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Argument over desegregation heats up



PHOTO/HERBERT L. WHITE

The debate over busing for desegregating Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools is as controversial now as it was in the 1970s when the U.S. Supreme Court approved the practice in *Swann v. Board of Education*.

Busing's last stand?

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Few issues have torn at Charlotte's social fabric like where and with whom children attend school.

Since federal judges ordered racial desegregation 43 years ago, parents have argued, pleaded, and sued over school attendance. Though that debate usually pitted black and communities against each other, it now includes a growing number of African Americans opposing forced integration.

Even some black integration supporters admit that if inner city schools were better, they too might consider an end to busing.

"Until we eliminate the race issue, we are going to be fighting that battle the rest of your life and mine," said Julius Chambers, plaintiffs' attorney in the landmark *Swann v. Board of Education* lawsuit which OKD forced busing for

integration.

Last week, Chambers' former law firm filed motions requesting that the *Swann* case be reopened in the wake of a lawsuit filed by a white southeast Charlotte parent in September.

Bob Capacchione wants Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to stop using race to determine where children attend school.

UNC Charlotte sociology professor Roslyn Nickelson says attacks such as Capacchione's grow from the economic fears of parents who see education as the last remaining avenue to maintaining class status.

"You need to look at what has been happening nationwide," she said. "In case after case, people who bring actions to end court-ordered desegregation



Chambers

are linked to social conservatives who have a very defined agenda."

"Why, at this moment in history, are people interested in ending integration? Most indicators of racism are down.

"Most social scientists look at status anxiety. People feel they are threatened. Education has become very important to status maintenance, and since most people go to public schools, parents are keenly interested in maintaining children's status and desegregation of public schools has become very target."

Racism is still a factor, Nickelson said, noting that W.E.B. DuBois believed skin color would be America's most difficult issue in the 20th century.

"I think the color line will be the question of the 21st century, too," Nickelson said. "But don't discount the shifting economy and concerns parents have about social and economic status."



PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS III

Anita Hodgkiss, center, is the lead attorney for plaintiffs in the second *Swann v. Board of Education* suit.

She noted the high number of black parents who are concerned about who their children go to school with also.

"The way people put it to me

See SWANN on page 2A

Study: More black kids slip into poverty

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Nearly two-thirds of African American children live in poverty, according to a report from the Children's Defense Fund.

The report, "Rescuing the American Dream: Halting the Economic Freefall of Today's Young Families" showed that the median income of black two-parent families has fallen by 46 percent in the last 24 years. In 1973, the average black family with children earned \$19,153. A generation later, it was making \$10,380 - putting 64 percent of African American children below the government's official poverty line of \$11,821 for a family of three.

"The soaring poverty rates among young families who are playing by the rules and working as hard as they can are shocking," CDF President Marian Wright Edelman said. "If the fruits of eco-

nomic growth had been shared equally among all families over the last 20 years, then the typical young family with children would have seen its income rise by 15 percent instead of falling by 33 percent.



Strengthening the economic future of young families with children must become a priority for every sector of society."

Median income for young families isn't exclusive to black families, however. Whites saw their income drop 22 percent and Latinos 28 percent. In every region of the country, 30 percent to 49 percent of children in young families are now poor. Only fami-

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Congressman Watts to speak at Wingate Nov. 3

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

U.S. Rep. J.C. Watts will visit Wingate University next month.

Watts, a Republican from Oklahoma, will speak at 7 p.m. Nov. 3 at Austin Auditorium as part of the Jesse Helms Center's lecture series. Previous speakers include Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, the Dali Lama and former presidential candidate Steve Forbes. Helms, N.C.'s senior U.S. senator, is expected to accompany Watts at Wingate, located about 25 miles east of Charlotte on U.S. 74.

Watts, the lone black Republican in Congress, is considered one of the GOP's rising legislative stars. As a conservative elected in a white-majority district, he has been an outspoken proponent of balancing the federal budget as well as other conservative causes. Last month, Watt and House Speaker Newt Gingrich announced a Republican initiative to recruit African American voters to the GOP.

Additional plans for events in conjunction with Watts' visit are incomplete. Wingate officials expect he and Helms will meet with young people involved with Charlotte inner city programs.

The Helms Center, which opened in 1994, consists of exhibits and memorabilia donated by Helms as well as programs such as the Free Enterprise Leadership Conference for high school students and a collection of senatorial papers for scholarly research.



Watts

Debate still rages over '95 march

By Max Millard
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

As the nation approaches the second anniversary of the Million Man March, the National Park Service remains embroiled in a controversy over its estimate of the original gathering.

Shortly after the March, the Park Service, which for more than three decades has been empowered by Congress to release official counts of mass gatherings in the nation's capital, released a figure of 400,000, which was widely reported in the media. One year ago, on the March's first anniversary, Associated Press used the phrase "at least 400,000" in its wire stories to describe the count, on the basis that the Park Service has never abandoned its original number.

But on Oct. 24, 1995, just eight

days after the March, the Park Service signed the following statement:

"As a result of its meeting with Dr. Farouk El-Baz at Boston University this morning, the National Park Service has concluded that the 400,000 number can no longer be considered final."

El-Baz is the director of Boston University's Center for Remote Sensing, which came up with its own figure of 837,000, plus or minus 20 percent, based on photographs taken at 3:15 p.m. The march reportedly peaked between 1 and 2 p.m., but due to technical problems, the Park Service shot no aerial photographs between 11:30 a.m. and 3:15.

The Park Service based its count on photographs of the March's epicenter, the National Mall. Through advance arrangement, it turned over the original negatives to the Center for Remote Sensing, which digitized

them to make a higher quality image than the prints. Then a team of 10 research associates and graduate students team scanned them into their computers and spent days analyzing them. The Center traced the boundaries around areas of varying densities, down to as low as one person per 10 square meters. Where individuals were clearly visible, the researchers sat at their computers and painstakingly clicked on the shadows corresponding to each marcher.

In the Oct. 24 meeting in Boston with Park Service officials, which lasted six hours, El-Baz demonstrated that their old counting techniques were unscientific and inaccurate.

"The reason we did not make a stronger statement was because we knew that the National Park Service would not sign anything to say that the government was See '95 RALLY on page 3A



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Controversy over the number of participants at 1995's Million Man March brought an end to Park Service estimates at demonstrations.

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