

HARFORD COUNTY Civil Rights Project



HCC's Harford Civil Rights Project hosted Mr. Willie Stamps this fall in a presentation, "Remembering Hospital Segregation in Harford County." He recounted his experience in 1960 as a young husband dealing with segregation at Harford Memorial Hospital that led to the deaths of his wife and baby. He later became a civil rights leader in pursuit of legal justice to end racial discrimination in the workplace.

Dr. James Karmel, Professor of History at Harford, is spearheading a three-year student research and oral history endeavor on the role that Harford County played in the civil rights movement. The project involves the development of curriculum, community partnerships, and digital material on Harford County's 20th century civil rights history. It is designed to deepen students' understanding of literary works and local and national history and broaden community awareness of the region's contribution to the civil rights movement. Funded by a \$97,118 National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the **"Active Learning and Student Engagement in the Humanities: Understanding the Civil Rights Movement in Harford County, Maryland"** project is also intended to stimulate student interest in such humanities disciplines as English and history.

The program will run from 2019 to 2021 and involve students, faculty and staff in producing digital history and a mobile application. Approximately 400 students will research old newspapers, government records, photos and archives and develop written reports; conduct oral history interviews; and engage in other project



activities through their History, English, and Computer Information Science classes as well as HCC's My College Success Network and Soar2Success programs. Three themes will be covered: the desegregation of Harford County Public Schools, the desegregation of businesses and government facilities, and equal job and housing opportunities. The project will both create new content on these crucial aspects of regional history and tie it to current events by focusing on parallels between the African-American civil rights movement of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Along with the faculty scholars and student support staff who comprise the project team (pictured to the right at the Hosanna School), Dr. Elizabeth Nix, Associate Professor at the University of Baltimore, and Dr. Jennifer Erdman (A.S. '03), Acting Associate Dean of the School of Arts, Sciences and Business at Notre Dame of Maryland University, serve as consultants. Community partners engaged with the College in the effort include the Harford County Public Library, Havre de Grace Colored School Foundation, Historical Society of Harford County, Hosanna School Museum, Lillie Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum at Morgan State University, and Visit Harford.

COURT TRIAL NEARS: 'IN THE BEST INTEREST ...' **SPAN ...**
Afro-American (1893-1988); Nov 17, 1956; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Baltimore Afro-American pg. 6

COURT TRIAL NEARS: 'In the best interest,' Harford Co. refuses to integrate

Integration Again In The Federal Court

The appeal entered by George D. Pettit of Aberdeen on behalf of his son, Alvin D. Pettit, a fourteen year old Negro pupil, was heard on Monday of this week before Judge Roszel C. Thomsen in the District Court in Baltimore. The father, who is an employee at the Aberdeen Proving Ground, contends that his son was denied admission to the Aberdeen High School solely because of his race.

However, the Board of Education reported to Judge Thomsen that the boy's transfer from Havre de Grace Consolidated High School at Swan Creek, to the Aberdeen High School was not deemed in the best interest of the boy, by the Committee which screens all applications for transfer of pupils from one school to another.

The County's Desegregation Plan, combined with the special screening system, was set up in 1957 with the approval of Judge Thomsen. The principals of the two schools involved are always members of the committee, named by the Board of Education. Their decision is based on the probability of success of each pupil wishing to enter a formerly white school, using standardized intelligence and achievement tests as guides. Last summer when Pettit filed his application, along with six other Negro pupils only one of them was denied admittance as well as another pupil.

The answer filed by the Board of Education by Wilson K. Barnes, its attorney, stated that the tests were made without regard to race.

The father testified that he felt that the boy was not getting a good education at the Havre de Grace School and had him enrolled in the Lemmel Junior High School in Baltimore, which is a Negro High School.

Following the hearing, Judge Thomsen indicated that he would give careful consideration to the possibility of changing the present system of a screening committee, and if that is the decision, it is probable that the Pettit boy would be permitted to transfer.

System Has Worked Well

The system adopted by Harford County and approved by Judge Thomsen has worked very well, according to Harford School officials. It has been referred to in other areas as a sensible plan for integration. There has been little argument or dissension on the integration that has taken place so far.



Dr. James Karmel records an oral history interview of Mr. Stamps conducted by U.S. History II student Michael Brown.

Interested in participating in an oral history interview for the project? Do you have any relevant photographs, documents, or other records that you'd be willing to share? If yes to either or both questions, please contact Dr. Karmel at jkarmel@harford.edu or 443-412-2105.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE Humanities
The "Understanding the Civil Rights Movement in Harford County, Maryland" project is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Members of the Harford Civil Rights Movement Project Team conducted a site visit of the historic Hosanna School Museum in Darlington, MD early on in the project: (l-r) Dr. Lisa Tittle, Colleen Webster, Sharoll Williams-Love, Jennifer MyersSmith, Jenny Jakulin, Michael Dixon, Dr. James Karmel, Mark Brock-Cancellieri. Not pictured: Mark Dencler and Jennie Towner