

M. Statements by Center Clients

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Florine Bell

**Founder of the Lincoln Height Community Development, Inc.
and the Ella Baker Educational Project of NC, Inc.**

Since 2009, Attorney Mark Dorosin, Attorney Peter Gilbert, other attorneys, and law students of the UNC Civil Rights Center have provided counsel and support to the Lincoln Height's Community during various visits to Halifax County. Thanks to their tireless and effective efforts, a (2010) decision for Roanoke Rapids, NC to locate a waste dump in the low-income, largely African-American community of Lincoln Heights was thwarted.

They are currently providing tremendous support regarding pursuit of Lincoln's Height's annexation into the township of Roanoke Rapids as well as the merger of our Halifax County's unequal triad school system. The Center agrees with us that all children are entitled to an equal, sound and basic education.

To take away the authority of legal pursuits by the UNC Civil Rights Center would grossly affect socially disadvantaged citizens who for various reasons are unable to engage in legal matters or else afford the services of an attorney. Undoubtedly, the former civil rights attorney, Julius Chambers, also considered the plight of disenfranchised low wealth individuals when he founded the Center for Civil Rights. Moreover, the Center has managed to remain afloat due to the many contributions of others who share similar beliefs of need regarding citizens and their communities. As it stands, we need the services of the university's Center of Civil Rights community outreach and engagement to help low wealth disadvantaged rural communities.

David Caldwell

**Rogers Road Community
Chapel Hill North Carolina**

We are a historical minority community that had been lied to, taken advantage of and disenfranchised by our government. We are a community that bore the weight and responsibility of a landfill in our neighborhood for many years due to promises made by our local government that had not been fulfilled. Until we became involved with the Center we had no idea how to begin to fight for ourselves. Through them we have been educated in everything from power points to research. From documentation to presentation. We have taken what we have learned from them to other communities around the state that like us have no idea how to start their fight or even understand what is happening to them. We feel that if the Center is not able to continue its work on the current level it will be a great loss not just to communities like ours but to the state of North Carolina.

Charles Wright
President, Wayne County Citizens for Better Schools

Wayne County Citizens for Better Schools fully supports the UNC School of Law/Center for Civil Rights.

Several members of our organization, including this writer have been closely associated with the Center for over 10 years. Our association began around 2001, with the previous director, the late Ashley Osment. We sought the Center's assistance with seeking remedies and redress for decades of major problems with the Wayne County School System and the long-lasting effects it was having upon thousands of children residing in the City of Goldsboro, commonly referred to as the Central Attendance Area. The UNC School of Law, Center for Civil Rights started working with several concern community advocates, in/around 2005, culminating with a filed complaint with the U.S. Department of Education; Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Justice; Civil Rights Division, December 2009. This complaint required an enormous amount of time, research, data gathering, documentation, strategic community meetings, individual parental intake sessions, and multiple group meetings requiring travel between Chapel Hill and Goldsboro, to include over-night trips. We look at an exhaustively amount of school data, and an equally amount of Federal, State, County, and local, statues, ordinances , zoning, policies, letters of memorandums as well as pertinent minutes of all governmental meetings pertaining to public education/students extending back as far as 10 years in several areas.

The UNC School of Law; Center for Center Rights took on a herculean task, coupled with garnering community trust and support. They continue to support the Wayne County Community to insure all children are receiving a sound, challenging, effective education, with a positive school experience.

We do not know of any advocacy organization that would have had the time, resources, and the sincerity of heart to effectively helped the thousands of children of Wayne County. In addition, help lift, educate and motivate hundreds of parents and community members, and still find time to monitor our gains and continue needs.

Wayne County is better because of the UNC Center, and its citizens are eternally grateful.

Elizabeth Shonter Cox, MPA, CFRE
Southern Pines, NC 28387

Habitat for Humanity of the NC Sandhills had a contract to purchase land in the extra-territorial jurisdiction of Pinebluff, NC to build a housing development. The Town of Pinebluff and some nearby residents objected to the affordable housing development even though the zoning was such that Habitat could legally build the development on the land. The Town developed ordinances that effectively kept Habitat from being able to build on the property, delaying the purchase.

