

Black colleges deal with racial integration

By Elizabeth Tennyson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DURHAM - Billy Jones insists he is just like every other freshman at North Carolina Central University. He goes to class, plays cards in the student union and tries to plot the rest of his life.

But Jones is different. He's white.

Brought into the university under a "minority presence" grant, Jones is part of a growing minority of white students on the historically and predominantly black NCCU campus.

Around the country, schools like NCCU are being forced by the courts and the government to desegregate. NCCU is under a state mandate to maintain a 15 percent minority - read: nonblack - population.

And like others in that predicament, NCCU is opening its purse strings to bring those minority students on board.

Jones admits he would have chosen another school had it not been for the scholarship: "They offered to pay for me to come here, so I'm here. That's why I'm not at (University of North Carolina) right now."

In an era of angry white males and embattled affirmative action, the situation at NCCU and other traditionally black schools has a certain through-the-looking-glass quality.

And while there are some who welcome whites to these schools, there are others who fear that whites will over-

what has always been a haven for them - one of the few places where they are in the majority.

"I feel more comfortable in this environment than I would at a school where we're not the majority," said Jonathan Hayden, a freshman at NCCU. "It helps me to strengthen who I am as a black male."

"I don't see Carolina or North Carolina State going out of their way to bring black people there," said Ila Winston, a journalism student. "I don't think it's right for us to do it if they don't."

In fact, both North Carolina and North Carolina State actively recruit minorities. But no matter how successful those efforts, neither is likely to lose its majority-white status.

Reginald Wilson, Ph.D., senior scholar at the American Council on Education, said he understands the sentimental attachment to black schools, but would remind students that they oppose segregation in other sectors.

"Students fought for desegregation," said Wilson, who is black. "I suppose it comes as a shock to some that the rule applies to black schools as well."

And Wilson says, true desegregation means all public institutions must eventually lose their racial identity.

Since desegregation first was ordered, a number of state-supported historically black schools have become

predominantly white. West Virginia State University is now 85 percent white and Bluefield State College in Virginia is 75 percent white, Wilson said.

While the balance shifts faster in states with large white populations, Wilson said it is simply a matter of time before similar changes occur at all state-supported black schools.

At some schools, change may come only under federal mandate. Tennessee State University, for example, was ordered to raise the number of white students to 50 percent by this year. So far, the school is hovering around 30 percent, Wilson said.

Other experts say changing the racial balance does not have to be as painful as students imagine.

"Lincoln University in Missouri is now predominantly white, but it doesn't change the historical context of that university. They still celebrate the founding of that university by former slaves," said Joyce Payne, Ph.D., director of the Office for the Advancement of Public Black Colleges within the National Association of Land Grant Schools and Colleges.

She admitted that changing the complexion of historically black schools may raise fears in the community, but said the influx of white students at some campuses should be a point of pride.

"I think it simply means that the universities are competitive and are providing the

kind of educational services that those communities need," Payne said, belying stereotypes that they are less challenging academically and less desirable socially.

Billy Jones agreed: "There are too many people who just think it's a bad school because it's historically black. My parents didn't want me to come here, but when they saw it was a good school, they were OK with it."

For the 1995-1996 academic year, NCCU has 14.8 percent minority students, up 1 percent over the previous year. "Nobody wants this institution to lose its identity or to lose the ratio either," said Vicki Fuller, who heads the school's Minority Presence Committee.

But nobody wants to lose minority recruits, either, so NCCU pays special attention to their problems. The school has introduced a big brother and sister program that pairs incoming minority students with older students, most of them black.

Minority students are being appointed to student committees; faculty, staff and new students are undergoing "diversity appreciation training."

Everyone benefits, administrators say, from racial mixing.

"The reality is the world is not all black and not all white," said George Walls Jr., special assistant to the NCCU chancellor, "and when our students leave here they need to be able to operate in a diverse environment."

Farrakhan to make Freaknik appearance

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA - Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam leader, may extend a scheduled April 16 appearance in Atlanta to address black college students attending Freaknik later in that week.



