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## Valdosta Project Change

June 1997

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June 20, 1997

# Investigation set to begin

■ Independent observer sought for probe into school system troubles

By PAMALA J. WILLIAMS  
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — The initial steps have been taken for an internal investigation of the problems that have dogged the Valdosta City School System this school year.

Wednesday night, during a called meeting, board members directed their attorney Gary Moser, to conduct an internal investigation to try and get to the bottom of the "general lack of unity" within the system.

Moser's investigation resulted from Valdosta High Principal William Aldrich's critical remarks last week concerning School Superintendent Dr. Gary Walker. Aldrich's remarks seemed to emphasize a year's worth complaints and concerns expressed by parents and teacher.

Moser will have help conducting the inquiry in the form of a third-party independent observer. Thursday morning Moser began the search for that independent observer. His first step was to call the Professional Practices Commission to get from them a list of possible candidates.

Moser said the PPC gave him two names and he planned to make calls to determine if either candidate was available to help him with the job.

Once that independent observer is in place, Moser plans to press ahead at a fast pace and begin interviews next week. He plans to pull a random, representative sample of system employees from all levels — from administration to custodial staff — in for questioning as he searches for clues as to what has gone wrong with the system.

Parents, community members and other system employees will have an opportunity to come to Moser with their concerns, but Moser wants to be able to focus on specifics and identifiable problems, not opinions or generalizations, he said.

Moser said the investigation process will be similar to a deposition. During an interview, a court reporter, the independent observer, and the person being interviewed will be in the room. Moser said the person being interviewed will be able to bring with them a lawyer or Georgia Association of Educators representative, though the counsel won't be able to participate in the discussion.

A court reporter will transcribe what is said to maintain an accurate record of the interview.



GARY WALKER

"I'll begin by asking open-ended questions," Moser said. "What I'm looking for is the who, what, when, where, why and how. Those are the type of things the board wants to look at."

Moser hopes to present a completed report to the board within a few weeks.

In a prepared statement released Tuesday (see complete text page 4-A), the board said Aldrich, a "tenured administrative employee," broke both board policy and Georgia law when he chose to speak out.

In his statement before the board June 9, Aldrich acknowledged that he would be violating board policy by speaking and asked permission to address the board without the threat of repercussions. School Board Chairman David Waller, who read Wednesday's statement accusing Aldrich of breaking the law, had granted Aldrich permission to speak June 9. Aldrich violated the system and state-established grievance policy by not first filing a claim with his superior, Walker. He also did not fill out the necessary forms required to get on the board's agenda.

When asked what state law Aldrich had broken, Waller responded he "threatened" the board.

According to Georgia code, before a threat becomes a criminal, act it must contain some element of violence. According to state law a terroristic threat is a threat to commit a crime of violence or terroristic act. The disorderly conduct law spells out that the threat must cause some fear of safety for life, limb or health.

# Opinion

The Valdosta Daily Times

4-A Friday, June 20, 1997

## School board chairman issues statement

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the statement issued Wednesday from chairman David Waller on behalf of the Valdosta City Board of Education:*

"The sole purpose of this Board is to insure that each student regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin, age or handicap, has the opportunity for the best education we can give.

In this regard, the Board, the school administrators, the teaching faculty, and all the other support personnel must function cohesively for that goal.

Over the past year, there has been a general lack of unity for that purpose within the system. Recently, a tenured administrative

employee violated Georgia law and Board policy. Such conduct frustrates the educational environment necessary for the education of the students and undermines the goal of the Board.

This Board could easily take immediate action against this individual. However, present immediate action will not resolve issues which run deeper than isolated incidents. This Board after a very careful and thoughtful process has elect (sic) to embark on a course of action designed to identify impediments to the education of our children and to remove those impediments.

In this regard, we are hereby directing the Board's Attorney to conduct an investigation

into the internal affairs as directed by the Board. In this regard, we remind all employees of the system of their obligation to cooperate fully in this investigation. Also, in this regard we request that the citizens of the City of Valdosta give this investigation their cooperation. After the investigation has been completed and has been reviewed by the Board, the public will receive full disclosure.