The UNC Center for Civil Rights assisted Habitat in finding legal representation through a pro-bono firm, Kilpatrick Stockton. The Center for Civil Rights advised us as to the rights of the population we serve, low-income, hard-working families seeking affordable housing. Habitat's budget does not allow funds for legal issues around civil rights issues, and we cannot afford legal representation even when a protected classes' civil rights are violated. Habitat for Humanity of the NC Sandhills, which I served as executive director of for 14 years, operated on a shoe-string budget, using resources to build affordable houses and repair houses owned by those living at or below poverty level. Without the assistance of the UNC Center for Civil Rights, we would not have been able to stand for the rights of those who were being discriminated against, as a town decided that they did not want this group of people living beside them.

The UNC Center for Civil Rights assisted multiple groups in Moore County to secure city services (water, sewer, roads, police and fire protection) in excluded communities, those unincorporated areas, in Needmore, Midway, Jackson Hamlet and other communities. These communities did not have basic services that nearby Aberdeen, Southern Pines, Pinehurst provided to other unincorporated areas. Community associations in these small enclaves were assisted by the UNC Center for Civil Rights to secure services.\

Additionally, DOT had a plan to build a road right through Needmore, a small African American community in Carthage, NC, also the site of a Habitat development. The assistance given by the UNC Center for Civil Rights enabled local community members to come together to present the harmful impact of this option on low-income families.

Without a group like the UNC Center for Civil Rights, low-income families would not have the resources to stand up and speak out when their rights are violated. This essential group has assisted multiple individuals, communities and groups in Moore County to ensure that all people, regardless of income, are treated equally.

David Harvey
President
Halifax County NAACP
Roanoke Rapids, NC

The Halifax County Branch of the NAACP has no real options to obtain legal representation in a case such as Silver v. Halifax County Commissioners in which our Branch is a plaintiff other than to rely on the attorneys from the UNC Center for Civil Rights. Our Branch has insufficient resources of its own to retain legal counsel. We depend on memberships and gifts from our local churches to meet our obligations to the NC State Conference of Branches and the national

NAACP. What remains enables us to hold monthly meetings and maintain an office and phone. We have no full-time or even part-time employees. The idea that we could independently mount a legal challenge to a unit of local government violating state or federal law is preposterous.

If the North Carolina and the National NAACP decided Halifax County Branch had a case of

paramount importance for the nation, it is conceivable they would devote the resources for legal representation. Such resources, however, are finite and Halifax County would have to stand out as another 1954 *Brown v. The Board of Education*. With all the other civil rights challenges across the country seeking support, the odds are, as a practical matter, insurmountable that this option would allow us to bring a legal challenge for a civil rights abuse in our county. We would have to stand in a long line and may never reach the front of it. In order to use the courts to confront local civil rights abuses we depend on the UNC Center for Civil Rights. Without it, we have no access to the courts and no access to justice. Without it we have no hope of justice.

Susan Lassiter
Chair, Concerned Citizens for Successful Schools
Smithfield, NC

The members of Concerned Citizens for Successful Schools are alarmed that we may lose the services of the U.N.C. Center for Civil Rights. We have benefited greatly from your help over the past three years as you have advised us in our quest to bring socioeconomic balance to our local public schools. We in the Smithfield and Selma areas are experiencing the harmful effects of re-segregated schools as is being seen in the low performance of our students.

We connected with your staff and law students in the spring of 2014 after our group appeared before the Johnston County Board of Education. Our presentation to the school board was the conclusion of two years of gathering data and studying the schools in Johnston County. In comparing our local schools with the schools in other parts of Johnston County, we discovered that our students weren't getting a sound, basic education. Our schools had high concentrations of low-wealth students and high concentrations of minority students. Overall, the numbers of minority students who were performing at grade level were dismal.

The response to our presentation by the members of the school board was unsympathetic and defensive. Our pleas for help basically fell on deaf ears because we asked for new studies to be made of the attendance lines, an end to the liberal transfer policy, and a balance in student demographics.

Since then, the U.N.C. Center for Civil Rights has worked with us in our study of student data. When we were denied access to important public records by the Johnston County Board of Education, the Center gave us assistance in filing a lawsuit to obtain the records. It took about 10 months before they were finally released to us.

With material in hand, the Center analyzed the district-level data for Johnston County Schools. The study included student demographics, test results, teacher quality, student discipline, facility utilization, and student transfer practices. It concluded that "there were unequal educational opportunities afforded to students across Johnston County."

Concerned Citizens for Successful Schools presented the 13-page report to both the Johnston County Board of Commissioners and the Johnston County Board of Education last fall. To date, we haven't seen results.