Farrakhan

A b d u l A k b a r Muhammad, an aide to the minister, said Farrakhan would decide today whether to reshuffle some dates on an 11-city tour to

extend his stay in order to address the thousands of black students expected for the annual spring gathering.

Muhammad announced Farrakhan's planned visit Sunday at First Iconium Baptist Church. He also criticized Atlanta business owners who say they're going to close early during Freaknik, which spawned scattered looting in the city last year.

"They want to try and give this the kind of image that black people are just savage, it's terrible," he said. "These are our students. We have to encourage them to do well in school just as white people strengthen their students and

give them opportunities to blow off steam and enjoy themselves during their spring break."

Farrakhan's 11-city tour is to talk up the success of the Million Man March and his recent world tour.

An aide to Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell said the mayor was traveling Sunday and could not be reached for comment.

Some have said the mayor hurt himself politically among blacks last year by taking a hard-line stance on Freaknik.

The Rev. Gerald Durley, who heads a committee appointed by Campbell to help structure this year's Freaknik, said stu-

dents may not make time to listen to Farrakhan's message during the sprawling party.

"They come for their purpose, not for the purpose of an individual," he said. "These students have decided what they're going to do before they get here."

Steven Muhammad, a concert promoter and Nation of Islam leader, is trying to gain approval from the city for the use of Grant Park during Freaknik.

He said an appearance by Farrakhan could draw 200,000 students to Grant Park.

"Freaknik would change as we know it," he said.

Road project means major changes in west

Continued from page 1A

Ford Road.

"It's going to have greenery and a sidewalk, then another greenery," Cousar said. "They will widen it about 16 feet."

Cousar said his building may have to be torn down, but that would be positive.

"We need new development," Cousar said. "We need open space and places to park. Winos and drug dealers have places to hide now."

"People are just not going to come to your business (if it's) like that."

The four-foot widening "would not help them (businesses) grow," he said. "Some businesses will have to relocate, at least temporarily. Some will come back."

"But we have got to look beyond today and tomorrow. We have got to look years ahead at what will be good for the children."

Some others agree that the heavily traveled roadway - likely to

be even more so when Carolinas Stadium opens in August - needs to be widened.

"It should be widened, with all this traffic," said Margaret Collins, who has lived at Russell and Beatties Ford for 10 years. "The traffic should

get better. There used to be a lot of accidents before they put in the third lane."

Stanley McCullough, manager of Briarwood Florist at 1407 Beatties Ford Road, agreed. A major problem is the spillover traffic from I-85 and I-77 whenever there is a traffic accident or construction blockages. And, ambulances and fire trucks trying to reach other northwest Charlotte areas have to fight through the narrow stretch of Beatties Ford at high traffic times.

"We need the improvements because of the traffic," McCullough said.

McCullough said he doesn't think his business will be affected by the widening project.

"From the little bit it is going to take, it's not going to affect me at all," McCullough said Tuesday.

Pete Cunningham, a N.C. House of Representatives member and owner of the Historic Excelsior Club near Oaklawn on Beatties Ford, said the club won't be affected much by the widening.

"My concern is I'm not sure widening Beatties Ford Road is a good move or bad move," he said. "The question more important to me is that the

people who live on this side of town, who travel this way day in and day out, know what's going on."

"I have mixed feelings about the widening...the decision will be made by city council," he said. "I think their approach now is to get more people involved in terms of widening and not widening and give us some indication of what it will look like."

"It's going to permanently change folks' life. I don't think two additional feet is asking too much. We want it to be done right. Cost should not dictate what program you use."

City Council member Malachi Greene, whose District 2 includes the area, said the new proposal will be designed by city officials and then presented to the City Council for final approval.

"I'm not taking sides," Greene said. "I may have to vote on it. I wanted to make sure folks got a chance to have input."

"I suspect everyone is concerned about losing their property, especially if it is income-producing," Greene said. "I am just as concerned about the business people as anybody else. They create jobs. They have remained in

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