

Atlanta becomes desired city for Whites

By Hal Lamar
Special to Sentinel-Voice
ATLANTA (NNPA) — Atlanta, often cited by Black Enterprise and other national publications as the ideal residential and business climate for African-Americans and other people of color, is changing ever so slowly.

In fact, by the year 2009, the city now called the "Black Mecca" by many of those same publications will find itself overtaken by a growing minority of middle- to upper-class Whites.

That commentary on the city that birthed Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the first Black mayor of a major southeastern city and several bastions of Black business success such as H.J. Russell, Citizens Trust Bank and Atlanta Life Insurance, has moved beyond a mere visionary stage. It is quantified by the 2004 "Status of Black Atlanta."

The report, issued annually the past 11 years by Clark Atlanta University's Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy, is watched over by center director Bob Holmes, a 30-year member of the Georgia General Assembly. He has shepherded the status of Black Atlanta report since its launching in 1993.

Asked to compare the 2004 report with the 10 others he has done, Holmes

noted that things haven't changed much economically for the city's poor and lower class population.

"Progress has been made by about 30 percent of the population, but as many or more than that experienced a decline in the quality of life," he told the Atlanta Voice in an interview.

One of the key indicators of how Atlanta is slowly changing demographically is in affordable housing.

A federal housing initiative called HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) is a well-intentioned effort by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to redistribute inner city dwellers out of public housing projects and other so-called "reservation communities" into better neighborhoods with single family houses and more amenities like better grocery stores, shops and medical services. But Holmes says the concept has yet to flourish the way its creators envisioned.

"We have yet to see that happen." What we have seen, he notes in the report, is the increase in condominiums and loft housing which he said is being gobbled up by Whites moving from other areas of the country and suburban Atlanta into the inner city.

"Not many Blacks are buying into this," he said. "While we are moving outside the city into the subdivisions and housing developments, Whites are coming into the city and occupying 95 percent of the condos and loft apartments."

He predicted that if the trend continues, the demographics of the city will change significantly and with it the political landscape as well.

Speaking of politics, Holmes said the census data from 2000 suggests that the White-Black population could reach parity within the next three to five years and allow a strong White candidate to be elected mayor.

"That's not to say that a Black person couldn't be elected," he notes.

"But that person will have to be one Whites feel will work in their best interests as well as those of the city's poor and working class. The days of the incumbent mayor hand-picking successors is over. That died with Maynard (Jackson) in 2003."

One of the reports' most disturbing finding is the declining rate of marriage in the Black community. According to their findings, nationally the number of Black married couples plummeted from 68 percent in 1970 to 46.1 percent in 2000. In At-

lanta, the decline was equally as sharp from 58.5 percent to 33.7 percent. Black married couples with kids comprise only 12.4 percent of total Black households in Atlanta compared to 30.5 percent for Whites. Holmes said their report cites the low supply of "marriageable Black men" as one cause for the downward trend.

The report cites the ratio of Black men to Black women as 597 men for every 1,000 "sistahs", nearly 2-1. When Black male employment is thrown in, the figures shrink to 279 eligibles for every 1,000 Black women.

"The impact is devastating," said Holmes. "It's increased teen childbearing, higher school dropout rates, more children in foster care, increases in welfare rolls, more kids in poverty and greater incarceration rates."

As possible solutions, the report suggests everything from major education efforts to encourage marriage over cohabitation or "shacking" to outlawing no-fault divorce or even sanctioning same sex marriage (a crime in Georgia).

"The Status of Black Atlanta 2004" is available for \$15 and can be obtained by calling the Southern Center at 404-880-8085.

Hal Lamar writes for the Atlanta Voice.

Kimora Lee Simmons unveils new creations, includes golden phone

NEW YORK (AP)—Kimora Lee Simmons has a full plate. It's probably a solid gold, diamond-encrusted plate, but it is definitely full.

"I think I just sort of keep going," the flashy TV personality and Baby Phat creative director told The Associated Press.

"I take a bunch of things on my plate, but I have wonderful people behind me. And I only get into things I know about."

The thing Simmons, 29, knows most about is bling. One of her latest creations, a pink diamond-accented Motorola cell phone, retails for \$699. And at Bloomingdale's last week, she launched her own "Diamond Diva" jewelry line under her Baby Phat label.

