

Distrust

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involvement of African Americans in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system's redistricting process; the black community, for the most part, did not come out on one side or the other.

During that process two years ago, school board member Geneva Brown explained that the black community was deeply suspicious of the school system's intentions. Walter Marshall, a former school board member, was quoted as agreeing with Brown.

"I don't know if it's just apathy or loss of hope," said Marshall, who is now a Forsyth county commissioner. Brown and Marshall were joined by former school board member Dale Folwell in voting

against the plan. All three said that the redistricting plan would segregate schools.

If a school system does not maintain a certain racial balance, it could be subject to federal investigation. Ultimately, that school system could lose federal funding if it refused to comply with standards set in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision.

While the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system is under federal investigation, Guilford county school system's redistricting process is under intense parental scrutiny. Many African Americans in Guilford county followed the redistricting process in Forsyth, and are not

pleased with the results.

"You all better watch out, because they're trying to do what they did in Winston," warned one parent at a redistricting forum held last month at Dudley High School in Greensboro.

The Guilford County Redistricting Steering Committee, a 60-member panel of parents and community representatives, held a series of forums throughout April to present four "feeder zone" maps. After assessing feedback, the steering committee decided last week to hold more forums.

One of the largest turnouts, Dudley's forum attracted a predominantly black crowd. Several speakers stood up and said that they believed the school board had

already made a decision on which map would be used.

Others wondered why the school board refused to attend the forums, as the steering committee could not answer most of the questions asked by the audience.

"There's no excuse to send out a committee like this, to get information from us, when we can't get any information from (the school board)," said Raymond King.

Other speakers said they were worried that redistricting was a plan to isolate inner city schools. They said that grouping lower income and lower-achieving students into one zone would set up schools to fail.

Even members of the redistricting committee seemed not to fully

believe in the process.

"We are limited in our function. We have been limited on purpose," said Gladys Robinson, the NAACP representative on the committee.

These suspicions were and still are harbored by many in Forsyth County. Some vehemently denounce the local school system's new redistricting.

"It sucks. I've heard a lot about it (redistricting), and from what I've heard, they're resegregating the schools again," said Andrea Mayes, a student at Forsyth Technical Community College. Mayes attended a total of five schools in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County, from elementary to high school.

Mayes and classmate Shemika

Lineberger, who also attended local schools, agreed that the redistricting didn't make sense to them. Both thought that the school system should have left zone boundaries alone.

"When they changed, half the students were already going to one school and had to switch into another. It was a mad situation," said Lineberger.

Some whites were also suspicious of the redistricting process. A white parent filed a complaint against the local school system with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. That parent felt the redistricting plan did not offer enough control, and would lead to resegregation (see side bar story).

Segregation

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information and talk to various school officials about policy," said OCR press representative Roger Murphy. OCR officers plan to visit the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools soon and investigate the complaint first-hand.

"I grew up in this community and feel pretty strongly that

schools should remain integrated," said Tom Harris, the white parent who filed the complaint with the Office for Civil Rights. "I know what it's like to go to an all-white school, and I know what it's like to go to an integrated school.

"I think there's a better education in integrated schools," he added. A native of Winston-Salem, Harris has children at

Speas and Whitaker schools.

Zone I is comprised of five elementary schools in the southeast section of the county.

During the first year of enrollment in that zone, two schools were over 90 percent African-American, and two others had a white student population between 70 and 80 percent.

Now, the two predominantly

African-American schools, Diggs and Forest Park, have even greater minority populations, as does Hall-Woodard, which is one-third Hispanic. Union Cross and Sedge Garden have lost minority presence in their student populations.

"I don't think a lot of parents want their children to go to racially isolated schools," said Harris. Even though each child would

have the option of attending a school that is predominantly attended by children of another race, said Harris, the chances of most children feeling comfortable in such a setting is slim.

The primary impetus for redistricting came from the white suburbs, said Harris. "They were tired of their children getting bused to more inner city schools,"

he said. A number of African-American parents have also protested forced busing; however, instead of vying for a system of one-race schools, most black parents want the burden of busing to be equally distributed.

"What will make or break the case, I think, is particularly how minority parents feel about the situation," said Harris.

Perception

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Overall, about 55 percent of Family Preservation clients are referred to the program by county Departments of Social Services. Other sources of referrals are the Division of Mental Health and the juvenile court system. Occasionally, families approach the service on their own.

"Our referrals come from other sources," said caseworker Judy Arthofer. "We don't control that." Coworker Wanda Burney added that the Department of Social Services didn't refer as many black families because that division served them instead.

"More times than not, they've already decided to place the child," said Burney.

Carol Downey, supervisor of the

Department of Social Services' Child Protective Services Treatment Unit, was not available for comment at press time. Former Child Protective Services director Brenda Evans said that she did not feel qualified to comment on the referral criteria, but said that the process may involve a screening committee.

Another factor for the seemingly low number of African-American clients could be a lack of set quotas, Allen explained, and racial demographics may seem skewed during some reporting quarters. For example, from July 1996 to the end of December, Family Preservation served eight white families, three African-American and one multi-racial. Other times, there may be more or fewer black families.

"We don't make decisions based

on race, we make it based on need," said Allen.