After the investigation, the Board will take such action as it deems necessary to insure the unity of effort in the school system, the single purpose of which is to insure quality education."

# State law protects BC

VDI 10-22-97

By PAMALA J. WILLIAMS  
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — Teachers concerned about participating in the Valdosta City Schools system-wide investigation need only to look to state law and board policy for reassurance their jobs will be protected, attorney Gary Moser said.

The board's grievance policy, adopted to mirror state law, and state codes is designed to protect teachers and administrators, Moser said.

A system-wide investigation probing what has caused a "general lack of unity" in the Valdosta City Schools was ordered this week by the board of education. Moser and an independent third-party observer will question employees from all levels of the system and people from the community to help determine the "who, what, when, where, why and how" of what has gone wrong this school year.

To conduct an effective investigation, Moser said he will need cooperation from the people of the community and the employees of the system. He will also need people who can talk about specific or identifiable problems to feel they can come to him without fear of losing their positions.

According to state law, a teacher or administrator can only be fired for eight reasons: incompetency, insubordination, willful neglect of duties, immorality,

inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate any state law, municipal ordinance or policy rule of the local board of education, due to staff reductions because of a loss of students or canceled programs, failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training or any other good or sufficient cause.

Before a teacher or administrator can be fired, Moser explained the law spells out a process by which the person must be notified in writing of the reasons for termination. There is also a process that allows the person being terminated to have a public hearing. If the results of a hearing aren't satisfactory, the entire case can be appealed to the local superior court.

Teachers or administrators who feel they have been treated unfairly can seek relief through the system's grievance policy. All that needs to be done to initiate the process is the completion of a complaint form.

The form goes first to the supervising administrator, usually a building principal, then to the superintendent and then to the board of education.

While some have commented the grievance process takes too long, according to the actual policy the maximum time it can take is 60 days. In reality, Moser said, it probably takes closer to a month to work through the system.

If the grievance isn't acted upon at any level, after a 10 day

# OE probe participants

period, it automatically is handed up to the next level, the policy states.

A third layer of protection comes in the form of the

See PROBE Page 2-A

## Probe

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From page 1-A

Professional Practices Commission, which can be called in at any time to investigate problems of ethics or unprofessionalism. The PPC will conduct investigations at no cost and those investigations can be requested by anyone willing to write up a

letter stating their complaint.

Moser hopes to begin his series of interviews next week and is in the process of talking with people recommended by the PPC to fill the role as that independent observer. When he completes his report Moser will present it to the board.

# The Valdosta Daily Times

Established 1867

ROBERT F. MORRELL  
PUBLISHER

Published Daily And Sunday At 201 North Troup St., Valdosta, Ga.

6-22-97

## OUR OPINION...

### Investigation should help restore city schools' unity

**T**he dark cloud that has hung over the Valdosta City Schools in recent months is either about to dissipate or break open in a torrential downpour.

The Valdosta Board of Education finds itself in the midst of a dispute which has created dissension and unrest among students, parents, teachers and administrators. The board was rocked by the June 9 statements of Principal William Aldrich, who accused Supt. Gary Walker of acting unprofessionally in dividing staff, confusing the public and placing at risk the safety of 6,000 people who attended the school's recent graduation ceremony. As a result of Aldrich's allegations, the board has commissioned an investigation to find out exactly what has created such a disruption to the system's unity. We take no sides in the dispute, but the board has acted wisely in ordering the investigation.

It has chosen board attorney Gary Moser to conduct an internal investigation to uncover the source of internal strife in the school system. With the assistance of an impartial third party, one recommended by the Professional Practices Commission, Moser will seek information from teachers, administrators and the public in order to determine what has caused the internal strife.

"What I'm looking for is the who, what, when, where, why and how. Those are the type of things the board wants to look at," Moser said.

We hope all involved will cooperate, because the city school system will never accomplish its educational goals if the source of the internal strife is not squelched. Moser and the board have promised the investigation will be conducted in a way that no individual should fear retribution. Therefore, there is no reason for anyone not to be forthcoming with information that will ensure the educational process continues to grow at city schools.

