

U.S. Education Amazes S. Africans

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the schools and the desks. The classes are tremendously overcrowded, the ratio is 100 students to one teacher," he said. "The government doesn't even encourage education for blacks. There are road blocks every 100 meters where the police check passes and confiscate books."

Another educator, who asked not to be identified for fear of punishment, said it would be wonderful if South African schools had programs like Teen-Age Parents Services and a school for excluded students. "It would make the young mother or delinquent still feel like a part of the community instead of resorting to the streets," she said.

The consensus of the group was that blacks in America have much greater opportunities than the blacks in South Africa.

"It's great that the state pays for each child's education equally. I would encourage all black people to go to school. If I lived in America I would go for it," she said.

While tour guide Kim Jones, a student at Smith, told the history of the school, many of the educators marveled at magnolia trees and searched for spots of shade. Others hummed native African songs and snapped photographs.



Photo/CALVIN FERGUSON

Kim Jones (center) leads a tour of South African educators at Johnson C. Smith

June Fredricks acknowledged that there are distinct differences between the two black cultures but she says that there some similarities. "In order to be

a teacher you have to have a degree just like in America. You are about 21 when you get out of college," Fredricks said.

There are also similarities in

entertainment taste. When Jones asked if the group was familiar with The Cosby Show, the group approvingly replied in unison, "Ummhumm."

Rev. Stallings: 'We Should Not Deny Our Culture'

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Stallings was suspended by the archdiocese of Washington for having mass at his Imani (Swahili for faith) Temple on July 2. The services at the Imani Temple, which is temporarily located at Howard University's Law School Chapel, attracted over 3,000 people.

Having tried to work within the framework of the church, Stallings said what he is doing is the best way to bring about change.

Some observers say Stallings will be excommunicated from the church if he continues but he does not believe that will happen. "That's (excommunication) is the last thing they want to do. It would split the black Catholic church," he commented.

Stallings has continued saying mass and performing sacraments despite his suspension.

"The Catholic church is not meeting the cultural and spiritual needs of its black parishioners," he said. "Ours (Imani Temple) is a liberation theology...we're talking about creating so that we can make inroads. The church has not allowed us to take control of our local parishes," he said.

Stallings contends that white priests are not educated about the black community.

"When a priest is sent into a Spanish community he is

taught about that community and culture before he enters. This is not being done for the black community.

"We have specific cultural needs and they need to be sensitive to that," he said.

"Most of our leaders used to come from the church," Stallings observed.

"Church made us feel like we were somebody. Church is where we develop our agenda for life. Life for us...is holistic."

Stallings made the observation that when blacks are in church they participate and when they go to sporting events, they're active; but whites are generally quiet in church but are vocal at sporting events.

"We should not deny our culture or inclinations," he added.

In his services at the Imani Temple he combines African religious rites and gospel with traditional Catholic liturgy.

During Stallings's 12-year assignment in Washington, he built up a black parish from 200 to 2,000 families.

While Stallings has a large congregation, he says African-Americans need to redirect themselves to finding self-determination.

"We are no longer vigilant and inquisitive. We're not watching and asking questions," he said. "We have to remain vigilant."

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