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Derek Barnes' Story

Is The School System Guilty Of Undermining A Student's Progress ?

By Jalyne Strong
Post Managing Editor

In the past, there wasn't much need for Richard and Mamie Barnes to be concerned about their son's educational progress. Fourteen-year-old Derek Barnes, a rising ninth grader at McClintock Junior High School, is an high achiever in academics, an all around athlete, a popular student involved in his school's extra-curricular activities. "He's doing very well," his parents thought.

Then, this past May, Derek was rejected from inclusion in the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS).

And through what is turning out to be, a long, complicated parental query into the reasons for Derek's exclusion, the Barneses are finding not only do they have cause for concern but ,furthermore, they have cause for alarm.

They have discovered, although Derek has essentially continued to be an above average student, there are questionable procedures going on at his school which may be undermining his progress.

Since the first week in May to date, Derek's parents have written numerous letters to the people involved in the education of their son, including McClintock Junior High School Principal James Cockerham; Thelma Johnson of the Equal Opportunity Office of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS); Andrew Haywood, Area Superintendent of CMS East-West Charlotte Area Center; Sarah Stevenson, of the CMS Student Policy Committee; and Robert Hanes, acting Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools.

As of June 8, by which time the Barneses had not received what they feel are satisfactory answers to questions about their son's rejection, they sent out a letter to Dale Hawley, Director of Student Activities for the National Association of Secondary School Principal. The letter is an official complaint against Cockerham and the staff members of the NJHS selection committee for 1987, "persons responsible for the NJHS inductions at McClintock."

In the complaint, the Barneses wrote: "Our son was denied induction into the honor society at McClintock Junior High although he met all criteria for induction. Upon questioning (Cockerham) about what appeared to be an unfair action, we became aware of several violations."

Ten specific violations were cited by the Barneses in this letter, including: inconsistent application of standards; blackballing, unprofessional conduct by committee members; subjective and personal bias; and unfair and unusually harsh scrutiny of Derek.

How Was Derek Judged?

"We had never been led to believe anything other than the fact that Derek was doing wonderful in school and there was absolutely no problems to speak of," Mamie Barnes relates.

Her son's grade point average for the school year is 3.1, above the 3.0 average required for induction in the honor society. Moreover, Derek scored 84 on the school system's CAT exam, and his conduct, according to his report card, has been deemed excellent and/or acceptable by his teachers. Elected to McClintock's Executive Council for two consecutive years (86-87), Derek also played football, basketball and was the recipient of the Coaches Award in basketball.

In fact, the only indication the Barneses ever had that there was any "problem" with Derek's performance at school arose out of his exclusion from the honor society.

Cockerham has said Derek was turned down because of "a lack of service, character or citizenship." He declines to be specific about the reasons saying, "The things that take place in the selection committee meetings are confidential and I'm not obliged to discuss them with the parents or anyone else."

As the Barneses had not been informed previously by the school of any infractions by Derek in the areas of "service, character or citizenship" they questioned the validity of this assessment and was referred by Cockerham to Derek's school counselor, Daniel Shearer.

Fourteen-year-old Derek Barnes as an eighth grader at McClintock Junior High School earned above average marks, played all sports, and served on the Student Council.

Subjective Stereotyping

The parents met with Shearer with the initial belief they would hear concrete answers about why Derek may have ben excluded from the honor society. Instead, Mrs. Barnes says, "We only heard from Shearer his perception of how he felt Derek should act."

In conference with the counselor, Mrs. Barnes reports "Shearer told us that Derek was 'overly confident' and the he 'managed to get under the skin of one or two teachers.' Shearer also said," Mrs. Barnes relates, that "Derek is a fast talker and a smooth talker.

"He said Derek 'has never misbehaved or done anything that warrants a reprimand' but he feels Derek 'tries to be slick.'"

One thing that struck the Barneses as particularly odd was Shearer mentioning the fact that one day he had seen Derek walking with "some undesirable black boys."

"Shearer said they were not doing anything wrong but he could not believe he saw Derek in these boys' company.

"Other things were revealed during this conversation with Shearer," maintains Mrs. Barnes. "But strange at it may seem, he failed to reveal things about Derek that would have kept him off the honor society. He only revealed many of his own hang-ups and prejudices."

The Fairness Factor

Based upon their conference with Shearer, the Barneses concluded, "We are of the opinion that acceptance into the NJHS is too highly subjective. We are adamant about what seems to be happening to our black children---especially our black males.

"I believe Derek was assessed unfairly because he was perceived by a couple of the selection committee members as being "arrogant."

Mrs. Barnes also claims her alarm peaked when she was told by one of Derek's teachers, who prefers to remain anonymous, "You better look into what is happening with Derek and the NJHS."

An added aggravation to the Barneses predicament was the fact Cockerham seems unconcerned with the whole situation. "He appears to be more concerned with upholding the committee's decision, than with finding reasonable answers about Derek," says Mrs. Barnes.

Cockerham does maintain, "The integrity of the group is honored and what they've come up with stands. As far as I'm concerned everything is above board and straight. I have not seen anything wrong with the decision."

Cockerham pointed out that

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Martin Proposes UNCF Support

UNCF Statewide Campaign Kicked Off

RALEIGH, N.C.- N.C. Governor James Martin and the Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of TIME, INC. helped the six North Carolina United Negro College Fund institutions begin their 1987 fund drive officially this week, while celebrating the success of the 1986 drive.

Martin joined with J. Richard Munro, Chairman of UNCF, to begin the 1987 year of the largest minority fund-raiser in the United States.