We also would advise the board to separate itself from the investigation until Moser's findings are finalized. Involvement by board members at this point will only impede the fact-finding process.

To that end, we are concerned about a recent statement by Board Chairman David Waller, who accused Aldrich of violating Georgia law and board policy in making his June 9 statement to the board. Waller's statement, we feel, was ill-timed and inappropriate in light of Moser's pending investigation. As board chairman, Waller had every opportunity to silence Aldrich before he read his statement earlier this month. Warren Lee, however, was the only board member to voice concern that Aldrich's appearance before the board was a violation of standing board policy.

When asked by a reporter what state law Aldrich had violated, Waller responded that Aldrich had "threatened" the board.

We disagree. We read no threat in Aldrich's words. He did, however, promise to fight the board in court, if necessary, if he was fired or demoted as a result of his statements. That is not a threat; it is his right as a member of a democratic society.

If the board truly wishes to solve the problems engulfing the Valdosta system, it will refrain from comment until Moser's investigation is completed. Then, through full disclosure to the public, the healing process within the school system can begin, and the focus of educators can be returned to the classroom.

## **Aldrich fights for the good of all students**

**DEAR EDITOR:**

We have been asleep for too long and now it's time to get our house in order.

William Aldrich recently stood up for his beliefs in a way no other person in this country has done in a long time - if ever. He is a true statesman who has put the welfare of YOUR CHILDREN before the welfare of himself or his own family.

There is no "Ego Trip" here and he probably will not have a building named after him; however, he should have a plaque placed at VHS stating "He fought a good fight for all students"!

After the fiasco of Friday afternoon, it is now time for the parents to stand up as he has done. Give him your full support, let your voices be heard and demand better for your children. They

deserve the best education we can give them and will not get it by diluting the curriculum, shifting people around, taking salaries from some and giving to others and having controversy and fear within the administration, as has been the case all year.

My family is a third generation "VHS family" and I have never seen anything to compare with the way our schools have been handled in the past year.

Now might be an appropriate time for a complete, publicly published audit of this school system to let the public know exactly where and how our money is being spent and by whom. We may be able to rid the excess personnel from places other than curricula and teachers.

Parents, William Aldrich has placed his job on the line for your children and it is now time for you to back him to the fullest. **LET YOUR VOICES BE HEARD!**

**Barbara Gandy**  
Valdosta

## **Walker is not right for Valdosta school system**

**DEAR EDITOR:**

Wake-up school board! It's time to admit that Dr. Walker is not

right for the educational system in Valdosta. In just two years, he has destroyed years and years of pride and tradition.

Ask yourselves these questions: Why are the students and teachers leaving the city school system in masses? Why do his views differ so from that of other educators and even state superintendent Linda Schrenko? Why, when recently, an article (on page 6 of the *Valdosta Daily Times*) showed how well leveling works, Dr. Walker wants to do away with this effective approach to education? If you want answers to these and many more questions, ask your faculty. I see it as having to be done by secret ballot as most are afraid that speaking up would lead to unemployment!

Congratulations to Mr. Aldrich who refused to be bullied any longer.

School Board, it is time to become an advocate for our children and our tradition. Admit that you made a mistake and cut your losses!

**Lisa H. Long**  
Valdosta

VDT  
6-22-97

# Civil rights groups challenge hiring

VDT 6-22-77  
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Civil rights groups are lining up in court to combat a lawsuit they view as a threat to Georgia's three historically black public colleges.

The lawsuit is aimed at eliminating racial preferences in hiring and admissions practices in all Georgia's public colleges, but it focuses on traditionally black Albany State, Fort Valley State and Savannah State.

"We need to be a part of this," said Victor Bolden, a lawyer for the NAACP Legal Defense Education Fund. "This lawsuit could have a devastating impact on the higher education opportunities of African-American students all across the state."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Council and 16 black high school and college students filed a motion in federal court Friday to intervene with the lawsuit that alleges Georgia uses tokenism and racial quotas to illegally perpetuate segregation in higher education.

