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Life, times and legacy of Martin Luther King Jr./Section C



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THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

ALSO SERVING CABARRUS, CHESTER, ROWAN AND YORK COUNTIES

Grassroots activism

Grassroots groups respond to Cooper shooting

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

African Americans won't get respect without struggle, Essence Glover believes.

That's why he's part of a growing movement of young blacks who are becoming active in demanding justice and equality for African Americans in Charlotte.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," Glover, 25, says. "It is simply time to roll up our sleeves and go to work."

Glover is one the founders of Jihad, which along with Citizens for Justice and Central Piedmont Community College's Black Student Organization are grassroots groups protesting the fatal shooting of James Willie Cooper by Charlotte police officer Michael Marlow.

Though their origins differ, they have a common goal - youth involvement and a desire to see justice for African Americans.

Born shortly after the 1993 shooting death of Windy Gail Thompson, Citizens for Justice has lobbied for a non-partisan citizen review board to review cases where the police use excessive force.

CFJ sponsors annual tributes for slain African Americans and led the call for Black Monday, a citywide boycott planned for Jan. 27. Organizers are encouraging African Americans to stay home from work and attend several community-oriented functions.

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PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Members of Citizens For Justice marched to the Law Enforcement Center to protest the fatal shooting of James Willie Cooper by Charlotte police officer Michael Marlow. Several grassroots organizations, made up of young African Americans, have been vocal in demanding investigations of Marlow's actions and calling for his prosecution or resignation.

Police clear Marlow; activists not surprised

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

African Americans reacted warily to news that the Charlotte Police Department found the shooting death of unarmed black motorist James Willie Cooper "completely justified."

Police revealed that Officer Michael Marlow, who shot Cooper on Nov. 18, did not take a polygraph examination nor a drug test as part of the police investigation.

Police spokesman Keith Bridges said investigators felt

a lie-detector test would likely register an inaccurate reading on Marlow because the shooting was a "traumatic and stressful situation." Marlow was not an "appropriate candidate for the test," Bridges said.

"There were no inconsistencies with his statements and the evidence that prompted suspicion of a lack of honesty," Bridges said.

He said no drug test was given because Marlow's "behavior and statements at the time exhibited nothing to make anybody believe a drug test was necessary."

Groups organizing Black Monday on Jan. 27 said they were "not surprised that the City of Charlotte has chosen to disregard what is just and hold the 'keepers of the law' above the law."

"Justice would dictate not only Officer Michael Marlow's dismissal, but some sort of judicial action should be taken," the statement said.

A U.S. Justice Department investigation into the shooting continues. District Attorney Peter Gilchrist declined to take criminal action against Marlow last month, ruling the officer acted in self defense.

Police Chief Dennis Nowicki announced that Marlow had been cleared by the department's internal investigation early Tuesday after a 2 1/2-hour briefing of Charlotte City Council members.

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Nowicki



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

West Charlotte High School students debated the appropriateness of Ebonics in classrooms. The Oakland, Calif., school district has adopted Ebonics as a teaching tool for standard English.

Ebonics worth is defended, debated

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

"Ridiculous" "Just another way to keep black people down."

"You are not going to get a job at IBM speaking Ebonics."

That how a group of West Charlotte High School students reacted to a question about a subject that's filled newspapers and the airways for the past month.

The Oakland, Calif., school system announced in December it would consider Ebonics - also called Black English - a separate language and train its teachers to treat students speak-

ing it accordingly.

"What is talking black," asked 17-year-old Meredith Glover, after a classmate used that term to define Black English.

"When a child hears Black English or Ebonics constantly in their neighborhoods, when they hear that all around them, it's hard for them to understand the relationship to standard English," Meredith said.

But, she added, "The solution is not to teach Ebonics."

Those comments, and those of most adults who have ventured to address the subject, reveal many of the misconceptions about the subject and about

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Teacher's death underscores fire awareness

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The death of a popular math teacher David Butler in a Jan. 7 house fire is being used to alert other families to fire safety tips.

Butler, 44, died in a fire about 4 a.m. caused by a

couch pushed against an electric baseboard heating unit, according to David Lowery, chief investigator for the Charlotte Fire Department.

Butler's wife and two children escaped the fire. Butler, who went into the living room where the couch was burning, yelled for them to leave through a back window. He



Butler

could not get out through the front door and tried to go out of the kitchen, Lowery said.

He said the blaze spread quickly after heat broke

the front window, venting the fire and giving it a fresh supply of oxygen. Butler, who taught at West Charlotte High School, was then not able to get back down the hallway to escape from a back window.

The family had a deadbolt lock on the back door which required a key to open from

the inside and outside. The key was not in the lock, Lowery said.

"If you have a double key deadbolt lock, you need to put the key in the lock at night," Lowery said. "We want to make people aware of things

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Honor long overdue

7 black vets get WWII valor medals

By Sonya Ross
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - Vernon Baker was standing in the White House with glistening eyes and a brand new medal around his neck, but his mind was on the Italian mountainside where he earned his place in history 52 years ago.

Baker, 77, was reliving the April 1945 firefight in which he took out German gun posts and killed nine enemy soldiers with a gun and hand grenades. He thought of the other black men who fought beside him and died around him as they awaited reinforcements that never came.

"We've all been vindicated," Baker said. "Those that are not here with me, thank you, fellas, well done and I'll always remember you."

Baker, of St. Maries, Idaho, was one of seven black soldiers awarded the Medal of Honor on Monday for World War II valor that was overlooked by the Army of a tense, segregated era.

Medals were awarded posthumously to Staff Sgt. Edward A. Carter Jr. of Los Angeles; 1st Lt. John R. Fox of Cincinnati; Pfc. Willy F. James Jr. of Kansas City, Mo.; 1st Lt. Charles L. Thomas of Detroit; Pvt. George Watson of Birmingham, Ala.; and Staff Sgt. Ruben Rivers of Hotulka, Okla.

Fox, James, Rivers and Watson were killed in action. Carter died in 1963 and Thomas died in 1980.

"We're just happy the country we believe in has done this," said Thomas' niece, Sandra Thomas. "My uncle was an humble man. He believed in this country and he fought for it. I believe young people need to take a lesson from this."

In presenting the medals, President Clinton praised the seven men for fighting selflessly "to lead the forces of freedom to victory" in spite of the freedom they didn't have in their native America.

"They were prepared to sacrifice everything for freedom even though freedom's fullness was denied to them," Clinton said. "Now and forever, the truth will be known about these African Americans who gave so much that the rest of us might be

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