

## Rites of Passage

By Theresa Humphrey  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEWARK, Del. — Brandy Jones is becoming a woman but she won't have to face the next stage of her life alone.

Jones is part of the Delaware chapter of the Afrikan National Rites of Passage United Kollektive — one among many organizations nationwide that put into practice the African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child."

The "village" was at the University of Delaware on Friday for the first day of the Kollektive's 10th national convention this weekend.

Four hundred participants, mostly youths, were registered for a weekend of workshops that ranged from African and European philosophy to discipline, respect and protocol.

There were drummers and dancers and vendors with books, T-shirts and African inspired jewelry and wares.

They were arriving by the busload from at least 10 states including, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Kentucky.

Rites of passage organizations are steeped in African culture, using that as a basis to train youths to be proud of their heritage and understand their roots. As participants prove themselves worthy and ready, they go through a "rite of passage" or ritual to the next stage of their life.

The Kollektive believes in a holistic approach to spiritual, mental and physical health as a way to understand oneself more clearly.

"It's an arena for cultural change. What it's taught me how to do is view everything from my perspective. We view everything through black eyes and how we fit into the picture," said Salimata Linger of the Delaware Kollektive, who also is co-chairman of the junior executive national council.

"It's very spiritual oriented," she said. "It doesn't matter if you're Muslim or Christian. As long as you're black, you're welcome into our family."

Lena Harris, one of the Delaware organizers, said, "It's not to teach hatred. It's to teach love of self. ... We have to learn to define ourselves. It's about going back and defining our roots."

"It gives a young person some self confidence, self esteem and gives them the equipment needed to compete in today's world with others," said Wilbert Fletcher, another organizer from the Delaware group.

At 18, Ms. Jones was preparing for her "crossover" ceremony into womanhood. A June graduate of Glasgow High School, she leaves in August for Bennett College in Greensboro. There will be a Kollektive there to welcome her when she arrives.

But Friday, while she was helping new arrivals register, she was also thinking about her ceremony Saturday night.

The ceremony will involve her mother and those closest to her who will give her an African name they feel best describes who she is and her purpose in life.

"It's like being reborn," Ms. Jones said.

"I'm very excited. But I know there are a lot of responsibilities that come with being an African-American woman with a purpose," she said.

## On a mission for peace



Imani McLaughlin (left) and Nina Johnson are headed to Nicaragua as part of the delegation representing Stop The Killing.

PHOTO/REV. JAMES BARNETT

By Tammie Tolbert  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Two Charlotte teens have decided to put their passports to use and help the people of Nicaragua.

Nina Johnson and Imani McLaughlin will be part of a 15-person delegation traveling to the Central American country as part of the "Stop The Killing Crusade."

"I've never really been overseas, but I am looking forward to it," said 16-year-old Nina Johnson.

She got the idea of going from Rev. James Barnett, founder of "Stop The Killing."

"In January, Rev. Barnett asked me if I would like me to go, and I said yes, because I like to travel and because I like to help kids," Johnson said. "I'm looking forward to

helping them learn how to read in English because a lot of the books they get are printed in English."

McLaughlin, 17, said she is very excited about going on this trip.

"I think that it is important to go to areas outside of your regular environment to help others who need your help," McLaughlin said. "I like doing things in my community and I consider going to Nicaragua as going to my community because there are a lot of people there of African descent."

For more than 10 years the "Stop The Killing Crusade" has given hope and assistance to children and adults of Nicaragua by ministering to them and helping them improve their standard of living. This year there will be

two delegations comprised of people from North Carolina and South Carolina going on the annual mission of hope.

Once in Nicaragua, the delegations will join another program called Witness for Peace. The volunteers will stay two weeks.

Johnson and McLaughlin will meet the delegation in Raleigh Aug. 3 and, after a two-day orientation, leave for Nicaragua Aug. 5 and return Aug. 17.

"The orientation will give us a crash course in Spanish...on key words we need to learn," Johnson said. "It is basically to prepare us for what we're going to do when we get to Nicaragua."

Johnson said she hopes to improve her Spanish-speaking skills while in Nicaragua, but also hopes "to be able to help

the people who really need my help."

The students' parents are also excited about the trip.

"We are used to our children going to different places, but we are excited that she has the privilege to do it for a worthwhile reason," said Gwendolyn Brown Johnson, Nina's mother. "Some people told us not to let her go because she is going to be living in a primitive environment. I responded by saying she is a Girl Scout and she has been exposed to living in some not so comfortable environments."

Artis Johnson Sr., Nina's father, is happy, but concerned for her safety.

