

includes ad lib
comments

Statement By Chancellor Paul Hardin
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
March 17, 1992

I want to talk with you, to our campus community, and with the general public about two important issues: (1) working together to meet the very legitimate needs and objectives of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center and (2) working together to improve the wages and benefits of our lowest compensated employees, especially those at or near the poverty level.

Both of these causes have had from the beginning, and will continue to have, my public and private support. I ask you to listen carefully for a few minutes, not only to my thoughts on these two issues, but also to a description of actions we have already taken together and to further actions I now propose.

As the leaders of the recent protests know, I sympathized with the frustration that led to the so-called demands of February 24, and I elected to treat them not literally as demands but as an urgent call for further consultation and action. Thus, I did not wait for the March 11 deadline but convened a meeting on February 27, just three days after I received the communication. At that meeting Dean Boulton and I discussed the issues with Arnie Epps, Elizabeth Kolb, and others. Dean Boulton's memo was a summary of that meeting, a reminder to all of us of what we had discussed, what remained to be discussed, what had been done, and what we expected to be done. I concurred in Dean Boulton's summary of those discussions.

I was assured at that meeting by Arnie that my interpretation was correct, and that he and others did not mean literally to demand. I did not feel -- from that conversation -- that he or anyone else expected me to take over personally the administration of the Division of Student Affairs or would not honor a written memorandum from my vice chancellor. I have great confidence in Dean Boulton, and I do not want anyone to think that my speaking directly to you today evidences any lack of confidence in him or in his support of you and all of our students. Nevertheless, with Dean Boulton's full support, I now address these issues in my own statement.

First, the issue of compensation for the university's lowest paid workers. I agree with North Carolina Representative Anne Barnes of Chapel Hill that no full-time state employee should have to live at or below the poverty level. While, with my full support, she works to improve, statewide, the compensation of the lowest paid state employees, I have been exploring what we have the financial means and legal authority to do on this campus without waiting for statewide action. Let me add that, although the focus has been on housekeepers, 65 workers with other job titles on this campus are in the same pay bracket and face the same financial difficulties our housekeepers are experiencing.

Several months ago, when you and I were buying lunch from the housekeepers in the Pit to show our appreciation of their work and our support of their cause, I asked my financial advisers to ascertain the cost of raising the wages of our lowest paid workers by various amounts. I made it clear that I wanted to pay them more, if I could find the money and the authority to do so, even though I recognized that this would result in compaction of wages at the bottom of the scale. Obviously, even if I had the authority, I could not find the resources to raise wages at higher classifications without the infusion of significant new state appropriations dedicated to that purpose.

Let me tell you what we have been able to do for housekeepers and others at the same pay level. Because of the high cost of living in Chapel Hill, we have been permitted by the Office of State Personnel to pay a starting wage 5% higher than the standard entry-level wages at other UNC campuses and other state agencies.

Second, when the General Assembly passed Representative Barnes' Accelerated Pay bill but was not able to fund it fully, we moved enough money from other operations on the campus to enable all of our eligible employees to participate in that accelerated pay program. Thus, for 1991, we had only 21 full-time employees who earned less than \$13,000 per year out of a workforce of some 5,200 SPA employees.

During the past few days, in order to be certain that we have now done all that we legally can do, we asked the Office of State Personnel if we had any unused legal authority to do more -- on our

own. The answer, given supportively and sympathetically, was, nevertheless, no. Our campus has no present authority to do more than we have done. However, OSP has, partly at our request and in view of our concern, recommended to the General Assembly the approval and funding of higher statewide pay ranges at those lowest levels of compensation and in some other classifications where earnings are higher but not competitive.

I have personally discussed with Representative Barnes and Dr. Jay Robinson of the UNC General Administration several ideas I have had for shifting from employees to state agency-employers some of the costs of fringe benefits. We have agreed to get together soon to explore further these and other possible proposals.

I have also discussed with Dr. Robinson your desire to convey to state government your concern for the plight of these workers. He has indicated that he will be happy to counsel with student leaders in choosing effective ways to voice your concerns and in identifying the appropriate persons to address. Arnie, I hope that you will call him and arrange to seek his advice and to follow it. I want, in advance, to thank you and all of you who will join us in seeking a living wage for this group of our employees. I also urge you to do as our students have always done -- to present your convictions to our lawmakers courteously and respectfully. Dr. Robinson believes that speaking to and writing to our own representatives is the way to go. I concur, and we will keep Arnie Epps and other student leaders posted on what issues are pending before which bodies in Raleigh.

Now, let me address the issues surrounding the expansion and improvement of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center.

I have worked throughout my life for the inclusion of all people into the full opportunities of American society and, throughout my career, for the inclusion of people of all races into every aspect of university life. I was practicing law in Birmingham when Rosa Parks, with majestic dignity, refused to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery. Some of you have heard me tell of the unique impact Martin Luther King, Jr. had on my father and me.