The lawsuit was filed in March in Savannah. The lawyer behind the suit is Lee Parks, who led the

fight to overturn the state's majority-black legislative and congressional districts.

The suit was filed on behalf of a group of white and black plaintiffs, including educators and two students who said they were denied admission to the state's flagship school, the University of Georgia.

Parks accused the NAACP and other civil rights groups of allowing segregation to exist in Georgia's university system.

"They have been fairly happy with the status quo because it got more minorities degrees and perpetuated this double standard," Parks said. "Black advocacy groups have winked at the inequalities of black schools and fought for integration at white schools."

Parks has said he is not seeking to close the historically black colleges, only to integrate them. One solution, he said, is to transfer popular programs to those schools, such as moving the University of Georgia's agribusiness degree programs to Fort Valley State in rural Georgia.

Parks contends the black schools get a disproportionate amount of state funds and have

little to show for it in academic achievement.

He also has said the university system should move immediately to integrate faculties, beginning with the University of Georgia, Georgia Tech and Georgia State University, giving priority to faculty from historically black schools.

And he's suggested the state develop a uniform admissions policy for all public colleges, arguing that schools such as the University of Georgia, which has a 6 percent black student body, must lower admissions requirements.

Bolden's motion says the NAACP should be allowed to intervene because the state can't adequately defend the interests of blacks with regard to "policies aimed at attracting, enrolling and retaining African-American students at historically white institutions, or programs such as developmental studies classes at historically black institutions which enable students who are academically less prepared to obtain a four-year education."

"Clearly, our concern is heightened by the defense the state has taken," Bolden said. "While

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they're saying they've eliminated all the vestiges of past discrimination, we believe there are continuing issues."

The state maintains it has followed edicts from federal courts and agencies for more than 25 years to bring its university system into compliance with civil rights laws governing admissions and hiring.

# True Dialogue Not Possible

President Clinton has called for a national dialogue on race relations in the United States.

We hope this isn't another touchy-feely thing that pays only lip service to the problem and does little to solve it.

Most of these initiatives in the past have merely been programs that allowed liberals to do something symbolic, then go home and feel good about themselves while accomplishing very little in a material way. We don't need any more symbolic gestures, quotas or affirmative action.

And we have serious doubts that the liberals truly want a dialogue. A dialogue is where two parties openly, candidly and truthfully express their views.

It also helps if the other party listens with an open mind to facts presented, even if they are unpleasant to hear.

We doubt, given this age of politically correctness, that such a dialogue will ever take place.

Instead, we will polish the truth to such a point that very little of it is left and we will issue pleasant homilies to one another, then go home and feel good about ourselves for having held a "dialogue."

We will have accomplished nothing.

The problem with our dialogues is that whites usually end

up with a finger pointing at them for all the problems minorities have.

The fact is a lot of those problems are brought on minorities by themselves.

It's just nobody wants to say that and generally, minorities are not happy to hear that.

Neither side really wants to hear the truth - only the truth as they see it.

The fact is we have a racial problem in the United States but it isn't one-sided and that has been Washington's view for more than 30 years.

The federal government's attempts to solve that problem have only resulted in resentment and resistance on the part of whites, a resentment and resistance that grows with every government program.

When we reach the point that we can truly speak to another without rousing anger, rage and hurt feelings, we can have a dialogue.

Until then, what we're calling a dialogue is just so much fluff and very little substance.

The only thing we truly owe to people of all races is a level playing field, an equal chance at achieving our potential without regard to race, creed or color.

Right now, that isn't the way Washington sees it and that dooms any dialogue from the beginning.



WEDNESDAY

June 25, 1997

SPORTS: Scott Boras claims client J.D. Drew should be a

WEATHER: Partly cloudy skies over South Georgia today

# The Valdosta Daily

Vol. 92 — No. 253

Valdosta, Georgia



Alma Williams, chairman of the Crusade for the Education of All Children, addresses a crowd of supporters Tuesday night at St. Paul A.M.E. Church. — Times photo by Mike Tanner

## 'Crusade' leader supports superintendent

By PAMALA J. WILLIAMS  
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — Expressing her support for Valdosta City Schools Superintendent Dr. Gary Walker and calling for the dismissal of Valdosta High Principal William Aldrich, Alma Williams predicted Monday night that if changes don't come soon, the city school system will be "set back 30 years with no chance of our children ever catching up."