Our group doesn't have the experience or the expertise to challenge the school board. Guidance from the Center is crucial. Our group doesn't have a treasury to hire lawyers. Both the school board and the board of county commissioners have attorneys on staff and the financial wherewithal to bring in additional attorneys specializing in civil rights and public school law to defend them. For us to find legal experts in this field who will represent us pro bono would be impossible.

Our work to bring success to the students and schools in our communities isn't over but we will experience a huge setback if the Center for Civil Rights isn't our advocate. With the future of the Center being threatened by the U.N.C. Board of Governors, the future of Concerned Citizens for Successful Schools is put into limbo.

Our hope is that the U.N.C. Board of Governors will use good judgment and thoroughly review the many ways the Center has provided excellent help to citizen groups such as ours. The Center must be allowed to continue its advocacy in its fight for protection of civil rights.

Ellen Denning
Warren Early College High School
Warrenton, NC

Hello, my name is Ellen Denning. I am a sophomore attending Warren Early College High School in Warren County NC. I aspire to pursue a career in law, and some day become a politician. Because I go to Warren Early College High School, I am dual enrolled as a high school and a community college student. My college English instructor assigned me to a research paper that presents a cause and solution. I sought guidance from a history teacher at my high school, and he introduced me to the legal case of Silver v. Halifax County. Since then, I have been researching this case thoroughly and creating possible solutions to the systematic discrimination engaged in Halifax County. This problem is very important to me; it is in my very own state. Therefore, I do not support the proposed ban of the UNC Center for Civil Rights for direct advocacy or litigation. The public school district of Halifax and many other districts in North Carolina need legal representation.

John Espenshade
Coalition for Education & Economic Security
Halifax County, NC

The proposed ban is a significant retreat from academic freedom and independence which would undermine UNC national standing and reputation. Furthermore, it is a step backward for the cause of social justice in North Carolina.

I have observed first hand in Halifax County the value of the UNC Center for Civil Rights in two courts cases (Silver v Halifax County and Brandy Creek). The involvement of attorneys from the UNC Center for Civil Rights in these legal cases has demonstrated a high level of excellence for UNC Law School. Moreover, the opportunity for attorneys associated with UNC Center for Civil Rights to actively pursue civil rights and social justice through our legal system is a hallmark of a civil society and in keeping with practices of some of the top law schools in the nation including Duke University.

Sylvia E. Barnes
President Goldsboro-Wayne Branch NAACP

It is with a grieved spirit that comes to the mind of the Goldsboro-Wayne Branch when we think of the possibility that you considering limiting or even stopping the Center from reaching out and touching the lives of so many children and families across this state.

Some years ago when each of our mothers gave birth to us, we were each given a gift from our Maker and Creator. Each of our gifts have been molded, developed and are now being used to help others. As I think of the Center, I know that the people that work there and share their gifts are special people. People with wisdom and knowledge and do not mind investing their time and gifts to make this world a better place for others.

Members of the Goldsboro-Wayne Branch NAACP ask that you do not take these special gifts and talents from us. We have no place to turn and we need them. Their talents are very special and we cannot find these gifts and talents any place else.

Fighting for our children in Wayne County is a way in which they have been able to help us that is impossible to receive from someplace else. Do not deny the children of Wayne County and other counties throughout this state the opportunity to receive a fair and just education. They are our voice when we need one.

Minister Richie Harding
Restoration Community Church
Save Our Schools
Northampton County Board of Education

My name is Richie Harding and I am from Northampton County. We were dealing with school merger/closure issues. We are dealing with decreased population in our county which has caused reconfigurations of our schools. We understand reconfigurations must take place but all burdens were placed upon the communities that were mostly populated by blacks. The School Board also showed favor to facilities that were far older and in much poorer conditions to cater to the far lesser white population.

Mr. Mark Dorosin and his colleagues taught us how to deal with this issue in a professional manner. Because of The Center we organized citizens within our communities to attend School Board functions, assign volunteers throughout areas of our county to compile petitions, registered voters, and ensured all citizens understood the power of the vote.

We eventually filed a complaint with AdvancED against The Northampton County Board of Education that bore my signature. That filing did not lead to an immediate decision change within The School Board, but it sparked a movement within our community that six years later

led to me being elected to The School Board. During the same election, three new School Board members and two new County Commissioners were elected.