Family Preservation's full-time staff consists of Allen, who is white, two white women, one African-American woman and an African-American man. The staff can spend as much as 54 hours with a single family during the intensive program period, and the case load averages to about four per worker.

The number of cases has gone up recently.

"Up until last month, we pretty much took or responded to every referral we received," said caseworker Wanda Burney.

Currently, the racial composition of the staff's caseload is about 60-40, white to black or biracial clients.

"The majority of the kids I work with in Forsyth County are black

kids," said caseworker James Jackson, who occasionally works in Stokes County as well. Burney's present clientele are all African-American.

Burney found the rumors of discrimination peculiar to the philosophy of the program.

"It struck me as funny," said Burney. "[Race] doesn't matter to us. If a child is at risk, it doesn't matter the race." She did comment that Jackson's role in the program was critical.

"In terms of black families, he (Jackson) has certainly been instrumental," said Burney. "So few of the kids, of the black males, have had positive male role models."

Critics of the program do not seem to take issue with the quality of the Family Preservation services, but with how clients are referred to

the program.

The General Assembly signed the Family Preservation Act into law in 1991. Ultimately, the legislators' goal is to establish Family Preservation programs for every county; as of last year's report, there were 21 programs servicing 40 counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

Family Preservation programs may differ from county to county. Some programs are under the umbrella of that county's Department of Social Services.

Statewide, about 69 percent of the children served by Family Preservation Services are white. Twenty-four percent are African-American, and 4 percent are multi-racial. The remaining 3 percent are categorized each as Native American, Hispanic and Other.

The Forsyth/Stokes program is unique in that it offers a Family Stabilization component in addition to the Family Preservation program. Geared toward those families who need more than six weeks of services, social workers follow up on clients after six months to determine the stability of the child and family unit.

In this component of the program, there are more African Americans served, said Allen. During one quarter, 49 percent of the clients served by Family Stabilization were African-American or biracial families.

For the most part, said Burney, African Americans are still new to mental health services. "The culture is, you seek help from inside (the family unit); you don't go outside," she stated.

Triad

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added. He spoke about the value of a man with a boy, doing simple things, especially character building. "Where are our values?" he asked. "What do we value if we are sitting around watching and whining as boys — our future — go down the tubes?"

Hayes told the story of how he engages his Aggie team to work with young black boys in Greensboro and High Point. Said Doug Thorne, field director for the Old North State Council, "Our efforts have resulted in a virtual explosion of new troops and involvement by men in High Point and Greensboro who would otherwise not be active,

except for Bill Hayes."

With an air of animation more fitting a pregame pep talk, Hayes appealed to black men to get involved in scouting. "We have failed miserably," he said. "We are sorry role models ... and we've got to get our boys back." Kermit Blount, head football coach at WSSU, was present. Blount has been recruited by his former coach — Hayes — to do at WSSU what he said has worked so well for the benefit of his players and the young boys they work with in scouting.

According to Clarence E. "Bighouse" Gaines, former WSSU head basketball coach and chairman of Winston-Salem's Urban Emphasis

Committee, the number of black boys in scouting is "abysmally low." He said he'd be willing to change his name to "Beg-house" if that would get more black men involved in order to get more boys into scouting.

Gaines described the Boy Scouts of America as the "most time-honored, effective and esteemed organization when it comes to making productive citizens and men of boys." Gaines is one of the local council's most ardent supporters, having been awarded the Silver Buffalo medal, scouting's highest honor given for those who serve youth.

Randall, one of the top-ranking African Americans in scouting, underscored the critical

importance of black churches and scouting. His role — he was freshly returned from the President's Summit for American's Future held in Philadelphia — was to build on Gaines' and Hunter's relationships with community leaders and organizations. He illustrated how "scouting has been replaced by gang-banging." He noted, "It takes \$300 to train and equip a scout, but it takes \$30,000 to train and support an inmate!"

However, it was Bill Hayes — who lives in Winston-Salem — who made the most emotional and effective appeals. "Scouting did not abandon the black community, the black community —

black men — abandoned scouting." Referring to statistics on black female-headed households in the Triad, Hayes noted, "The Boy Scouts of America has the same problem as many black women: Can't find no men!"

Ray McAlister, a retired executive of the N.C. Department of Corrections, outlined what has been done in High Point, while praising the efforts of Hunter. "Traci needs you men in Winston," he said. "She is going into the projects and doing a

great job; but, she needs more of you men in Winston-Salem to help her!"

In Winston-Salem, the black churches that support scouting — in addition to Mount Zion — include St. Stephens, United Metropolitan, Shiloh Baptist, First Waightown Baptist, Exodus Baptist and Zion Hill Baptist. Hunter said she wants to hear from church leaders and lay persons. She can be reached at 760-2900.



THANK YOU

Mrs. Naomi Cassaberry and family wishes to thank everyone for their acknowledge and cards and acts of kindness during the death of Norman D. Cassaberry in Bronx, New York.

WSFCS

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools
Public Meeting

about

Guidelines for Student Discipline

Thursday, May 8, 1997
7:00 p.m.

Administrative Center Auditorium
1605 Miller Street

For more information, call 727-2695