As head of the newly formed "Crusade for the Education of All Children," Williams gathered with about 30 supporters at St. Paul AME Church Tuesday night to "awaken the conscience of this community."

"For years, blacks and poor whites have suffered in the Valdosta School System from the lack of equal opportunities and access in this, supposedly equal system of education," Williams said. "Dr. Walker and the board of education are commended on their efforts to right past wrongs and to address the inequalities of the past."

Williams also said Aldrich, who spoke critically of Walker during a June 9 Board of Education meeting, "does not represent the right caliber of individual needed to direct the paths of our children."

Williams said the school system must do away with all leveling of students by ability and must discontinue the practice of grouping students according to their performance on standardized tests.

"Leveling makes excuses for laziness," Williams said. "Leveling is a breeding ground for segregation ... For many years the Valdosta Board of Education has condoned a private-school mentality in a tax-supported public school domain. Students have been systematically routed into segregated classes while their standardized test scores have been used as an instrument for their placement."

Showing support for Walker, Williams said upon his arrival here, the superintendent immediately accepted the challenge to provide "positive changes for the benefit of our students and... (he) immediately began to

review, revamp and repair the inequalities identified in the system."

Williams also said children who don't meet the skill levels required for passage of a class should not be promoted, but instead should be retaught until they have mastery of the subject. During the same speech, however, she was critical of one of Walker's initiatives, the Transitions Program, designed to handle the task of catching children who are behind in reading and math skills by giving them the attention and support they need to catch up and become successful in those areas.

Williams said placement in gifted, average and transition level classes is a form of labeling children.

"How would you like it if those labels were applied to you on the job, if you were labeled a gifted, normal or transitional employee, and you were paid accordingly?" Williams asked.

Williams was also critical of proposed scheduling changes at Valdosta Middle School. Williams did describe Principal

See WILLIAMS, Page 2-A

THURSDAY

June 26, 1997

SPORTS: Alex Brown to miss Georgia-Florida All-Star game with broken ankle — Page 1-D

WEATHER: Partly cloudy skies over South Georgia with highs in the lower 90s

# The Valdosta Daily Times

Vol. 92 — No. 254

Valdosta, Georgia

50 cents

## Concerned parents at odds with Williams' 'Crusade'

By PAMALA J. WILLIAMS  
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — Criticisms voiced by the leader of a new "education crusade" conflict with those of parents already fighting changes in the Valdosta City Schools.

Alma Williams, a member of the Valdosta Board of Education from March 1990 to May 1992, expressed support Tuesday for Superintendent Dr. Gary Walker and the changes he has brought to the system.

Williams' defense of Walker and his policies is at odds with concerns raised by large numbers of parents at both public and private meetings.

A former teacher in the Valdosta system, she is the owner of Eastside

Training Academy Inc., a Valdosta-based private school. Williams said Wednesday she "doesn't anticipate" running for a school board seat and only decided to speak up for Walker after he and the board were publicly criticized. The wife of City Councilman Bunnis Williams, she "refused to let either of her children go through the city (school) system."

The parents claim Walker's changes and programs are causing them concern and forcing them to look for educational alternatives that include private and home schooling.

"My child won't have the opportunity to grow as rapidly as before," said Bob DeLong, the father of three school-aged children. He doesn't want the schools to do away with ability grouping and also spoke out against the current policy to

reteach and retest students who don't pass a classroom assessment. "I do pay taxes and want to participate in the system, but I am concerned about the changes and am considering pulling my children out."

With children in the elementary and middle school grades, DeLong said private schooling is an option that might require him to take on a second job, "but I'll do what I have to do to make sure they get a good education."

Williams called Tuesday for a removal of all "leveling," or grouping students based on academic performance and achievement levels. At the same time, she supported Walker's changes, which include creation of the transitions level classes which groups students by ability and performance.

