

Choir may be on way out at WCHS

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Church. The choir has performed at dozens of local churches and traveled as far as Washington, D.C. for appearances at the Kennedy Center.

Deborah Cuthbertson, whose daughter Devon, was a founding member of the gospel choir, said it would be a great loss.

She noted that it was a positive force when many seemed to say all black children were causing problems.

"It's always what our children are doing bad, never what our children are doing good," said Cuthbertson. "We have some good children."

She said the choir provided her daughter, now a Winston-Salem State University sophomore, the opportunity to make friends with other children in a positive way.

"It helped her keep a positive image," Cuthbertson said. "I think it will be a total loss."

West Charlotte's success sparked similar groups at other high schools, including Olympic and West Mecklenburg. It was unclear Wednesday what will happen to those gospel groups.

The West Charlotte choir meets after school for rehearsals and pays for trips and other activities with the students' own money. But Epps, confirmed Wednesday reports that he will be leaving the school system to take a job with an Atlanta television station.

He had followed Simmons to

West Charlotte from Cochrane Middle School.

Cline has been busy hiring a new staff for the school. About half of the positions have been filled and officials promise to have the full staff in place by July 19.

Cline reportedly has rehired some of the teachers who requested transfers in a dispute with Simmons, who was reassigned last month after 44 white teachers sought transfers to other schools.

Simmons called his removal a "lynching," and attributed the dispute to his efforts to move black students into higher level classes and hire more black teachers.

Simmons' reassignment sparked angry protests from black parents and community leaders, who attribute the dismissal to racism and the power of white Eastover and Myers Park parents who opposed Simmons plans to increase diversity.

Black parents leveled some of their criticism at school board member John Tate, who they allege spearheaded efforts to get rid of Simmons.

Cline has met with some parents groups, including the West Charlotte High School National Alumni Association.

Alumni president Geraldine Powe said the association believes Simmons, a West Charlotte graduate, was not treated fairly. The group has



FILE PHOTO

Arnie Epps leads West Charlotte's Gospel Choir during first performance in spring 1996.

expressed its concerns to Smith and has asked him to establish a process for better communication with the group.

"My question is how much support did Kenny Simmons get from downtown," Powe said. "I feel he was unfairly dismissed."

Simmons still holds the rank of principal in the system, but is not assigned to a school.

Powe said she thinks the incident has awoken blacks about inequities in the school system.

"At this point, I'm sure the alumni will do what we can to keep this from happening again," Powe said.

Cline, she said, seems to have many of Simmons' ideas about

teaching all children and diversifying classes.

"I hope we won't be doing the same thing again," she said. "We are fighting a racial undertone here and anybody who denies it is not being honest."

"I certainly think we as alumni will be more aware and stay abreast of the things that are happening to all students."

Betty Shabazz mourned in N.Y.

By Andrew Whitehead
INTERNATIONAL PRESS SYNDICATE

NEW YORK — Americans from all walks of life last week mourned the death of Betty Shabazz, the widow of Malcolm X, who died on June 23 at age 61. She was gravely injured May 31 in a fire allegedly set by her grandson Malcolm.

Throughout the whole ordeal New Yorkers showed their support. From Democratic mayoral candidate Ruth Messinger to regular working folks, hundreds of people stood patiently in long lines at the Carver Federal Savings Bank to give blood to a woman many of them called a hero.

Linda Levi, a spokeswoman for the New York Blood Center, called the blood drive, sponsored by the bank and The Amsterdam News, a black weekly paper, one of the most successful ever. "We collected a total of 263 pints of blood."

Levi said. "Our goal was 150 pints, so we were extremely pleased with the results."

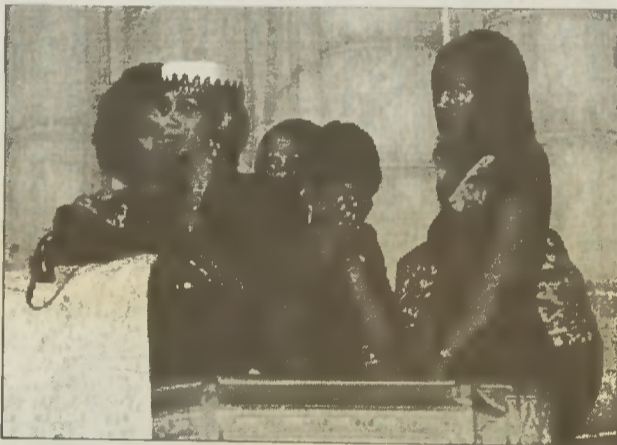
Because so much blood was donated and some was not the proper type for Betty Shabazz, excess supplies went to replenish stocks at other area hospitals, said Levi of the New York Blood Center.

