

Hampton students penalized for political, anti-war protest

By Daniel Bayer

Special to Sentinel-Voice
HAMPTON, Va., (NNPA) - Nearly everyone has heard of the A&T Four, the college students whose seminal sit-in at the Woolworth's store protesting segregated food service in Greensboro 45 years ago, helped kick off the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. A half-century from now, when historians discuss the War in Iraq, will the case of the "Hampton Seven," a new group of student protestors, be considered a turning point in African-American involvement in the anti-war movement of the early 21st century?

Seven Hampton University students faced possible expulsion for taking part in the November 2 "World Can't Wait: Drive out the Bush Regime" nationwide protests on campus. Unlike the A&T Four, who faced an entrenched White power structure bent on preserving segregation, the Hampton students face a university administration they say actively works to discourage, if not outright prevent, student activism similar to that which fueled the battle for civil rights.

"On November 2, there were a lot of students in the student center, passing out information about Hurricane Katrina, the War in Iraq, the crisis in Sudan, homophobia, AIDS and other issues that affect our communities," said Aaron Ray, one of the seven, in an interview with Bruce Burch, co-host of Fourth Estate Radio, an Internet program.

"The police came in after about 20 or 30 minutes and shut down everything, told students to give up their ID information, and even students just walking around with pins saying Resist or Die were told to take them off."

Sheridan Owens, another one of the six, says that they were notified on Friday, November 18, that they would face a disciplinary hearing the following Monday, giving them little or no time to contact parents, lawyers or administrators. After complaints about the time limitations, the hearing was postponed to Friday, December 2.

After the hearing, the university issued a statement acknowledging that seven students had been charged with what it called "a minor procedural violation" and none had been expelled as a result of their actions. Five of the

students reportedly were ordered to do community service and two were issued warnings.

Owens said that campus police tried to prevent a local television station from interviewing the students after news of the expulsion threat went public.

"A dean saw them talking to us and sent the police to make them leave," said Owens.

Ray told Burch that the administration of University President William Carver makes it virtually impossible for any progressive political groups to operate on campus.

"I'm affiliated with Amnesty International, and for years we've been trying to get recognized by the school," said Ray. "Every year the school has either lost our paperwork, or said that we won't be able to benefit the school, or just given us the runaround."

Without recognition by the administration, groups can't distribute literature or hold events on campus, said Ray.

The administration's concern with literature distributed on campus, however, doesn't extend to flyers promoting parties, said Ray.

"Half-naked women and alcohol are heavily endorsed on party flyers that come out just about everyday. Students are bombarded with these kinds of flyers," Ray told Burch. Ray said that the disciplinary action against the students amounts to "selective prosecution," based on the flyers political content.

Ray said that possible disciplinary actions range from a warning to expulsion. The students have 48 hours after the hearing to appeal the action.

Ray said that the students have received support from professors, university workers and fellow students. "Everyday someone comes up to me and says, 'You have my support,'" said Ray.

While African-Americans have been overwhelmingly opposed to the War in Iraq, and leaders such as Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney and activist Ron Daniels have spoken at many large anti-war gatherings, anti-war activity on the campuses of HBCUs has been relatively muted.

Greensboro community activist Ed Whitfield, who protested the Vietnam War and fought for a Black Studies program at Cornell University in the 1960s, said that

college is a vital training ground for future community involvement.

"College is an opportunity for young people to reflect on the world around them and struggle to change it," said Whitfield. "Given the challenges we face today, it's important that people not be blindly led to fit in."

Whitfield said that HBCUs like Hampton often face pressure to limit the political expression of their students.

"There's a spotty history of HBCUs when it comes to student activism," said Whitfield. "Administrators struggle for funding, and due to the way we fund our education system, they're often forced to cater to the existing power brokers. Some administrators have made bad decisions regarding their student body's political involvement."

Daniel Bayer writes for the Carolina Peacemaker.

Return

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residences were destroyed in the area, in the eastern New Orleans section and in the upper-income Lakeview section.

At one intersection, the twisted remains of a yellow wood-frame house sat on Antonia Jackson's front lawn.

"It's from somewhere down the road," Jackson said.

She surveyed the destruction in her yard and sighed. "Everything's gone," she said. "Everything's gone."