Another parent, Dr. Ralph Allen, said he pulled his child out of West Gordon Elementary last year because of the phasing out of academic leveling. He had planned to put his child back in the public schools, but now that Valdosta Middle School "seems to be going the same direction as West Gordon" his child will stay at Valwood School.

"I'll have to spend a lot of money to avoid the public schools," Allen said.

Of her own teaching experience, Williams said part of the reason she left her position in the middle of a school year was because she was teaching students in advanced level classes who didn't have the skills she believed they needed to be successful. She also saw other students, in her lower level classes, who did have the skills but weren't moved up

the ladder.

Many parents in the system say they want their children to be grouped based on skills and performance. They are concerned that doing away with ability grouping will slow down the rate at which their children learn. And, the parents stress, the problem isn't motivated by a racial bias, as Williams maintained, but on what they believe is best for their children.

Another parent, a former teacher with two children, insisted that regardless of color, children should be placed in a classroom with students of similar skills so the group can work toward a common goal.

"If you are able to do sixth grade and See CRUSADE, Page 2-A

# **City BOE should ask for Walker's resignation**

**DEAR EDITOR:**

In light of the recent events involving Mr. Aldrich, Dr. Walker and our Valdosta City school

board, I find it hard to understand how the school board can continue to collectively bury their heads in the sand and ignore what is obvious to most teachers and parents in their city. Mr. Aldrich is a highly respected principal of thirty years in the Valdosta city school system. Dr. Walker is an outsider who has been here for a little over one year. I have yet to meet either a parent or a teacher who supports Dr. Walker and his policies.

Where are the Valdosta City school board members when we need them to take immediate action? Are they seriously considering hiring an outside source to do their business? Are they just too embarrassed to admit

that they made a mistake in hiring our superintendent, Dr. Walker?

Dr. Walker should resign immediately in light of the results of his miserable policies over the past year. Should he not offer his resignation, our elected members of the Valdosta City school board should ask for his resignation.

We citizens of Valdosta need to remember that these city schools are ours. Our children, regardless of economic or ethnic background, deserve an opportunity for an excellent and appropriate education. We also need to remember that three Valdosta school board members are up for election this November.

**Herman Ertlschweiger, Jr.**  
**Valdosta**

VD 7  
6-26-97

# Opinion

The Valdosta Daily Times

4-A Monday, June 30, 1997

## Which children will get the best education?

In Brooklyn's Junior High School 57 "fewer than 1 percent of the students are white," the *New York Times* reports, "and more than 87 percent are eligible for free lunches." In the eighth grade, only 11.7 percent of the youngsters are reading at their grade level.

These kids and many more like them — black and Hispanic — in segregated public schools around the country were missing in the president's "landmark" speech on race relations at the San Diego campus of the University of California.

The president wants us to be "one America" in the 21st century, but he explains, "money can't do it. It can come only from the human spirit." Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, knows better: "It will take money ... to provide the resources and quality of schooling required for youngsters to succeed." Especially isolated youngsters.

Unless attention is paid to the students at Junior High School 57 in Brooklyn, the 21st century will be the same for most of them as their bleak present.

The president ignored the crucial fact that the division of the races is profoundly affected by experiences in the most formative ghetto in our society — the public school. And these increasingly segregated schools continue to be inferior in resources of all kinds, including, with exceptions, the teaching staff.

This continuing discrimination — not by law but by indifference — is not only racial but is a matter of class.

### OPINION



NAT  
HENTOFF

Yet Clinton, in speaking of education in San Diego, focused only on colleges as he ritualistically preached the necessity of affirmative action. The students at Junior High School 57 — where attendance is less than half in some classes — may not get any closer to a college than a job as a security guard. Yet the president passionately said in his talk that "we must give our children the finest education in the world."

Which children? Or, more to the point, which class of children?

Much to the president's chagrin, affirmative action in colleges is in trouble not only because of Proposition 209 in California — which the Supreme Court is likely to affirm — but in courts elsewhere. So, what will happen if race and gender preference — as a factor in college admissions — can no longer continue, however it is "mended"?