Ironically, new skin for burn victims is being developed in what was once the Audubon Ballroom, scene of Malcolm X's murder, and is now the Audubon Biomedical Science and Technology Park. That skin, however, was unavailable to Shabazz, who was too seriously burned for the new treatment.

Shabazz, whose husband led the New York chapter of the Nation of Islam and was its spokesman until his break with the titular head Elijah Muhammad, was estranged from the religious group which she accused of complicity in her husband's death. The two sides have since reconciled.

Following her husband's murder, Betty Shabazz, a nurse, returned to school and earned a doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts. A faculty member for 21 years at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, the school said Betty Shabazz exemplified a commitment to education and community service.

The Medgar Evers College family and community are truly saddened about the tragedy that has struck our friend and colleague," school officials said in a statement issued to the press. "She (was) a valued and committed member of the community. The College joins the nation in



AP PHOTO

Attallah Shabazz, second from left, speaks to the thousands of people who jammed into Riverside Church at a memorial service for her mother, Betty Shabazz in the Harlem section of New York Sunday last week. The widow of Malcolm X died June 23, nearly a month after she was burned in a fire at her home. Daughter Qubilah, center, cries while, Malaak, far left, Malkah, third from left, Gamillah, second from right, and Ilyasah, right, listen to Attallah eulogize their mother. Among the thousands of mourners attending the service were N.Y. Gov. George Pataki, poet Maya Angelou and Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King Jr.

praying for her (family)."

Southern Christian Leadership Conference president Joseph E. Lowery, stated: "We are deeply saddened by this devastating loss. Dr. Shabazz's strength and dignity, as Malcolm X's widow, as a loving and self-sacrificing mother and as an educator and community leader, have been exemplary. We pray without ceasing for her family, which has been struck by more than their share of recurring tragedies. Our pain is deep."

Betty Shabazz was also hailed for her role in the civil rights movement by Myrlie Evers-Williams, the widow of civil rights leader Medgar Evers and current board chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

"She has been a source of strength and encouragement not only to myself but to millions of

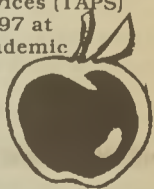
Americans," Evers-Williams said. "Dr. Shabazz is the epitome of a strong woman, and she was the strength and backbone behind Malcolm X throughout their lives together. We lift her up today in prayer and love."

National Newspaper Publishers Association President Dorothy R. Leavell added her voice to the thousands voicing praise and sending condolences to the Shabazz family.

"Dr. Shabazz exemplified all that the Black Press Association strives to achieve; she articulated the concerns of black people and worked diligently against all odds to secure our advancement," Leavell said. "Her articulate voice will be sadly missed and we extend our support to her family as they grieve her passing and work to secure the best possible outcome for young Malcolm."

Be an early bird... Register for TAPS!

Registration for the 1997-98 School Year at Dolly Tate TeenAge Parent Services (TAPS) will be held on July 10, 1997 at The George T. Lewis, Jr. Academic Learning Center (formerly Midwood Center) 1817 Central Avenue 9:00 am - 2:00 pm



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DR. RICKY A. WOODS, SENIOR MINISTER
1801 OAKLAWN AVENUE • CHARLOTTE, NC 28216
Greetings in the name of our Risen Christ.

This letter is written to express my dreams and hopes for the 8:00 A.M. Early Morning Service at First Baptist Church-West. It is a dream of a place where persons may experience kindness and grace in an often unfriendly world. It is a dream of a diverse worship experience that embraces the wide range of music within the Black church as well as providing sound theological teaching and preaching. It is a dream for the means of growing the membership of first Baptist Church-West as well as growing disciples to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a dream of creating an oasis of Christian courtesy, brotherly love and bodily unity. It is the hope of providing a place and a people to live out the meaning of their faith to a changeless God in changing times.

We invite you to come and dine on spiritual manna that has been provided and be participants in a dream to live to God's glory and our good. Come and be caught in the grip of His grace.

A fellow dreamer

Ricky A. Woods

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