

Professor calls on blacks to press for change

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Despite setbacks during the 1980s, the civil rights movement has been a "resounding success," according to Dr. Charles Willie, a Harvard University sociology professor and a college classmate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Willie made his contention during a boisterous and humorous speech at St. John Fisher College on Monday, Jan. 15, at a ceremony commemorating Martin Luther King Day.

Statistics show a general increase in the numbers of blacks obtaining high school and college degrees since the 1960s, Willie said. He asserted that the open struggle of blacks for civil rights in the 1950s, '60s and '70s bore great fruit, then soured in the '80s because blacks no longer pressed their demands in the political arena.

"When people of oppression were pressing for change, they got it," Willie said. "When they stop pressuring, they regressed."

Willie noted that the Reagan administration cut back student aid to low-income undergraduates throughout the 1980s, and then favored federally-subsidized student loans in place of government funding. This hurt minorities the most he said, but nonetheless, blacks in general are better educated than ever before.

"I am convinced that public education is better than it was when I went to school," Willie said, noting that more public schools feature special programming than when he was a child.

Schools and society in general only improved for blacks when they took their struggle for freedom into their own hands, Willie said. Whites were important allies in the civil rights movement, he said, but no oppressed people can be liberated simply by the benevolence of the majority.

"Don't put your faith in any homogeneous group because it doesn't have the knowledge to solve your problems," he



Bette G. Augustin-Staff photographer

Dr. Charles Willie, once a classmate of Dr. Martin Luther King, considers the civil-rights movement a "resounding success," despite setbacks during the 1980s.

said. Willie joked that white middle class males should not trust any group of all-black females with their "liberation," just as black women wouldn't do so with white males. "The oppressed must define the time that they want and the freedom they want," he said.

Nonetheless, society functions better when those "in charge" have compassion for those who don't hold power.

For example, Willie said, whites who oppose affirmative action programs are

misguided because treating minorities in the light of their past oppression will result in a benefit for all of society.

He noted that when whites held dominant political power in Atlanta, Ga., the city wasn't scarred with the same racial tension that marked other southern metropolises. Hence, now that the political establishment is dominated by blacks, whites are treated more fairly than might be expected in the south, he said.

To support his argument, he said that while only eight percent of students in Atlanta's public schools are white, 17 percent of the teachers are white and whites hold half the administrative positions. No city in the United States has a similar proportion of black teachers to black students, he added.

Such statistics prove that white fear of black and minority political power is unfounded, Willie said. He commented that racial violence on college campuses in the country during the 1980s can be explained in terms of white male frustration with the growing power of blacks and women.

"We've got to be compassionate towards white males," Willie said. "White males are losing ground at a time when they thought they were entitled to rule," he said, adding that more women than men now attend college, and that other minority groups — such as Asians — are excelling in academics.

Willie concluded by noting that blacks have made "great progress in the United States," but still have a way to go.

"It is much better than it used to be, but much less than it ought to be," he said.

Development director chosen

ROCHESTER — The Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester have named Sister Shirley Pilot, SSJ, the first development director for the congregation.



Among her qualifications were extensive fundraising as well as administrative and supervisory experience in a variety of areas. Sister Pilot is also a Realtor associate with Sheila Walsh Realty, Inc. in Rochester.

In addition to teaching elementary school

for several years, Sister Pilot served as a pastoral agent in Goias and Minas Gerais, Brazil. Among other positions, she has served as campus minister at Rochester Institute of Technology, director of the diocesan Department of Campus Ministry, and chairwoman of the New York State Diocesan Directors of Campus Ministry.

She received her bachelor's degree in history from Nazareth College of Rochester and her master's degree in education from the University of Rochester. Sister Pilot completed her post-master's study in psychology at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.

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