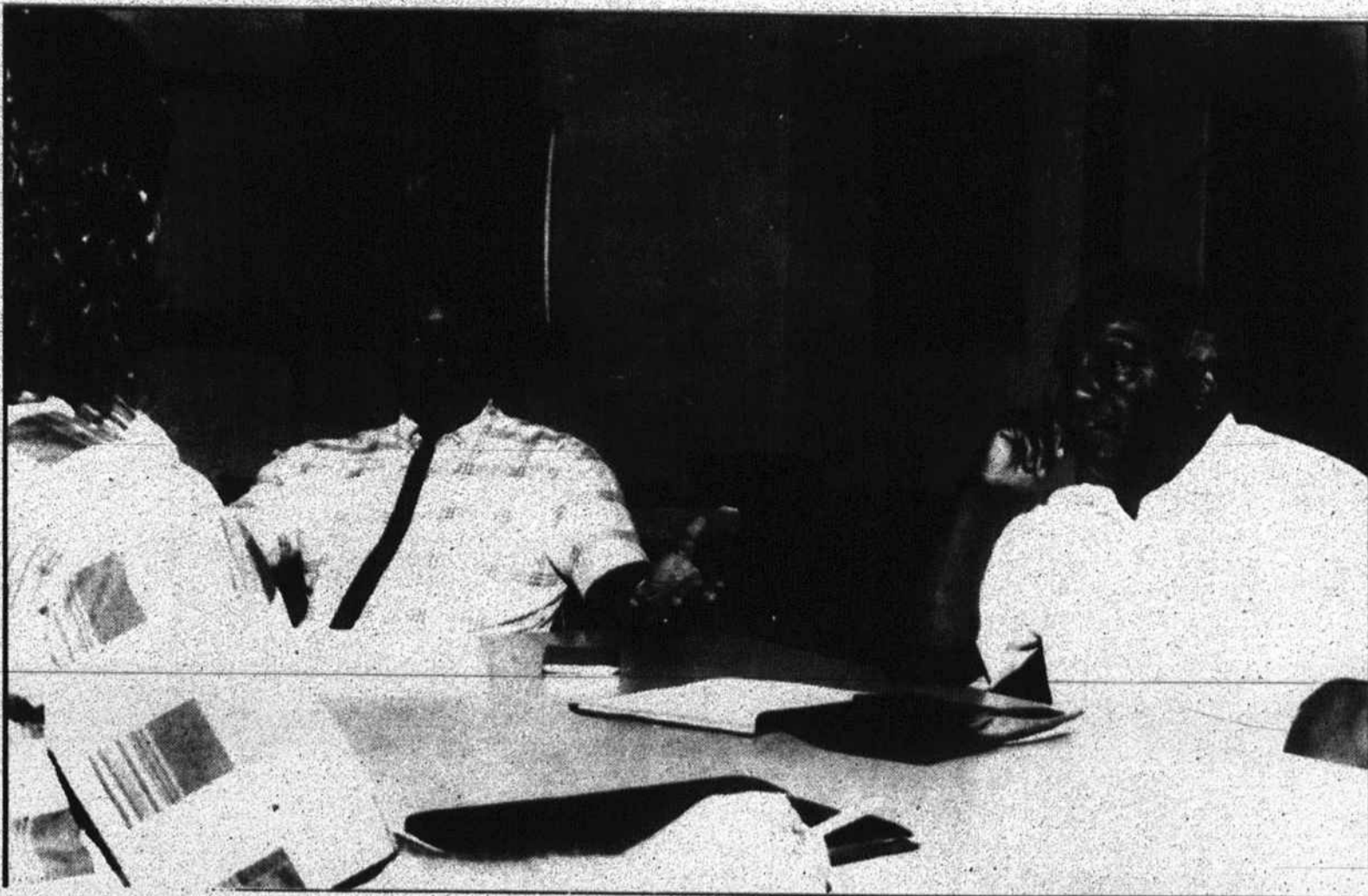
They also discussed lobbying for laws in which parents who receive child support payments would have to document how that money is spent, to verify that the payments are being made and the child is actually benefiting from those payments.

