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Stories On Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13B



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Stories On Pages 16, 17, 18B



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"The Voice Of The Black Community"

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Volume 12, Number 4

THE CHARLOTTE POST - Thursday, June 26, 1986

Price: 40 Cents



Nia Anderson
.....Carving out career

Anderson Chooses Friends As Opposed To Going Out

By Jalyn Strong
Post Staff Writer

Twenty-one-year-old Nia Anderson is carving out a career for herself in the dental industry. Though, as she points out, there aren't many blacks in the field, Nia has taken up the challenge and is going against the odds.

She is a dental assistant working for local dentist, Dr. Gwyn Davis. Nia describes her job as "helping the dentist prepare patients and assisting the dentist with instruments and such."

Nia trained for the position by taking Central Piedmont Community College's one-year Dental Assistant course. She was the only black student in the class. Three days after she completed her studies she went to work for Dr. Davis.

"I like my job," assures Nia. "Dr. Davis keeps me busy." Nia pursued dental assistantship in the beginning primarily because she felt it would be a challenge. She's found, however, that the work is not really hard yet it requires diligence. "It's consistent type of work," explains this week's beauty. "You have to know what's next-anticipate what the dentist wants done. You have to be very aware of what's going on when handling a patient."

Now that she has this type of experience, Nia has her sight set on another component of dentistry. She's planning to attend Durham Technical to study Dental Lab

Technology. "I like to work with my hands so I think it will be a good field for me," she says. The fact that Nia admits preferring to work alone is conducive to working in a dental laboratory setting.

Nia describes herself as a "private" individual who's not very outgoing or social. She likes most her own company or the company of close friends as opposed to going out a lot. With a smile, she reveals she's "self-centered." Which is her way of saying she's very "independent."

For relaxation, Nia enjoys cross-stitch. She mostly decorates pillows and is right now working on a set of pillows for the Johnson C. Smith football team.

A former graphic arts major, this week's beauty also makes car signs in her spare time. She hand-paints the signs with an air brush.

Nia also likes bike riding and she's learning to play pool. She's looking forward to learning to play tennis and racquetball.

The youngest in her family, Nia has one brother Henry and one sister Betty. She says it's no big deal being the so-called "baby" in the family. "My brother gets all the attention anyway because he's the only guy," Nia laughs.

She has great admiration for her mother, Geneva Durant, who, Nia says, "is always doing something. She caters, sews, and organizes things. And she gets things done on her own without anyone helping her."

If she could have the one thing she wants above all else, this young lady claims it would be "the chance to go to school without any financial problems." Nia says when she does go away to school she's going to miss "going in her house and opening the refrigerator." Even so, she's still anxious to get out on her own, though she believes her mother doesn't want her to leave.

When Nia finishes school and has a few more years of experience, her ultimate ambition is to own a dental lab and have lots of clients.

"The time is now to discover what you can do," offers Nia in advice to other young people. She implies there is no excuse for giving up on one's goals. And she concludes, "Rely on yourself not other people."

Bill Johnson's Key Motivation Was To Make A Difference

By Audrey C. Lodato
Post Staff Writer

"His key motivation was to make a difference."

That's how Gerald O. Johnson described the driving force behind his father, the late Willie L. "Bill" Johnson.

Johnson was owner and publisher of the Charlotte Post for 12 years. He died June 20, 1986, after a three-month bout with leukemia.

Newspapering was in the man's blood, according to his son. While working full time for the United States Post Office (he was the first black to serve as a mail carrier in Charlotte), Johnson also worked part time as a reporter for several newspapers, including the Charlotte Observer, the Charlotte News, the Afro-American, and the Norfolk Journal and Guide.

Johnson was born in Laurence, SC, on March 7, 1918. He attended Second Ward High School in Charlotte and earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from the United States Armed Forces Institute. He did additional study, through the Newspaper Institute of America.

In 1947, Johnson began his Post Office career, from which he retired about 1972.

Johnson was the first known black to work for a white daily news-



Bill Johnson
.....Editor-Publisher

paper in the area. During the mid-fifties, he covered sports at Johnson C. Smith University and the local black high schools for the

Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte News.

He went on to serve as sports information director at Smith in the late fifties and early sixties.

After his involvement with the Queen City Gazette, a business venture that folded in the sixties, Johnson began working for the Post.

After he retired from the Post Office, Johnson was managing editor of the paper under Garland Atkins, who bought the paper when Dr. Tross died. Johnson then bought it from Atkins in 1974.