"Our pieces are 30 to 50 percent bigger than other fine jewelry. My personal taste is big and over the top. Kimora Lee Simmons is larger than life-size," said Simmons, who often refers to herself in third-person.

The former model, wife of hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons and mother of two said she's transformed or, more appropriately, branded herself into a sort of urban Martha Stewart. But does that mean "Kimora Lee Living" is on the way?

"I'm rolling out a home line," Simmons revealed. "I would make paint and bedding. People ask me all the time about my home. Where did you get that door? Where did you get those curtains? Where did you get those pillows? I'm more than willing to open myself up like that."

Also on Simmons' "to do" list is a reality TV show pilot and a fragrance from French designer Coty, which will be in stores next fall.

"I know I'm really real," says Simmons. "I do what I love. I generally have a love of fashion and lifestyle. Sometimes it's hard for me. I am a young woman and have all the real struggles that women have."

Symposium

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The cost to run the yearly program cost \$60,000, and is staffed by volunteer members of the organization. There are no income requirements of the families of the

students participating in the program.

Young men from the ages of 6 to 16 are able to apply to become a mentee of the C100 Men organization. You can contact the Mentee Recruiter

Advisor at 642-9145, or go to the homepage at www.committed100men.org for more information.

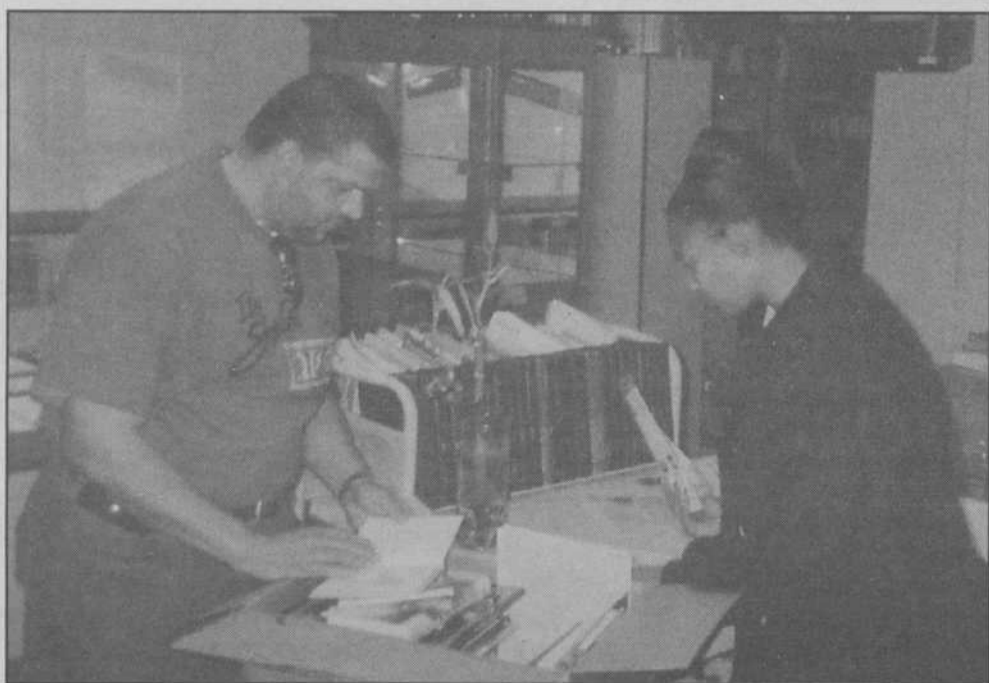
There is also room for adults to join the organization as a mentor. All mentor

applicants are required to complete an application, attend an orientation, and pass a background check.

Send applications to P.O. Box 271071, Las Vegas, Nevada 89127.

BOOK SMARTS

The brothers from the Kappa Xi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., recently donated \$300 worth of books to the library of Jo Mackey Magnet School's Academy of Leadership and Global Communication. "We are so appreciative of the gift from these gentlemen," principal Kemala Washington said. "It means so much to us that this



organization has recognized the need for our students. The elementary school library is an integral part of the learning community. Although many of our students use the public libraries, others do not have the opportunity to do so. Our library is the primary source for the books that they read. The more books that our library has, the greater possibility of creating life-long readers. It is always exciting when new books arrive in our library and to watch the librarian enthusiastically show them off. The children are so eager to check them out. Thank you Omega Psi Phi! Your generosity will not be forgotten." (Left) Eric Adams reviews a book with the librarian.

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