"I think that it will be a good experience for her...I think it is great for people to travel at

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Las Amigas members: (L to R) Daisy Alexander, Juanita Woods, Barbara Atwater, Sylvia Sims, Dora Johnson, Johnnie Young, Marilyn Chisholm, Joyce Waddell, Barbara Crosby, Carolyn Wyatt.



Sylvia Sims was crowned Las Amigas National Queen.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Chapter of Las Amigas was recently named the 1995-1996 Outstanding Chapter of the Year at the national conclave in Fayetteville.

The chapter was selected because of its commitment, dedication, and local community service projects.

Service activities were submitted by Barbara Atwater and Arcasia Brewer. Dora Johnson, chapter president received the award.

## Seen and heard



PHOTO/CHARLES CLARKSON

Joetta Talford (right) and Felicia Grant (left) are two of the 35 cheerleaders for the Carolina Panthers, known as the Top Cats.

## Charlotte native details being black in America

By Darlene Superville  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Sam Fulwood isn't beating his head against the wall anymore. He has quit trying to convince whites that even subtle forms of racism are just as troubling to blacks as obvious prejudice.

"I firmly believed that at the millennium skin color would be as relevant as the color of someone's car," said Fulwood, an award-winning national correspondent for the Los

Angeles Times. "But the century's going to end and that's not anywhere near to being true."

"There are whites who will tell you we've made tremendous (racial) progress, but we aren't there."

In his first book, "Waking from the Dream: My Life in the Black Middle Class," Fulwood chronicles his disillusionment and fear that white-run America may never end its racism against blacks.

Growing up in Charlotte in the 1960s, he excelled in inte-

grated public schools and believed, as his minister father and schoolteacher mother taught him, that skin color would one day become an afterthought.

But he grew up and began to see things with his own eyes.

"This color line would shape everything I did," he said, answering questions after a book reading in a deep, slow Southern drawl.

"I've gotten hired in a succession of jobs where everybody took into account the fact that I was black. It wasn't an

accident," Fulwood said. "But there's no way you can prove that to white people."

Whites, he said, insist there's no race problem because "For Whites Only" signs have come down.

Black men and boys aren't lynched anymore and because no one uses racial epithets to address him.

But Fulwood wonders: How would they know?

"It does exist," Fulwood said. "They say it doesn't. They define the reality and therefore it doesn't exist."

## Around Charlotte

•The Charlotte Q.C. Rams alumni chapter will sponsor its fifth annual scholarship golf tournament on Saturday. Tee time is 8 a.m. at the Eastwood Golf Course and registration is \$50. Proceeds will be used to support the scholarship program for Charlotte-Mecklenburg graduates planning to attend Winston-Salem State University.

Donations are tax deductible. For more information about registration, call Don Cureton at 536-4264 or Theophilus Woodley at 597-1444.

•The Greater Carolinas Chapter of the Red Cross will offer training sessions for its Youth Peer Education Program from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday. The free session will train teens to become peer educators for schools, churches, and community youth groups. Training will include HIV/AIDS facts, interpersonal communications, public speaking and diversity awareness. For more information, call Kristin Hunicke at 347-8351.

•The Charlotte Philharmonic Chorus will hold auditions in August. All voice parts are needed. Singers will experience a variety of quality music literature from Renaissance, Baroque and Classical masterpieces to 20th century selections including pop, jazz and Broadway hits. Concerts are held at Blumenthal Performing Arts Center and Owens Auditorium, as well as other venues. Opportunities are available for solo and small ensemble engagements. For more information, call 846-2788.

•Theatre Charlotte and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Parks and Recreation will present a play titled "The Second City". The play examines the life of Charlotte's Brooklyn Community, a predominantly African American community. The performance on Saturday starts at 7 p.m. The performances on Sunday starts at 4:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. For more information, call 336-8454.

•The Hidden Valley Political Action Committee will have a fish fry at 6 p.m. on Saturday at Little Learner's Day Care on Tom Hunter Road. Plates are \$4.50. For more information, call 597-0307.

•There will be a Hidden Valley town meeting 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. August 14. Residents can talk about what they want to see happen in the community. For more information, call Alfreda Barringer at 597-9921 or 332-3090.

•The Washington Heights Community is having a "Bring the Neighborhood Together Day," 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday. The Coca Cola/Park and Recreation Culture Jam will be held at the L.C. Coleman park 5-8 p.m. For more information, call Vera Williams at 334-8466 or Mattie Marshall at 373-1808.

•The First Ward organization will meet 4-6 p.m. Sunday at the Second Ward Alumni House, 1905 Beatties Ford Road. For more information, call R. Taylor at 375-6379 or Thornton Haynes at 392-5147.

•There will be a Summer Reading Festival at the Charlotte Coliseum 1:30-3 p.m. Tuesday. For more information, call 336-3363.

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