

Intimidation rears its head

MELODYE MICERE STEWART

In the spirit of Ma'at



During the summer uprisings of the '60s, the world saw violence against African Americans that it had not seen since the days of "Red Summer" in 1919.

During that time, thousands were arrested, shot, beaten and some, murdered. The fear and intimidation of white supremacy was best symbolized by the burning of black churches. During the past 12 months, 31 black churches have been violated - burned and torched - and others threatened. The Clinton Administration has promised to "do all it can" to solve this latest manifestation of the still vexing scourge of racism, but, the challenge of changing our collective fate in America is up to us.

To understand why the black church has often been the target of white violence, one must look at history. The black church was the first institution created by Africans in America. Understanding who they were, they incorporated the name "African" into their dominations, e.g., African Baptist Church, African Methodist Episcopal Church. The awareness of their Africanness became a very real source of strength. As a result, these churches became strongholds of resistance, race education and critical societal agitation. It is this legacy of struggle which the churches of the civil rights era inherited.

Black houses of worship throughout the South and North participated in liberation struggle activities which made them targets of horrific fire bombings. Remember the death of four little black girls in Birmingham in 1963? As we are still caught in "crisis management," in terms of our collective action/reaction to events, the question is, whose children must be sacrificed in the next church firebombing of 1996 before we get off our collective hindparts to actively struggle on our own behalf? Harsh economic times have been the historical fuel of aggressive racial violence

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Frances Moore (left) and Lois Love work the soil on a Lillies of the Valley project. The Lillies is one of five African American garden clubs in Charlotte.

PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Flower club tests its mettle on petals

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Francis Moore wasn't always an ace gardener.

But now she's a green thumb, nurturing her skills as a member of a garden club that knows the meaning of petal power.

"There has been a tremendous change in all of us," Moore, a member of the Lillies of the Valley Garden Club, said. "I couldn't grow anything when I got into the club. I had a brown thumb. A lot of us did. We can see the difference over the years."

The Lillies of the Valley are eight women, aged 40 to 80 years old, who love growing things. The club's flower is the Lavender Orchid. It's motto: "Nothing Without Labor."

That's how they came to spend a Saturday afternoon outside the First Ward Shopping Center, planting flowers in front of Simmons Restaurant.

"We take on a project each year," said club secretary Frances Moore. "Simmons is a project. We did a beauty shop

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Paper focuses on homelessness

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While at the shelter, Manual got involved in a creative writing class taught by Maria Macon under the sponsorship of Mecklenburg County's parks and recreation department.

"That opened up different avenues for me," Manual said. "I had written briefly before, but nothing was published."

"At the shelter, I saw so many intelligent people, with such great sense, but for whatever reason - drug abuse, lack of self-esteem, laziness - they were homeless."

"I decided that once I left the shelter I would do something to assist the homeless community."

Manual's idea of a homeless street paper is borrowed from similar projects around the world, including major efforts in Chicago and Seattle.

The idea is to educate the community about homelessness, while providing an out-

let for homeless people to speak out about themselves and their problems.

The first issue will cover a wide range of issues, Manual said.

"We will be talking about the NAACP convention and letting the homeless and financially oppressed of Charlotte, getting them to join in and feel a part to boost their self-esteem."

There will be an article about different recreational programs of the Mecklenburg County offers and an article on different housing options.

"We have decided to target the Latin American market. The middle two pages will be in Spanish and written by the Latin American Coalition of Charlotte."

Manual plans to print 7,500 copies of the inaugural issue, some of which will be distributed free to help boost sales later.

Subscriptions are available and advertisers are being

sought to help defray costs.

At first, the paper will publish monthly, but Manual hopes that can be increased to every two weeks.

"These papers are growing across the world," Manual said. "They are international now because homelessness is an epidemic. This will be the first homeless newspaper in North Carolina."

"I hope by the fall to expand to Winston-Salem and from there to other cities in North Carolina and South Carolina."

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