Gerald Johnson recalled, "When he got into all the black newspapers, it became his dream to own one."

Johnson believed in being involved in his community. Besides keeping his paper involved in the goings-on of Charlotte's black citizenry, he took an active part in a variety of community organizations. He was a member of the West Charlotte Lions Club, the YMCA board, the Association for Sickle Cell Disease, and the William E. Robinson Post 7775 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He also served on two boards of the Small Business Administration and was active in fundraising for Johnson C. Smith.

Johnson is survived by three sons and three grandchildren.

"Freedom Riders 1986" Witness Victories

One of the most important elections of the decade took place recently in the Alabama Black Belt. At stake were numerous political offices held by black elected officials in 10 key black-majority counties. Also at stake were the progressive gains which have been made in that area over the past several years.

The area is often referred to as "the cradle of the civil rights movement." It is here that many lost their lives in the determined struggle for the right to vote. It is here that Jimmie Lee Jackson and Viola Liuzzo were killed during the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965. It is also near here that four little black children were bombed in a Birmingham church in 1956.

The June 3 primary was the area's first election since a Justice Department investigation targeted the black leadership of those five counties with the largest number of black elected officials: Greene, Perry, Sumter, Lowndes and Wilcox. Local citizens had charged that the investigation was launched to decrease black voter turnout in the upcoming elections.

In an effort to counter the chilling effect of that investigation, the Commission for Racial Justice of the 1.7 million-member United Church of Christ began a "Freedom Riders 1986" campaign. Over the last four months the Commission took more than 100 freedom riders, hailing from several states, to Alabama to work on voter mobilization.

According to the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., the Commission's Executive Director, the aim of the group was to bear witness with those who had been intimidated by the Justice Department investigation, to mobilize black voters and to monitor the primary election. In Alabama the group joined with other freedom workers who had also come from across the country to assist in the election.

As Dr. Chavis told a church congregation two days before the election, "I don't have to come from New York or Washington, DC, or anywhere else to tell you how to vote. You know how to vote. I'm here in the time of the Lord only to make sure that you do vote. We are called



Speaking at a voter mobilization prayer vigil in Greene Co., Ala., is Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., Executive Director of the Commission for Racial Justice of the 1.7 million-member United Church of Christ. With him is Spiver Gordon (l), the long-time Greene Co. civil rights leader, who, along with other key civil rights leadership, was the target of a Justice

Department investigation. Rev. Chavis took over 100 community organizers as part of the "Freedom Riders 1986" campaign to Alabama to mobilize black voters, most recently for the June primary. Numerous black elected officials, including Sen. Sanders, were re-elected in that primary. (Photo by Gene Young)

on June 3 to practice our faith by not giving into the powers of evil and staying home, but by coming out and having a joyous day."

As a result of strong grass roots political organization and with the assistance of concerned volunteers from throughout the U.S. key political posts were retained in the hands of black office holders. One election centered around the seat of incumbent black State Senator Hank Sanders. Sen. Sanders, a dedicated civil rights attorney, was the first black state senator elected from the western Alabama Black Belt in over 100 years. He was first elected in 1983.

Sen. Sanders won with 58 percent of the vote. In analyzing his victory he noted, "My opponent was so

busy consolidating the white vote that he unwittingly helped us consolidate the black vote." Sen. Sanders' opponent, Andrew M. Hayden, had said in an interview that his candidacy offered white voters their first opportunity to vote for a black candidate who would represent their interests.

Yet the hard struggles of the Civil Rights Movement are still deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the Alabama Black Belt. At a prayer vigil in Greene County where Dr. Chavis spoke the Saturday before the election, Mrs. Juanita Walton and her husband Lewis Walton spoke of the way it was before the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Mrs. Walton reflected, "I went through a lot of trouble to get

registered back before the Voting Rights Act. Two white people had to sign the application form for you back then in order for blacks to get registered. That's why the vote is so important to me now. It makes me feel really important. It makes me feel like I'm on the level with the ones that think they're on top."

The Walton's, both in their 70s, have been community organizers in Greene County since the early 1960s. The election in Greene County was particularly important as it took place in the wake of continued Federal and state intimidation of black voters. In fact, while the Freedom Riders were in Alabama an FBI agent conspicuously drove See Freedom On Page 11A

TURTLE-TALK



He is strong who conquers others; he who conquers himself is mighty.