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Blacks ponder own fates at conference

First-ever State of Black North Carolina Conference attracts diverse group of thinkers

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
 THE CHRONICLE

It was by choice, not chance, that the first-ever State of Black North Carolina Conference kicked off on a Sunday. Although everything from education to economic development was talked about at the two-day event, it was faith, organizers said, that would be the bridge to link it all together and make the goals discussed at the conference realities.



Alexander

To that end, the Rev. Claude R. Alexander Jr., pastor of University Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, made a podium his makeshift pulpit at Benton Convention Center as he keynoted the opening ceremonies.

He told participants, some of whom had come from as far away as Wilmington, that although African-Americans are as politically and ideologically diverse as a rainbow, blacks must work together to heal what ails the black com-

munity. "The challenge is for us to unite together and be as one," he said. "We share a destiny. We share a history."

Alexander asked conference participants to not just talk about problems such as unemployment and underachievement. There has been too much talk for far too long, he said.

"We don't need another symposium... (It's time for) us to be decisive and urgent," he said.

Richard Williams, a local entrepreneur who created and organized the conference, said he designed the event so it would not be just another black issues event. Panelists and participants at each of the 10 sessions came up with action items and strategies to address the various issues. Williams said those suggestions will be sent to groups such as the General State Baptist Convention of N.C., the NAACP and Masonic organizations.

"Hopefully (these organizations) will put these ideas and suggestions on their agendas," Williams said.

Williams said the dozens of community, civic and political leaders from across the state he assembled to sit on panels were enthusiastic about taking part in such a conference. They includ-

See Conference on A10



Photo by Kevin Walker

Richard Williams gets a woman's reaction to his new business magazine.

People sought to probe '70s hate crime

Group will try to come up with answers from deadly KKK attack more than 20 years ago

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
 THE CHRONICLE

GREENSBORO - The city of Greensboro is making an attempt to heal wounds inflicted nearly 24 years ago. On Nov. 3, 1979, five leaders of a labor organizing rally and parade were killed and 10 others were wounded in a black neighborhood by members of the Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi party.

A local task force of about 40 diverse Greensboro residents has decided to uncover what happened on that tragic day under the direction of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP).



Allen

"The project is a broad community-based initiative that seeks to help Greensboro create a brighter future by earnestly engaging its past specifically in relation to the killings of Nov. 3, 1979," said Carolyn Allen, co-chair of the GTCRP Local Task Force. Allen is a former mayor of Greensboro.

Several members of the task force met Monday to announce the mandate and the selection process for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The mandate will serve as the general framework that will guide the commission's work.

A portion of the mandate reads: "This examination is not for the purpose of exacting revenge or recrimination. Indeed the Commission will have no such power... We owe it to ourselves and to our future generations to explain what happened and why... Nor can there be any genuine healing for the city of Greensboro unless truth surrounding these events is honestly confronted, the suffering fully acknowledged, accountability established and forgiveness and reconciliation facilitated."

According to the task force, this is the first attempt of its kind in the country to initiate a process where a community can resolve painful and divisive aspects of its history in a spirit of truth seeking, reconciliation and transformation.

The commission will be charged with the task of examining all aspects of the killings. The events of that day along with subsequent court rulings have been sources of tremendous bitterness, division, fear and distrust in Greensboro over the last two decades.

The Klansmen and Nazis were twice acquitted of any wrongdoing and then eventually found to be "jointly liable for the wrongful deaths," even though their actions were caught on film by local news crews. Stories of the fatal shootings quickly made national and international headlines.

"The confusion about the events and their aftermath persists in the public's conscious even to this good day," said Z. Holler, co-chair of the GTCRP Local Task



Headen



Holler

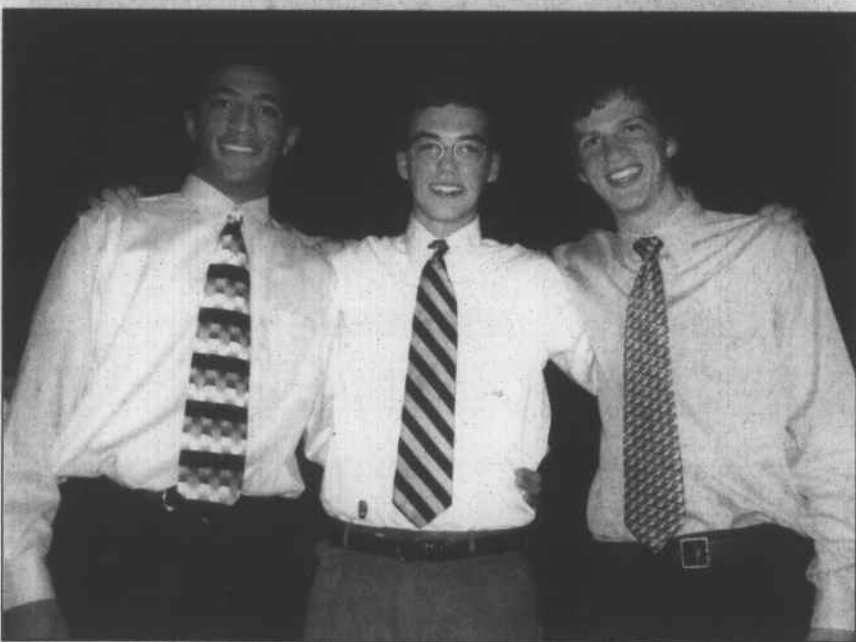


Photo by Kevin Walker

Mt. Tabor students Walter Martin (from left), Kyle Southern and Rob Stephens are the first local students to organize a racial relations forum at a school in Forsyth County.

Tackling Race

Student-organized forum asks how equal are we?

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
 THE CHRONICLE

The director of the city's Human Relations Commission said that a racial relations forum held last week at Mt. Tabor High School was the first of its kind in Forsyth County. Never before, Wanda Allen-Abraham said, had students initiated and organized a discussion about race in a local school.

More than 100 Mt. Tabor students, parents and faculty members assembled in the school's auditorium to hear a diverse panel field a wide array of questions that focused on the state of racial relations inside the school and beyond Mt. Tabor's walls.

A large portion of the more than two-hour forum focused on the achievement gap between white students and students of color. While more than 85 percent of white students at Mt. Tabor passed the End of Course

See Forum on A9

Local reps like moratorium idea

House expected to vote on bill that would halt all executions in North Carolina for two years

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

State Reps. Earline Parmon and Larry Womble say they will vote for a death penalty moratorium when that legislation works its way through the House of Representatives.

The state Senate passed a bill last week that would halt executions in the state for two years so that a legislative committee can probe capital punishment and iron out flaws if necessary. The bill is in committee in the House.

Parmon said she will work to get the bill through quickly and encourage her colleagues to vote for the moratorium.

Parmon agrees with the

notion that capital punishment is racially skewed, largely victimizing blacks who are convicted of killing whites.



Parmon

"I think that it is such an important issue that we do need to take time and study it," she said.

Womble joined about 150 demonstrators Tuesday at the

See Moratorium on A5



Photo by Kevin Walker

While many ran for cover Friday after rain began to pelt the Rock the Block event downtown, Mayor Allen Joines walked up and down Fourth Street telling residents that the show would go on as planned when the rain died down. Many did stick around and enjoyed the music, food and entertainment that was provided at the second Rock the Block.