At San Diego, Clinton said he was willing to listen to any alternative to affirmative action. ("I would embrace it if I could find a better way.") Apparently his advisers had neglected to tell him what's going on around the country in class-based alternatives to race-and-gender-based affirmative action.

The very University of California system, for instance, has created a partnership between the state's 50 low-performing high schools that will help students achieve better test scores and grades and thereby qualify for university admission on academic merit. Many of the high schools involved in these college preparatory programs have predominantly black or Hispanic students. But there are also whites and others who have potential that needs to be nurtured.

Other colleges and universities — aware of the dubious future of affirmative action as currently practiced — are engaged in similar outreach programs.

The University of California alternative

— a mention of which would have given some substance to the president's superficial speech — is evidently going to include training of elementary and middle school teachers in those isolated lower schools.

Already underway in the Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Francisco, as reported by Rene Sanchez in the *Washington Post* — is a University of California engineering and science achievement program for students. The school is in a very poor neighborhood, and the principal, James Taylor, points out that for those youngsters to be qualified for college, "we have to start very, very early."

The students in these various programs — from elementary school on — will legitimately achieve self-esteem, to use a modish term. Most important, they will learn that they can learn. The most harmful effect of many ghetto schools is that many kids there learn that they are dumb — and they are not.

Moreover, college admissions directors will no longer have to play a color-coded game in deciding who gets in and who doesn't.

In his speech, Clinton pointed to the presence of White House aid Thurgood Marshall Jr. Clinton did not mention Thurgood Marshall Sr.'s insistent focus on undoing the racial isolation in the public schools. Nor did he address the criticism of Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., who has said "if Clinton wants a legacy of race relations, he should invest in public schools."

To the students at Brooklyn's Junior High 57, the president was far more distant than San Diego.

*Nat Hentoff is a nationally renowned authority on the First Amendment and the rest of the Bill of Rights.*

Readers' forum

# Leadership Lowndes

The Leadership Lowndes Class of 1997 participated in their fifth program of the year on May 15. The program was Health and Human Services Day and was chaired by **Teresa Clark** (Leadership Lowndes Class of 1996). This program educated the class about community-wide health and human service agencies and issues as well as medical services available through South Georgia Medical Center.

The day began with a breakfast at Mathis City Auditorium and an introduction to human services by **Angela Crance**, United Way director (LL'93). **Chris Roan** (LL'92) informed the group about LODAC and class member **Amy Carter** gave an update on the American Red Cross.

The class then began touring our helping agencies. They were given a tour of Greenleaf Center by class member **Dave Zammit**. They received a warm experience as they toured LARC. **Tim Crown** of LARC explained the work that the clients are able to participate in. The class then visited the Sweet Sixteen Habitat community and received a detailed review by class member **Ralph Jackson**. The Second Harvest Food Bank was next and **Frank Richards** (LL'96) had a wonderful presentation on what the food bank does for our community. On to New Horizons ... **Bonnie Peterson** and her staff told the class how the homeless shelter runs and gave a tour of this nice home. **Marjorie White** of DFACS also spoke to the group on Welfare Reform. The class then traveled to the Human Resource Building. **Sue Leonard** (LL'94) and **Teresa Clark**, program chair, informed the group of the services provided at this facility.



Leadership Lowndes Class at SGMC

After lunch at South Georgia Medical Center, **Mark Wilson** (LL'94) spoke on "Partnership for Health." **John Bowling**, SGMC Administrator and a charter member of Leadership Lowndes welcomed the class and answered questions concerning health care in Lowndes County. **Greg Hembree** and **Jack Edwards** had an excellent presentation on managed health care. **Dr. David Waller** (LL'95) guided the class on a tour of the hospital.

The program ended at SGMC with presentations from class member **Mark Stalvey** on the Valdosta Housing Authority; **Jenne Brandon** (LL'96) on Home Health Services & Hospice; **Mary Bowers** (LL'95) on housing for the elderly and **Frank Morman** (LL'92) on Project Change.

Many thanks to SGMC and Langdale Place, sponsors of this Leadership Lowndes program.



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