It definitely took the leadership and legal expertise of The Center for us to understand how this process needed to play out. We were made aware of The Center because of their involvement with Brandy Creek/The Randy Parton Clinic and the three school districts in Halifax County. The Center being engaged in community issues so close to us allowed us to make contact in person. We have helped the citizens of Halifax County and they have done the same for us. The issues in Halifax ultimately brought us all together.

The work that has been done in our region thus far has our citizens believing more and more that someone cares about us, and that no one can just walk over us. That feeling of strength, pride, and understanding has a direct relation to The UNC Center for Civil Rights.

The work being done here does not need to cease, it needs to be congratulated. I ask that The Center is allowed continued involvement across our great state ensuring civil rights are protected for all.

The availability of the UNC Center for Civil Rights was crucial for us. As we live in Northampton, one of the poorest counties in North Carolina. Due to lack of economic development and one of the highest tax rates in the state (0.92) the ability to afford an attorney is a far reach for most. As some of the issues addressed by The Center has been resolved. We are moving forward with stronger educational opportunities for our children which will help attain better quality of life for us all.

Maurice B. Holland, Jr.
President, Midway Community Association, Inc.
Aberdeen, NC

I am Maurice B. Holland, Jr., President of the Midway Community Association in Aberdeen, NC. I want to take this opportunity to voice my community's appreciation for the advocacy work that has been provided by the UNC Center for Civil Rights in our battle to acquire water and sewer service, and political inclusion from the Town of Aberdeen. The Midway Community predates the Town of Aberdeen yet it took an act of the NC General Assembly for residents to be included politically.

The question that persists in my mind is why preclude the UNC Center from doing advocacy work for low income and communities of color? Are there similar plans to curtail work performed by the Kenan-Flagler School of Business for corporations or the School of Government for municipalities?

The work of UNC Center for Civil Rights is a vital part of making the University of North Carolina truly the "people's university rather than just another "ivory tower."

**Minister Robert Campbell
Rogers Eubanks Neighborhood Association
Chapel Hill, NC**

The Rogers Eubanks Road neighborhood from before 1972 came out of an era when low - income communities of color was in a place of political ability to protest the political actions of government. Yet the organize activists and a few committed community members needed more than to stand together to solve the difficulties of three local government. We needed to know and to understand the laws that was driving the policies that did not protect our communities from the injustices that was create by institutionalize racism that was embedded in the policies and the zoning policies and the lack of good will from the boards that enforced these oppressive condition by way of legislation spread from local, to state, and to federal. The question is where do we, the low-income communities get help, we who work in these great walls of business and higher institution of learning, yet not enough pay to afford an attorney. Most law firms will not take cases against municipalities and corporations.

The Rogers - Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA) reached out to the civil rights Center for understanding of the process of law and the terms of law and litigation, we became community students/ clients of the outreach of the Center for Civil Rights. We learn about the laws about clean water, and air act, and we applied this to our learning to understand that laws is for everyone and how to stop the impacts of systemic discrimination by lack of enforcement of these laws. How we apply the principle of the UNC community service mission as We understand. We can go to third world countries and yet cannot go four miles down the road to help communities that keep UNC University of Chapel Hill facility operational. The people that work at these institutions live in these low- income communities. What will happen if they stay home? what would happen if they demand more pay? what would happen if the cooks did not come to work? what would happen if the house keeper did not come to work? what would happen if the baby sitter did not come to work? what would happen if the yard keepers did not come to work? what would happen if the garbage man stop pick-ups? We need not say more, we need each other to make this world a better place for all people.

The Center for Civil Rights is the best in our nation and many great students will be coming to the U N C University of Chapel Hill. Do we want to deprive them the opportunities to use our community's injustices as a tool of learning the fundamental of true litigation and to advocate for the underserved communities, and the unsafe living conditions created by Board members that set in high places and never asked how did they get to where they are in life? What is the price of life, when other just want the same living opportunities? Yes, we are asking the question are the BOG becoming watch dogs for big corporation by way of our institutions of learning. To stop the Center from representing communities of low-wealth is like sending your child off to war with a gun and no bullets. Can you see what we see how important the Center is to UNC AT CHAPEL HILL NORTH CAROLINA and your overall mission to give our youth the best education that we can offer, that they can compete on the global market. Thank you your time and if I may please let me tell you a story at your board meeting.