

MELODY MICERE STEWART

In the
spirit of
Ma'at



A slave ship speaks to us

"We have come over a way that with tears has been watered... We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered."

This exalted, musical tribute to honor our heritage comes from the second verse of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing." Honoring history means preserving and observing it, learning from it and being empowered by it.

In November 1996, African Americans in North Carolina will have that opportunity. In 1701, 35 miles west of Key West, Florida, the slave ship Henrietta Marie sank after trading its cargo of enslaved Africans for sugar, indigo and cotton. In 1972, the shipwrecked remnants were discovered, along with shackles to fit children and adults. Twenty years later, "A Slave Ship Speaks: The Wreck of the Henrietta Marie" exhibit should implore every African American to confront the horrors of our history, acknowledge the strength of our ancestors to endure and be empowered to move mightily into the next millennium. Alas, this is not the case.

To understand the objections and misgivings of some blacks to bring the exhibit to Charlotte, I refer to the writings of Carter G. Woodson. In his searing "Miseducation of the Negro," Woodson writes, "The large majority of the Negroes who have put on the finishing touches of our best colleges, however, are all but worthless in the uplift of their people... They become estranged from the masses and the gap between widens as the years go by." Some African Americans, not understanding the full value of this historical opportunity were/are concerned about a negative image, hurVangry feelings and a "rehash of old history." (You would never hear a Jewish person rejecting the opportunity to enlighten the public through powerful artifacts from the Holocaust. They understand the relevance of history to the present and the need to tell one's story frequently.)

Unfortunately, too many of us have become so estranged from our history and ourselves that we can't even face the truth of our existence! The entire Charlotte community nearly forfeited an opportunity to help bridge and heal the racial divide through education, understanding and empathy that the exhibit of the Henrietta Marie represents.

"God of our weary years, God of our silent tears. Thou who has brought us thus far on the way..." Like the lyrics to "Lift Every Voice...", the meaning of the slave ship must be taught to our children. It represents the power to endure and transcend the dehumanizing systems and institutions that still plague us. Instead of running away, African Americans need to embrace the past's painful reality so we can intelligently strategize for the future.

SAVE achieving lofty goal

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Bynum has personally received awards from the Children's Defense Fund (Moral Leadership) and Focus on Leadership (Unsung Heroes).

"I really try hard not to consider myself the founder," Bynum said. "I'm a supporter. I consider Alex as founder. It was his death that angered students."

Bynum makes several appearances each year to help

SAVE grow.

"When I go to a school, I make one of the students get up and talk with me...to their peers," Bynum said. "I try to keep SAVE as student-run... them doing their own things. It takes a strong faculty, but it must be students."

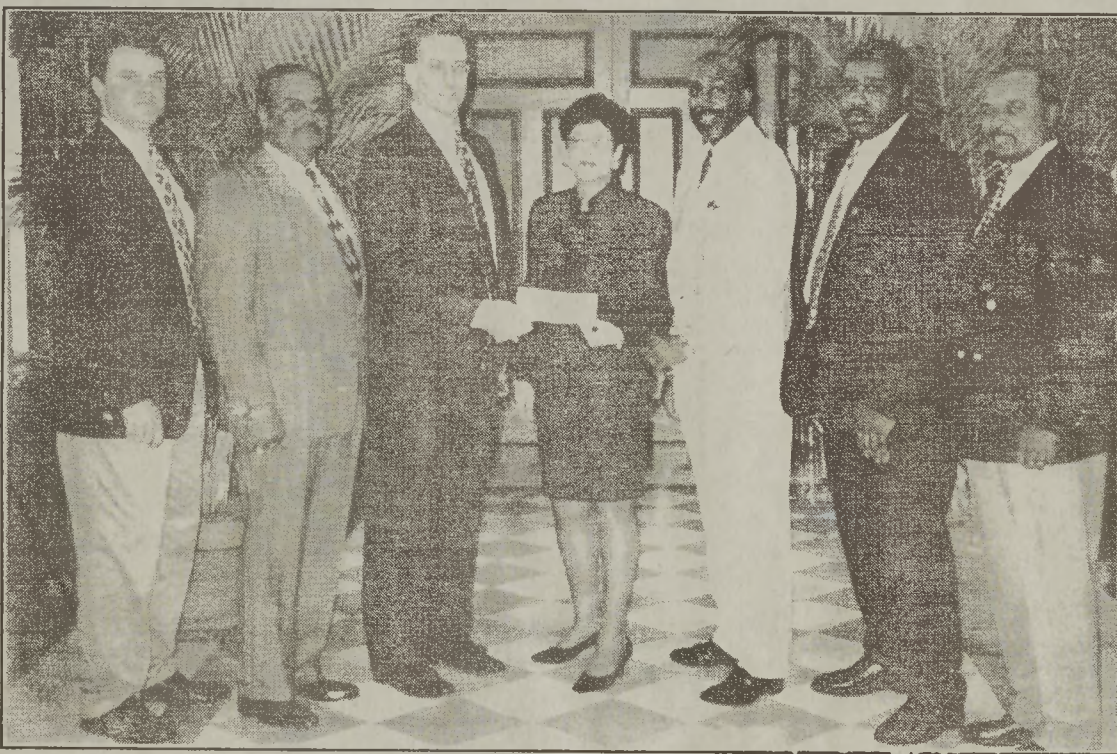
"Someone knew something was going to happen and said nothing. What we tell students when we go to high schools and junior high schools, is if something is going to happen, tell some-

body. They have resource officers now. Tell them."

Bynum hopes SAVE continues to grow and that young people will heed its message. "My dream is that every school in North Carolina has a SAVE chapter," she said. "I'd love to follow up on all the schools and make sure the SAVE chapters are running the way that they should."

"As long as we can save one child, I feel good. One day it may be mine, my daughter (Portia Gerald, 4)."

Coke contributes to JCSU



PHOTO/COCA-COLA CONSOLIDATED

Coca-Cola Bottling Co. Consolidated presented Johnson C. Smith University \$5,000 for the university's capital campaign. Pictured are (left to right) Chris Dunkley of Coca-Cola; retailer Thomas Neely; Pat McNamara of Coca-Cola; JCSU President Dorothy Cowser Yancy; retailer Willie Waddell; Terry Peterson of Coca-Cola and Elliot Robinson, JCSU's vice president for financial affairs.

Brown remembered as pioneer

Buried at Arlington Cemetery

Continued from 1A

Brown and 34 other people were killed last week in a plane crash in Croatia. He was leading a trade mission with the aim of helping to rebuild the war-torn country.

His closed coffin was displayed in the lobby of the Commerce building until Wednesday morning.

A public celebration of Brown's life was held later Tuesday at Metropolitan Baptist Church.

Justin Fortune, 13, traveled to Washington from Baltimore after his mother told him about Brown's work and leadership.

"My mom said that Ron Brown is just as important an African American as Colin Powell, so I came here to learn a little bit about Ron Brown," he said.

Mary Krupka, 32, of Turlock, Calif., made an impromptu decision to pay respects to Brown while she was visiting the capital.

"Ron Brown was a very good example of, if you're willing to work hard you can do any-

thing," she said. "I think people should remember him that way."

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