

**EDUCATION**

# Colleges strive for diversity despite court rulings

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

PIKESVILLE, Md. (AP)— Matt Hyman is white, but he'll begin his freshman year at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, this month on a scholarship originally given only to blacks.

The 17-year-old Pikesville resident is one of seven whites among the latest 53 Meyerhoff Scholars.

The four-year grant program was created a decade ago to encourage more black students to become scientists

and engineers.

His case is an example of how Maryland colleges and universities were forced three years ago by the courts to stop awarding scholarships based on race.

Although admissions officers say they have a harder time attracting bright minority students through financial incentives, the schools are maintaining racial and ethnic variety of students through admissions processes that are allowed to weigh race among

other factors.

Now even those practices are in jeopardy. Robert Farmer, a white Baltimore man, has sued the University of Maryland claiming he was rejected by the medical school in favor of less qualified blacks.

"A black or Hispanic with Rob's test scores would have had a red carpet and brass band welcoming him as he walked up the steps," Farmer's lawyer, John Montgomery of Arlington, Va., told *The (Baltimore) Sun*.

The medical-school case comes three years after a Hispanic freshman at the University of Maryland, College Park, won a lawsuit contending he was discriminated against by being barred from receiving a Benjamin Banneker Scholarship then given only to black students.

The Supreme Court ultimately settled the issue by letting stand an appeals decision that race-based grants were illegal.

One result was that the University of Maryland combined its Banneker scholarship with the Francis Scott Key Scholarship, and the number of black recipients declined by a third.

But during the same period, College Park increased its black enrollment from 12.3 percent of undergraduates in 1994 to 14.4 percent last year.

"It seems like losing the court battle was actually a good thing," said Heather Austin, a 1997 College Park graduate

who was among the last Bannekerscholars. "Instead of just letting it fizzle out, they started creating other opportunities for minorities to still attend."

Meyerhoff scholarship recipients, for example, must demonstrate an interest in helping minority communities.

Admissions recruiters expanded efforts to reach minorities.

They visit inner-city high schools. Colleges arrange tours (*See Diversity, Page 17*)

## Old program winning new converts all the time

*By Ronald W. Powell  
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

SAN DIEGO (AP) — At Freedom School, the exercise is called "making the room shake."

Bruce Jackson stood in the center of the Harambee circle, walking in a slow-motion strut, exuding cool. Harambee is Swahili for "let's pull together," and that's what Jackson urged in this prelude to a day of classroom instruction on a recent morning.

All around him, students from 5 to 13 years of age sat expectantly on metal chairs. Suddenly, he stopped pacing.

"Freedom School," Jackson intoned. "How're you feeling?"

To which came this high-decibel reply, punctuated by fist pumping and foot stomping: "Fannn-tastic! Terrrific! Grrreat! All day long!"

Attorney Terrie Roberts, a guest speaker, told the children she was amazed by their lung power.

"I've never seen such energy in the morning," Roberts said before talking about her job and reading aloud about slain civil rights activist and religious figure Malcolm X.

The rush of youthful energy marks the start of each day at Freedom School, a free educational enrichment program designed to boost the educational achievement and self-esteem of black students. The program operates in San Diego and in 18 other cities across the country.

In San Diego, the Freedom School is in its second year and is based at Valencia Park's Bayview Baptist Church. For six weeks during the summer, 69 children are receiving a course in academics, morale raising, personal discipline, field trips and fun.

The Freedom Schools are part of a growing national network of 33 sites operating under the Children's Defense Fund's Black Community Crusade for Children, organized by Marian Wright Edelman.

The schools bring an upbeat curriculum and teaching approach to learning.

At the same time, the schools are serious about the business of strengthening communities through education. Each school requires the involvement of parents, teens, college-age individuals and other adults who learn to become advocates for the effective education of black children.

The current wave of Freedom Schools is a rebirth.

The original Freedom Schools were born in the South in 1964 during the heat and the violence of the civil rights struggle.

At the urging of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, 2,000 volunteers fanned out across the South and established 41 Freedom Schools to prepare black children to enter newly integrated public schools.

Over time, the schools closed as the flame of segregation burned out.

Edelman, who was active in the establishment of Freedom Schools in the 1960s, revived them in 1993 through her Children's Defense Fund to respond to low test scores and low academic performance by a high percentage of black students.

Shelli Graham, site coordinator for San Diego's program, said there is a link between the Freedom Schools of the past (*See Freedom, Page 18*)

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