

Photo by Kevin Walker  
Two students taking part in the Southeast Europe Youth Leadership Institute look for a place to place flags during last week's forum.



# American panel tells European students that race problems exist

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

While many around the world envy America for its democracy, strength and opportunities, this country too still struggles each day to live out the true meaning of its centuries-old creed.

In essence, that is what a panel of local people told a roomful of European students last Thursday during a forum designed to educate the visitors about this country's continuing struggle to provide parity to all of its people.

Stephen Hairston, the president of the city's NAACP chapter, used missing Alabama teen Natalee Holloway as an example of what is wrong in the United States.

Holloway, who is white, has made international headlines since she disappeared while on a graduation excursion in Aruba.

"A black life in this country is not as valued as a white life," Hairston said. "Black females go missing every day

and they very seldom make local news."

Hairston was among a panel that also included a Hispanic leader, a member of the local Jewish temple and an advocate for the disabled. The forum was held at City Hall South and sponsored by the city's Human Relations Commission.

About 50 teens from the Eastern European nations of Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Montenegro spent all of July at Wake Forest University for the Southeast Europe Youth Leadership Institute. The program gives students the

opportunity to explore American culture while promoting civic participation.

Civil rights was the theme for this year's institute. As part of the institute, the European students researched hot-button topics, everything from same-sex marriage to legalized prostitution, and held a series of debates on them

throughout the day Friday on the Wake campus. (One of the forums was held at the Winston Lake Family YMCA).

Miriam Hernandez, who founded the city's Hispanic Action Center, told the students that while Hispanics' numbers are growing rapidly here and around the United States, political and economic power still eludes them. Hernandez said there are obvious barriers that are preventing Hispanic gains in these areas.

"We see the challenge in culture," she said. "We see the challenge in language."

Bob Conn, a member of Temple Emanuel, said that the numbers of Jews in North Carolina and throughout the South were extremely low compared with Jewish populations in states such as New York.

He told the students that in terms of civil rights, his people have been on the receiving end of bias and by the sides of African-Americans and other groups who have struggled to achieve parity.

"The Jewish community has always put its money where its mouth is.... We have been there," said Conn, after

reminding the group that two of the three civil rights workers that former Klansman Edgar Ray Killen was recently convicted of killing in 1964 were Jews.

But today, civil rights has become more than an issue of skin color or religion, according to Jacob Thadathil, a deaf services specialist at the Forsyth County Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Speaking through an interpreter, Thadathil talked about the Americans with Disabilities Act. The 15-year-old law makes it illegal to discriminate against qualified people with disabilities in the areas of employment, public accommodations, transportation and telecommunications.

But the ADA is far from foolproof. A few days before the ADA's 15th anniversary, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released a study that found that people with disabilities are often discriminated against when they try to rent apartments.

## School

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state Rep. Earline Parmon, Mayor Allen Joines, state House Speaker Jim Black and Gov. Mike Easley - have been invited to take part in the non-partisan event, which will take place at Bethlehem Baptist Church.

General Assembly members will meet with students to discuss topics such as political careers, education, health care and safety. Students will participate in a mock legislative body where they will draft, debate and pass some 40 bills that could end up on either state House or Senate floors.

The school is the brainchild of Rep. Jim Harrell III. The school is named after Harrell's father, James A. Harrell Jr., who ran for a congressional seat last year against Virginia Foxx.

Jim Harrell said he was inspired to create a program for young people not long after he became one of the youngest people elected to the General Assembly. Hundreds of students have participated in the government school over the last three years. This will be the first time that The Harrell School of Government will operate outside of Raleigh.

"We've gotten a broad range of children from across the state, but I felt like we weren't tackling some of the areas that I wanted to. We weren't seeing the diversity that I'd like to see," said Harrell, who has been visiting local churches in order to spread the word about the program. Harrell says they plan to conduct the school around the state so that more students will be able to participate.

"Our goal is to not only to educate a future governor but also to educate people who can then go back and help their communities to understand the legislative process and how the laws are made and advocate for (their) population," Harrell said.

He worked with Rep. Larry Womble to bring the summer program to the city. Womble, who secured the location for the event, says he hopes the experience will impress upon the students what a major role government plays in their daily lives.

mines your life to some degree from the day you're born to the day you die. Even government, right here in Winston-Salem, determines what hospital you're born at," said Womble. "It'll give our high school students some exposure to state government. It will open up opportunities for them that they may or may not be aware of."

Womble plans to give the students an overview of state government and what his job entails during his keynote address scheduled for the evening of Aug. 26.

"Hopefully out of there we'll have a mayor. Maybe there's a budding governor. Somebody in that group could take my place as a state legislator," Womble said.

There is no cost to participate in the School of Government. Participants must be a rising high school sophomore, junior or senior resident of North Carolina. Students will lodge at the church overnight.

For more information on the program or to receive an application, contact the school at P.O. Box 10282, Raleigh, NC 27605; call (919) 715-1883; or e-mail Matt Harrell at harrellin@ncleg.net.



Harrell



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## Hate

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North Georgia White Knights, Schertz was caught by an undercover federal agent and a confidential informant. Court records show he took them shopping for bomb materials at a home improvement store.

"Once at Lowe's, Schertz picked out five end caps and some silicone for the pipe bombs he was making," the agent's affidavit says. He then explained how to wire the explosives.

After returning to a shed at his home, Schertz gave instructions "down to the proper order of laying gun powder and shrapnel material." He made five pipe bombs and sold them for \$750, records show.

Schertz is charged with teaching and demonstrating how to make a weapon of mass destruction and interstate transport of explosive material with intent to kill or injure. He is being held without bond.

Schertz's attorney, Mike Caputo, declined to comment

on the charges but said he was working on a plea agreement. He said Schertz is a military veteran and has no previous criminal record.

His Klan leader, Jeffery, said Schertz was thrown out of the Klan for unrelated disobedience in mid-May - weeks after the alleged bomb making and selling in April.

"We kicked him out for breaking his oath that he swore before God," Jeffery, 43, said in a telephone interview. "We are not a violence-making group, and we don't believe in that. This isn't the '50s and '60s."

Federal agents say hate groups always deny involvement when one of their members is charged with a crime.

"There are always a percentage of these people who are ready, willing and able to go off," said James M. Cavanaugh, special agent in charge of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Nashville field division.

Cavanaugh said: "When the

group burns the cross, worships under the swastika, you dehumanize the people.... That has been a plague on the world for centuries."

The Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report counted 762 active hate groups in the United States in 2004. South Carolina had the most, with 47, and Tennessee had the most Klan chapters, with 13.

David Lubell, director of the Nashville-based Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, said the Schertz case shows how supremacist talk can prompt violence.

"It is what happened in the Civil Rights Movement. All of a sudden it is acceptable to incite hatred of immigrants, whether Latino, or from Africa, or Asia or wherever," he said.

Lubell said: "Usually it is a lone wolf kind of person who listens to these messages and acts on them.... This is just a symptom of what has been anti-immigrant sentiment, much more freely used by radio talk show hosts, anti-immigrant groups and even politicians."

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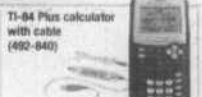
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