Darlana and Alfred Green weren't sure the pile of wreckage in the median of Tupelo Street was their house until they saw the Spiderman sheets from their children's bedroom.

Darlana Green said she and her three children were in the house Aug. 29 when floodwaters lifted it off its foundation. They were rescued three days later, and the house eventually col-



Lower Ninth Ward resident Ruby Simon looks at a damaged family photograph after returning to her hurricane-damaged house in New Orleans on Saturday.

lapsed in a heap.

Picking through the debris, they found a water-swollen family Bible and a uniform that one of their daughters used to wear to nearby Martin Luther King School.

Despite the destruction, she was happy about where she ended up — what she described as a nice, neat rental house in Allen, Texas,

far from the impoverished Lower Ninth Ward.

"She was a blessing to me," Green said of Katrina. "Everything was falling apart here."

The Greens have no intention to return, and they see little future for the neighborhood.

"What can they do with it but bulldoze it?" Darlana Green said.

Your Horoscope Says... Dec. 8-14

ARIES

Freedom needs may be high this week. Use your powerful imagination to discover a way to feel freer in your current situation. At least in your personal space, let yourself be free and surrounded by objects and vibes that set your spirit soaring.

Soul Affirmation: Feeling free is the essence of being free.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 14, 19

TAURUS

Passing on knowledge, or gaining some new knowledge, preoccupies your fine mind this week. You can teach as well as learn. Look for a way to combine these two activities. It will benefit the many that you attract.

Soul Affirmation: I am attractive because I am open to giving and receiving.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 38, 47

GEMINI

Details, details, details. They are cluttering up your vision of the big picture. Be patient and deal with one detail at a time. You'll soon see your big picture very clearly again. You are kind, and can be amazingly tolerant.

Soul Affirmation: I slow down and go with the flow.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 49, 50

CANCER

A practical solution is at hand to one of your inventions. Give yourself some space to allow the answer to come to you. Any repetitive task, such as weeding the garden or washing the dishes or car, will be conducive to your receiving the solution.

Soul Affirmation: The deed is done. I must wait for the results to unfold.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 32, 33

LEO

You may feel an internal pressure towards responsibility this week. Go with the flow on this, and the week will be like a gift. Let your words assist others in becoming more self-responsible. You are a good teacher of right actions.

Soul Affirmation: I love pressure as a test of how much I can master.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 31, 49

VIRGO

Money may come to you from an unlikely source this week. Keep your eyes peeled for opportunity. Let your words this week paint the images of better ways of being in the world for yourself and for those under your care.

Soul Affirmation: I let the good that is for me come into my life.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 29, 38

LIBRA

You may decide to visit a friend you haven't seen in a while, or you may hear from one while you are at work. How did they get your number? You'll be pleased to connect again with this person.

Soul Affirmation: Old friends bring back good memories.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 40, 50

SCORPIO

Finding a way to do it better than others is not going to be hard this week. Share your wisdom with other seekers. All who receive your word will benefit this week. Happiness rules! Don't waste a moment of this perfect week on any negative thoughts.

Soul Affirmation: I create a positive world for myself by thinking positive.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 21, 45

SAGITTARIUS

Strong vibrations bring a series of dramatic interactions with others this week. Practice your charm. Let it come from the heart, and let your energy carry you upwards to your best, highest self. Keep emotions calm.

Soul Affirmation: In the storms of the week, I find comfort inside myself.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 45, 47

CAPRICORN

You'll be energizing and inspiring others this week as you speak what's on your mind regarding spiritual matters and masters. The quality of your thoughts is very pure; write yourself a love letter.

Soul Affirmation: I am inspired by my own words this week.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 47, 48

AQUARIUS

Surprises are in order this week. Keep yourself open and alert for the unexpected. Put yourself in the presence of people whose spirits are akin to yours. The surprise is likely to be a spiritual one.

Soul Affirmation: I am uplifted by the presence of friends.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 33, 47

PISCES

You need to be with someone this week who does not place too many demands on you, and who is creative, intelligent, a good conversationalist and highly spiritual. Perhaps you should be out looking for that person this week with eyes wide open!

Soul Affirmation: My mood is enhanced by the company I keep.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 24, 27