Tim Jackson, branch manager of the East Winston library and a member of the group, suggested audits for those parents. "When you receive that money, if there's going to be some periodic checks, where you have to produce receipts, and if you can't produce those receipts, then you have to deal with the law."

Another member named Charles, who preferred that his last name not be used, agreed and said that the courts do need to check whether parents who receive child support are actually using the money for that purpose and only that purpose.

Other issues also discussed included how a judge's personal feelings can sometimes get in the way of fair decisions in divorce cases, how the judges do not always rule in the best interest of the child, and the set up of a system in which fathers would not be penalized (usually sentenced to jail time) if they are unable to make their child support payments because of illness or involuntary unemployment.

Although each of the men at the meeting had different experiences in their cases, there was one common agenda for the group.



Shedrick Adams (right) and Tim Jackson (left) discuss the plight of fathers in divorce cases at the first meeting of Divorced Fathers of Forsyth County.

"The reason I decided to come is to promote fairness and accountability in the child support system. So that both parents will have access to the child," said Jackson.

Also, in speaking for the other members of the group, he stated that the primary purpose of Divorced Fathers of Forsyth County is "basically, to draw attention to the laws themselves so that the law will benefit each citizen as opposed to benefiting one parent. We feel that the laws at their present state are antiquated and that some sensitivity needs to be brought about so that there is fairness within the law. There are a lot of responsible fathers who get caught in the shuffle."

The other members agreed and commented that the laws dealing with child custody and support tend to be one-sided, usually in favor of the mother. And although the group plans to work for better policies relating to fathers and their rights in child support and child custody, the members say they have no intentions of trying to erase the role of women in the lives of the children. They said that the group mainly wants to work towards policies that are in the best interest of everyone involved, most importantly, the children.

According to Adams in a written statement explaining the group, "We contend that children are adversely affected when fathers do not participate fully in their upbringing. We believe that when fathers do not participate fully in childrearing, the emotional and cognitive development of their sons and daughters is often impaired. It is our hope that courts will eventually adopt "Family-Friendly" policies rather than automatically assign custody and child support payments to one

partner, in most cases to the mother."

Divorced Fathers of Forsyth County plans to meet again Monday, Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the East Winston branch public library, located on Highland Avenue at Seventh Street, at which time there will also be a panel discussion with representa-

tives of the courts and judicial system. The group is open to anyone who is divorced, going through a divorce, or considering divorce, but primarily those who are paying child support. For more information about Divorced Fathers of Forsyth County, call the East Winston branch public library at (919) 727-2202.

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Nat'l Conclave meeting

The National Conclave of the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, Inc. met recently in Nashville, Tennessee. More than 1500 delegates assembled for the sixty-eighth anniversary and were challenged by one of the greatest of the nation's problems - the educating of minority youth.

The convention was presided over by the Supreme Basileus, Mrs. Marguerite McClelland.

Some of the keynote speakers of the conclave were Dr. Gloria Scott, president of Bennett College in Greensboro, N.C.; Dr. Raymond Winbush, Director of the Black Culture Center at Vanderbilt University of Nashville, Ten-

nessee; Dr. Bruce B. Hare of Syracuse University of New York; and Dr. Henry Ponder, president of Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Basileus Mabel Sullivan-Jessup was the delegate for the local chapter, Beta Lambda. She was accompanied by Mrs. Mattie Neal, who was an alternate. Basileus Mabel Sullivan-Jessup is now the Eastern Region Chairman of the Anthropolos, "The Men in Our Lives."

Plans are already well-developed for the seventieth anniversary conclave which will convene in San Diego, California, July 14 - 24, 1993.

Mrs. Bethlehem crowned during Women's Day

Highlighting the First Annual Women's Day of Bethlehem AME Zion Church, 6475 Old Yadkinville Highway off Reynolds Rd., will be the crowning and flowering of Mrs. Bethlehem AME Zion 1991.

The program will take place Sunday, September 15 at the 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. services. The church is proud to have Mrs.

Delores M. Gullick, wife of the Rev. William Gullick, pastor of Bethlehem, which is located in Pfafftown, N.C. as the 11 a.m. speaker; and honored to have Mrs. Jamie Speaks, wife of Bishop Ruben Speaks as the 3 p.m. speaker.

The public is invited to join in this affair.