



◀ Locals dominate 4A track/1B
Recital music to teacher's ears/11A ▶



240 SX a
go-getter
Page 14B



The Charlotte Post

http://www.thepost.mindspring.com
THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

THE WEEK OF JUNE 5, 1997
VOLUME 22 NO. 37

75 CENTS
ALSO SERVING CABARRUS, CHESTER, ROWAN AND YORK COUNTIES

'Climate of tragedy'

Fire latest setback for Shabazzes

By Dale Russakoff
and Michael Fletcher
THE WASHINGTON POST

YONKERS, N.Y. — The lanky, 12-year-old grandson of Malcolm X, dressed in middle school garb — an oversized sweat shirt, jeans, sweat socks and sandals — walked into Westchester County Family Court Monday in handcuffs, a suspect in a gruesome arson that has left his grandmother near death.



Betty Shabazz

The judge asked him to identify himself, but instead of answering like an adult, with his full name, the suspect responded only, "Malcolm,"

while cracking what looked like a half-smile. The proceeding vividly demonstrated how the the latest violent chapter in the family of Malcolm X has reached through three generations — entangling not only Betty Shabazz, 63, and her six daughters in tragedy, but also the grandson and namesake of the slain black leader. Malcolm Shabazz is the son of Qubilah Shabazz, who was charged two years ago in a bizarre plot to kill Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

Malcolm Shabazz was characterized by his defense attorney, Percy Sutton, not as a violent juvenile delinquent — as Yonkers authorities charged — but as "a child who needs care." Sutton and other family friends portrayed him in interviews as a troubled youngster who wanted to be with his friends in Texas instead of here with his grandmother.

He may have set a fire in anger, some of them said, but not with the intent of hurting Betty Shabazz, whom he loves. He is being held in a local juvenile facility. "I see a child covering up his head, wishing it hadn't happened, wanting to make it all go away," Sutton said, describing Malcolm Shabazz's reaction to his alleged act.

"He's a 12-year-old boy. What did he mean to do? When I first saw him, he just wanted to hide."

But in San Antonio, where



AP PHOTO/KATHY WILLENS

A handcuffed Malcolm Shabazz, 12, is led from Yonkers family court in New York, Tuesday after he appeared in connection with the burning of his grandmother, Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow. Betty Shabazz remained in extremely critical condition at New York's Jacobi Medical Center.

Malcolm had lived with his mother for four of the last five months, police reports depicted a tempestuous home environment, the Associated Press reported. The reports indicated that Qubilah Shabazz was frequently drunk and at times unable to care for Malcolm. According to the reports, she told authorities that her son had attacked her and she wanted to turn him over to child welfare authorities.

Family Court Judge Howard Spitz postponed an initial hearing on the juvenile delinquency charge against Malcolm Shabazz pending the

arrival of his mother from Texas. Sutton said he plans to ask that the hearing be postponed indefinitely until Malcolm undergoes psychiatric examination.

"In my view, he's not responsible," Sutton said.

Meanwhile, Betty Shabazz was fighting for her life in the burn unit of Jacobi Medical Center in the Bronx, where doctors said she was on a ventilator and receiving fluids. Bruce Greenstein, head of the burn unit, called her injuries "catastrophic," adding that she "is in a life-threatening situation and will be for a long peri-

od of time."

Sutton said Malcolm Shabazz was born into "a climate of tragedy." He said Malcolm does not really know his father, whom his mother met in Paris, and has lived with his grandmother, aunts and other family members, as well as his mother. Friends described Qubilah Shabazz as intelligent, but somewhat lost, moving from job to job and from apartment to apartment, often in impoverished neighborhoods, while other sisters achieved success — one as a playwright, one a professional

See YOUNG on page 3A

City stuck for answer on districts

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte's redistricting tangle is getting messier.

A party-line split among council members has caused an impasse in redistricting the council's seven districts for the fall elections. If the matter ends up in court, the city may have to spend as much as a million dollars in a court battle and let a federal judge redraw the districts.

"They want to alter something to assure a partisan victory," said District 4 representative Nasif Majeed of the Republican-backed plan. "They know I am a strong candidate. What they are attempting to do is shift the district and pack District 2. That way they can accomplish their goal. That would have the affect of decreasing minority representation."

"It is a partisan thing," Majeed said. "There is an extreme group in the Republican Party which has attached itself to issues that divide our community...they always deal with divisiveness."

A city council redistricting committee held an emergency meeting Wednesday trying to find a compromise solution between the Republican- and Democratic-backed plans.

Historically, redrawing council districts has meant making few changes as annexed citizens are added to the voting pool. Democrats support such a plan, which would keep the majority black districts — districts 2 and 3 on the westside and District 4 in the northeast. District 4 includes Hidden Valley, Hampshire Hills

See REDISTRICTING on page 6A

Alston named N.C. NAACP president

Woodard promoted to first vice president

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

The N.C. NAACP has hired a new executive director as the state conference moved to complete the changeover from the administration of Kelly M. Alexander Jr. of Charlotte.

The state's executive board last weekend formally installed Skip Alston of Greensboro as president and hired Keith Sutton of Rocky Mount to fill the vacant executive director's slot. Alston, who was first vice president, had been interim president during Alexander's suspension. Valerie Woodard of Charlotte moved up a notch into the first vice president's slot last week.

Sutton declined comment this week, saying he was awaiting formal notification and signing of contracts for the position.

Sutton, 27, works with the Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce. A UNC Chapel Hill graduate, he reportedly has grant writing and supervisory experience.

Sutton, who will move to Greensboro, will be paid \$35,000 a year, plus \$7,000 for expenses.

Former executive director

Mary Peeler of Charlotte resigned last June, shortly after Alexander was suspended by the national board pending an audit of state conference finances.

The national board last month suspended Alexander's membership for 10 years and turned the matter over to its general counsel for recovery of

See NAACP on page 3A

Inside

Editorials 4A-5A
Strictly Business 7A
Lifestyles 9A
Healthy Body/
Healthy Mind 10A
Religion 11A
Sports 1B
A&E 4B

Regional News 9B
Classified 12B
Auto Showcase 14B

To subscribe, call (704) 376-0496 or FAX (704) 342-2160.

© 1997 The Charlotte Post
Comments? Our e-mail address is: charpost@clt.mindspring.com
World Wide Web page address: http://www.thepost.mindspring.com



Please Recycle

West Charlotte principal has support of black parents

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hundreds of black parents and community leaders have come out in support of West Charlotte High School principal Kenneth Simmons, who has been criticized by white teachers at the school.

Some 44 white teachers, a third of the faculty, has requested transfers from the school and many fear Simmons' job is in jeopardy. Simmons is ending his first full year as principal. He took over the job in March 1996, moving up from Cochrane

Middle School. He has also been principal at Bain Elementary School.

Less than 10 percent of the teachers at West Charlotte are African American, which was all-black prior to desegregation in the early '70s.

Supt. Eric Smith said Wednesday he will have a recommendation on West Charlotte ready for the school board at Tuesday's meeting.

"I intend to have a comprehensive recommendation, an overall recommendation that will help

See SIMMONS on page 3A



PHOTO/DIANNE V. CURTAIN

West Charlotte High School parent Harriet Porter-Jinwright (center) talks with principal Kenneth Simmons and social studies teacher Jade Harris Wednesday on campus.

