

Barnard College apologizes to Dorothy Height for slight

By Jamal E. Watson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW YORK (NNPA) - In an age when apologies seem rare, Barnard College has publicly apologized to Dorothy Height for failing to admit the educator and civil rights activist to their school some 75 years ago. Height, who served as the president of the National Council of Negro Women for 40 years, was recently named an honorary alumna by the college.

School officials acknowledge that Height did not gain admission into Barnard back in 1929 because she was Black and at the time the school adhered to strict racial quotas, only allowing a few African-Americans entry each year.

"We affirm our commitment to racial equality as the nation marks the 50th anniversary of the landmark school-desegregation ruling, Brown versus Topeka," said

Judith Shapiro, president of Barnard. "More than two decades ago, Dr. Height accepted the College's highest honor, the Barnard Medal of Distinction. This was a gracious and forgiving gesture on her part, and one for which we are most appreciative."

The tribute to Height, who turned 92 earlier this year, was organized by Barnard's Alumnae of Color, which celebrated the largest number of African-American

women graduates from Barnard (Class of 1974) during a weekend reunion program.

"Awarding Dr. Height the long-denied status of alumna acknowledges the dark past of American society," said Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, an organizer of the tribute to the civil rights activist. "As an alumna, I am proud that Barnard has started a dialogue on racial discrimination, a necessary component of the

process of healing and justice."

In her recent memoir, "Open Wide the Freedom Gates," Height wrote: "In the summer of 1929 ... I [received] a telegram ... asking me to report for an interview at Barnard. When I arrived, breathless, in the office of the dean, I was asked to have a seat. It seemed an eternity before the dean finally came to speak to me. I apologized for being late. It didn't matter, she said. Although I had been accepted, they could not admit me. It took me a while

to realize that their decision was a racial matter: Barnard had a quota of two Negro students per year, and two others had already taken the spots."

Height went on to receive a bachelors and masters degree from New York University. Almost immediately, she became the protegee to Mary McCleod Bethune and worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young during the 1950s and 1960s.

Jamal E. Watson writes for the Amsterdam News.

Problems

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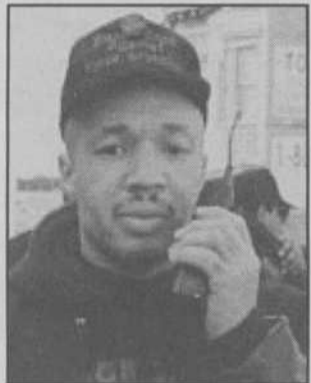
lition of that, like 100 Black Women, 100 Black Men and the Black church," says Hare. "You (Cosby) throw out all of these criticisms and you don't have any kind of solutions, I've got to look at you and I just wonder if you're just floor showing."

The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (AKA), the oldest of the Black Greek letter sororities, has operated its Ivy Reading Academy for grades K-3 for nearly two years with \$1.5 million from the U. S. Department of Education.

Linda White, AKA's national president, eagerly explains why her organization chose to focus on the early years of a child's life.

"Children who have not developed the basic reading skills in the very early years find it extremely difficult to become competent readers in the later grades," she says. "And when they are unable to read effectively, then they don't perform well in the other subjects and other higher-level educational tasks and they don't finish school, they can't function in society."

She adds, "Most of us would not be where we are today if someone had not reached back and helped us, whether it was the neighbor next door who encouraged you or the teacher in your school. Most of us did not come from well-educated well-to-do backgrounds. What matters is the person who shows some caring and



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— DeLacy Davis, sergeant in the East Orange, N.J. police

love and provide encouragement for that child."

Hare says children too often get the blame for circumstances over which they have no control.

"They're not responsible for the ebonics," Hare states. "They're not responsible for the situation that causes them to stand on street corners. If you look at the figures, you have a society that will not employ their mothers, will not employ their fathers. In fact, you have a society that sent most of their fathers to prison."

DeLacy Davis, a sergeant in the East Orange, N.J. police department and executive director of the department's TRY (Together Redirecting Youth) program, is using the police department to help rather than lock up troubled youth.

"They come every day and they go straight to the police department. We give them access to the Internet. They do their homework at the police station. My staff comes from behind the desk and the children take over. We teach

them office skills. We show them value and love," Davis says.

"We call it giving an overdose of support services for that child. In other words, while the parents may be drug addicted, it doesn't mean that child can't make it. They may say, 'I go to the gang because it's protection. I go to the gang because they feed me. I go to the gang because it's my family.' What we're going to have to do is make sure that child is eating every day, that we remove all of the factors that our children have told us as reasons for them going to gang activity. We take those arguments off the table."

And the program is working, says Davis, who is also president and founder of Black Cops Against Police Brutality.

"Two children, last year who failed every subject, they were age 15 and 16, were held back in the 9th grade, but now are on honor roll."

Such support and encouragement is crucial says MaryLee Allen, director of

Child Welfare and Mental Health Division at the Washington, D.C.-based Children's Defense Fund, a non-profit organization that researches and advocates on behalf of children.

"We try to ensure that there are comprehensive services and supports available to the children and their families because you can't separate a child from the family and community in which they're living and in which they're being raised," she says. "There are gaps in terms of being able to reach the needs, but there are some things that we know work. But what we've got to do is try to make those things work for many, many more children."

The federal Head Start program is a terrific example of a comprehensive program that provides an early childhood education to children 3 to 5 years old, Allen says. But Head Start serves only 60 percent of eligible children, more than a third of them Black.

Allen says a new early Head Start, which serves children from birth to 3 and assists their parents, should be expanded as well.

Morial, the head of the National Urban League, says everyone has an obligation to help the needy.

"Anybody who's halfway enlightened understands the interdependence in society," he explains. "You can't build a wall around yourself and pretend to be successful if there's pain and suffering all around."



Sentinel-Voice photo by Les Pierres Streater

Summer Business Institute participant Rainee-Shaye Sayles, right, shares a moment with her mother, Andrea. Rainee's brother previously participated in the program.

SBI

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Nevada.

"Anything that involves youth in our community, you are going to find Bank West of Nevada at the table, money in hand and time to participate. We believe that our young people in Las Vegas are critical to the success of this town as a whole," said Lois Greene, the bank's senior vice president.

"We're very pleased to have been here since the beginning of the program with eight students and we were one of the first businesses to contribute money to the program. It was a seed and we have seen that this seed has grown. This harvest is wonderful."

Other program donors participating since the beginning are Valerie Mercer of Stations Casinos, Lloyd Cutler of Kellogg-Cutler and Louis Richardson of Richardson Construction.

Powell

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the virtual disappearance of attacks in which no one died.

"There's a new terrorist threat information center that compiles this data under the CIA. And we are still trying to determine what went wrong with the data and why we didn't catch it in the State Department," Powell said Sunday.

"It's a very big mistake. And we are not happy about this big mistake," he added.

The department has said that one of the mistakes was that only part of 2003 was taken into account.

When the annual report was issued April 29, senior admin-

istration officials used it as evidence the war was being won under Bush.

"We weren't saying terrorism has gone away. The report clearly says terrorism is a main problem facing the world today. We've got to continue going after terrorists," Powell said.

"But based on the data we had within the report, there was a suggestion that the number of incidents had dropped and it was the lowest since 1969," he added.

"That turns out not to have been correct. We were wrong. We will correct it."

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