In his keynote address Munro said, "America's historically black colleges helped redeem the soul of this country."

He said, "An increasing proportion of America's work force will be black, and unless these people are properly trained and educated our country will suffer," he added. "Corporate support of UNCF institutions is a matter of self-interest. We need-very badly the talent that these schools graduate. UNCF colleges and universities give America a competitive edge, and it involves our soul."

Governor Martin, who served as the Honorary Chairman of last year's drive, hosted a reception at the Governor's Mansion in Raleigh for the six N.C. member institutions prior to Munro's address, and called on North Carolinians to support this year's drive in the same spirit of the previous year. A total of more than $1 million dollars was raised during the 1986 drive in North Carolina alone.

Martin said, "We as a people can respond to the need for increased support."

He praised the academic standards of the UNCF institutions. He said, "The special atmosphere, unique environment and smaller class size all contribute to the prepared students that these institutions graduate."

He praised corporate America, and corporate North Carolina for their continued support as well as individual citizens of the state.

Martin presented the coveted "Patterson Cup" to Shaw University and Saint Augustine's College in Raleigh for their exemplary performance in the 1986 campaign. The two institutions joined together to raise more than $200,000 during the 1986 drive. Anheuser Bush and their local distributor, Harris Wholesale, Inc. also received awards for their major contributions to the 1986 drive.

Nationally, more than $38 million dollars was raised during the

Gov. Jim Martin

1986 drive. To date the National UNCF drive has raised more than $400 million since 1944. These funds benefit students attending the 42 UNCF institutions across the country.

Six of those institutions are located in North Carolina. They are: Barber-Scotia College, Concord; Livingstong College, Salisbury; Johnson C. Smith University,

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District 3 Race Gets Another Candidate

Along With Record and Scarborough

The race for District 3 has a new member. Samuel L. Carr will announce his candidacy for District 3 City Council Sunday, June 28, 7 p.m., at Village Court in the Brookhill Community.

On hand will be several noted guests from the United House of Prayer For All People, including, Apostle J. C. Crawford, Apostle C. B. Gibson, Apostle C. Taylor, Richard Malnati, a local music instructor, and James C. Ross.

Carr made his decision based upon problems surrounding inadequate housing conditions, benefits for the elderly, unemployment and the garbage collection process.

Carr has been an employee of the City's Sanitation Department for eight years and is spokesperson for the Concerned Sanitation Workers. He is married to Arnetta Robinson Carr, and has nine children.

Carr asks that you join him in this auspicious occasion which will feature the McCullough Marching Band, choirs and refreshments.

Enrollment, Financial Crises Place Catholic School In Jeopardy

By Loretta Richardson
Post Staff Writer

The Crossing guard, on Statesville Avenue signals for all traffic to stop. Stepping boldly across the street are boys, dressed in freshly pressed, white shirts, ties and slacks and girls, clothed in blue and black checkered uniforms and white blouses.

Out of the way of traffic, these bright, eager youngsters enter the one-story red brick school building and another day begins at Our Lady of Consolation Catholic School.

This scene, repeated over a period of thirty years has helped to establish Our Lady of Consolation Catholic School as a tradition of excellence in the Northwest community.

"The school has a name of its own," proudly announced Allean Conner, principal of Our Lady.

But, because of financial crises, that tradition of excellence and established name hangs in the balance.

What has contributed to the financial difficulty the school is experiencing is a combination of low enrollment in certain grades (fourth grade through eighth) and a reduction of funds from the school's principal financial supporter, Diocese of Charlotte.

"In the past the Diocese has subsidized $100,000. They have cut back their support by 50%, stating that the pre-school grades through third were the more critical grades that needed support."

With that announcement, parents who were expecting to enroll their children in the fourth, fifth and sixth grade classes at Our Lady were facing the grim possibility of placing their children elsewhere for their education.

The Parents, however, decided on another plan of strategy. Within the steering committee of the Home School Association, the parents and teachers formed the Ways and Means Committee, determined to raise a minimum of $125,000, a figure which would ensure that their children who would be in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades would be able to continue their education at Our Lady if enrollment, in these grades, does not increase this year.

"The amount of money we will have to raise really depends on the enrollment," commented Jesse Callie, chairperson of the Ways and Means committee. "If there is full enrollment, then we're only talking about raising $25,000 and if enrollment reaches to 80% of capacity, then we will only need to raise $40,000."

"If the parents were able to come up with the money, then we would be able to keep those three grades for another year," confirmed Mrs. Conner.

"As it stands now, it is just too expensive to maintain those grades and provide our quality of education with such low enrollments, especially without the subsidy from the Diocese," she added.

Faced with such a tremendous, financial challenge the Ways and Means committee has already launched their plan of attack. "Over 800 letters have gone out to Our Lady of Consolation Catholic School alumni asking for $500 donations. We are ask-

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Unless financial conditions improve at Our Lady of Consolation Catholic School, these youngsters (pictured above) will be the last group of eighth graders to graduate from the private school. Pictured above are: First Row: (left to right) Clayree Avent,Ms. Amanda Graham, Lannie Bennett, LaRavi McCauley, Tara White, Tawana Carr, Renee Alexander, Tiffany Kirby, Allean Conner (principal) and Karen Davis. Second Row: (left to right) Mrs. Rushenna Flack, Angela Pettis, Tarnisha Graves, Ancala Franks, Kenyon Patton, Teresa Alexander, Jennifer Alexander and Maurice Heath.

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