I appreciate your sense of drama, but the adult African-American community in Durham and, indeed, all citizens who were politically alert in that city in the '60s will be puzzled by your reference to the Hardin Plantation. In the mid 1960s I chaired the Mayor's Human Relations Committee, which compelled Durham, on legal grounds, to integrate its motion picture theatres. I later ran for mayor, received the endorsement of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, was attacked by a Raleigh television commentator (whose name you would recognize) as a Communist sympathizer and advocate of black power, and was defeated in a conservative, white backlash. Colleagues, I have paid my dues as a human rights advocate in the public arena. And you ain't seen nothing yet.

I also share your respect for the memory of Sonja Haynes Stone. Arnie will remember that I ignored all of my afternoon appointments and sat spellbound through the entire three-hour Sonja Haynes Stone memorial service over which he presided. He will also remember that I wrote him a handnote of personal thanks. I also wrote to a student dancer that her original dance in honor of Professor Stone was the most brilliantly moving solo dance I had ever seen.

In the light of that background of personal commitment to inclusiveness, personal celebration of diversity, and personal admiration of Sonja Haynes Stone, I seek to be your friend and ally in fulfilling the vast promise of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center.

Friends should be honest with each other. I do not agree with those of you who advocate a free-standing Center. However, I respect your sincerity and ask you to respect mine.

My vision of the center is two-fold. I respect the need of ethnic groups who are vastly out-numbered in our particular community to have "their space," where they can draw strength from each other and from their shared culture and traditions. I also see the Center as a place where all women and men of this learning community can come together, work together, read together, share experiences, and begin at long last to understand and celebrate together the richness of the African-

American experience. I favor a Center that is, by geography and program, inviting and inclusive -- a forum, not a fortress.

I worry that what has been happening these last few days and weeks -- this well-intended advocacy of a stand-alone structure and the adoption of strategies that tend to alienate rather than attract -- will lead again toward the dark valley of separation. We cannot go back to the days of the plantation. We cannot go back to the fifties and sixties of this century or the last. I will not go back there. I honestly believe that you do not want to go back there.

I have supported and will continue to support, publicly and privately, a Black Cultural Center that is inclusive. I want us to build a concept that can educate those who do not yet appreciate African-American culture as well as those who are its present champions. I also want to build a model that we can apply to other ethnic groups if they seek their own centers.

I have asked Dean Boulton to insure that the person chosen for future leadership of the Carolina Union be deeply committed to the Center and to inclusion. I want to go with you and with Dean Boulton to make that same pitch to the Board of the Carolina Union and to the Student Congress. I have also asked Dean Boulton to convene a small working group to explore the short- and long-term space needs of the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center, and I have suggested that he invite the president of the Black Student Movement to serve with that group.

(Dean Boulton, by the way, feels that some short-term needs may be met fairly soon in Chase Building. That was among the topics we discussed with the student leaders shortly after I received your communication.)

We are now engaged in a nationwide effort to raise \$320 million to secure Carolina's future. Priorities in that campaign, set after years of discussion among our trustees, faculty, staff, student leaders, and prospective donors include endowed professorships, scholarships, and fellowships. But I suggest respectfully that we work together, as our first priority, to bring to full dignity and useful service the Center that already bears the name of Sonja Haynes Stone.

Let me bring something to the attention of this community that has not previously been said in public. Professorships and facilities are almost always named because the honorees have wealthy friends or because the donors themselves are honored. These are important and legitimate recognitions.

There is, however, another form of naming recognition that is completely non-precuniary. It is even more thrilling to me than the first form of recognition. Just a very few times since I have been chancellor, I have had the privilege of recommending to the trustees the naming of a center, not in response to a material gift, but in recognition of the fact that the honoree was so important in the creation or leadership of the Center that it must, logically, bear her or his name. Thus, for example, in my tenure, our trustees have, without the slightest financial incentive, named the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research and the Sonja Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center. Sheps and Stone are now in the company of Frank Porter Graham and a few others whose service to the university merited and received high recognition without the necessity of raising large sums of money.

You and others whose efforts will help us achieve our financial goals have the right to designate the use of your gifts within the broad purposes and goals of the University. I personally hope you will go after that \$500,000 that is in the case statement for the Sonja Haynes Stone Center as your first and most important objective. My wife and I will contribute to that. The naming honor has been conferred by the trustees. Let's now use our financial contributions to enhance the honor by fulfilling the dream! Part of our gifts may help defray the cost of physical expansion (for example, keeping down to the lowest possible level whatever fee may be voted on by the students to cover the cost of expanding student facilities); part may purchase cultural artifacts, books, and works of art to grace the Center.

Regardless of what path you pursue, what tactics you follow, I admire and share the idealism that leads you to champion the underpaid and to honor your mentor and teacher. Godspeed!