

Intel Corporation (Intel Computer Clubhouse Program) sponsored several Sacramento high school students' participation in Carl Ray's 2003 Fall Black College Tour. Below is coverage by the *Sacramento Bee* newspaper.



Valley teens impressed by black schools

Sacramento high schoolers say a tour of the colleges opened their eyes to a world of possibilities.

By Walter Yost -- Bee Staff Writer

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During their recent whirlwind tour of historically black colleges, a group of Sacramento high school students encountered sights they'll never forget: a slave cemetery, the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr., the high-stepping Alabama A&M marching band.

But for 17-year-old Marcus Atkins, one image stood above the rest. "The really beautiful thing to me was seeing all those African Americans in one place -- college," he said.

Atkins, a senior at Kennedy High School, was part of a contingent of 70 African American students from throughout California who took the five-day trip to the South, visiting the campuses of Alabama A&M University, Clark Atlanta University and Morehouse, Spelman and Oakwood colleges.

Although such schools have held recruitment fairs in the Sacramento region -- including one in September at Natomas High School -- students like Grant High's Mister Stephens said nothing compares to setting foot on a black college campus.

"This gave me the incentive to set a goal not only to be a college student but a college graduate," Stephens said.

Classmate TraVaughn Basped, who joined his older brother Glen on the tour, said, "You get to see something most people will never be able to see."

For some of the students, like Sharita Sheard of Grant High, the trip was the first time they had been outside of California or on an airplane.

"This was a big opportunity for me," said the 17-year-old Sheard, who wants to study nursing at college.



Grant High's TraVaughn Basped, left, went on the college tour with his older brother Glen, right, working on a drawing this week at the Intel Computer Clubhouse in Del Paso Heights. "You get to see something most people will never be able to see," says TraVaughn Basped.

Sacramento Bee/Andy Alfaro

Intel Corp. in Folsom paid the way for many of the students, including nine juniors and seniors from Grant, Florin and Kennedy high schools.

All of Sacramento students participate in the Intel Computer Clubhouse programs offered at Sacramento Food Bank Services in Oak Park, the Center for Fathers and Families in Meadowview and the Greater Sacramento Urban League building in Del Paso Heights.

Intel established the after-school clubhouses to provide young people who can't afford computers an opportunity to become familiar with the technology.

Leroy Tripette, a manager with Intel, accompanied the students on their trip to the South.

"I saw them uplifted by the positive black experience and the African American role models," Triplets said.

He said he also observed the young travelers' somber reactions when they came face to face with some painful chapters in black history.

During a walking tour of a former plantation on the Oakwood College campus in Huntsville, Ala., Tripette said the students were surprised and distressed that a cemetery, where 40 to 50 slaves were buried, contained no headstones. Slaves, he said, were often buried in unmarked graves.

For Tripette, 32, the trip was, in part, a journey to his past. Although he grew up in Davis, he attended Atlanta's Morehouse College on a scholarship.

Carl Ray, a San Jose resident, has organized tours like the recent one for the past 16 years. He has taken more than 1,900 African American students, primarily from the Bay Area, to visit historically black colleges.

Ray paid for the first student tour out of his own pocket. He now receives funding for the trips from several Bay Area counties' foster-care programs.

A graduate of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, Ray has seen his tours expand as interest in black colleges has taken off in California. California has the second-largest number of students enrolled in historically black colleges, other than each college's home state, Ray said.

Most of the nation's 105 historically black colleges and universities were established more than 100 years ago and are located in the Southeast, the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

The popularity of historically black colleges has greatly increased, Ray said, thanks to television programs like "The Cosby Show" -- which was the highest-rated TV program from 1985 through 1988 -- and its spinoff, "A Different World." The latter, set at the fictitious Hillman College, drew inspiration from the Spelman campus as it portrayed student life.

The recent movie "Drumline," the story of a black university marching band, also has been a positive influence, Ray said.

"Black colleges have received millions and millions of dollars in free advertising from those shows," Ray said.

He said visits to black colleges and universities help African American students from California connect with their cultural identity.

"Many black kids out here go to school without ever having a black teacher," he said.

For students like Atkins, at Kennedy High, attending a black college would be a fresh start and a welcome change of scenery.

"I'm looking for something new. I've been in Sacramento my whole life," he said.

Atkins and his classmate and friend Karega Bailey were so impressed by Alabama A&M's marching band that they're preparing audition tapes in hopes of qualifying for band

scholarships.

Erica Page, a junior at Grant High and an aspiring writer, said her preference is Clark Atlanta University, a smaller, private United Methodist school.

While Page said she liked the school's "nice atmosphere," she added, "I'd hate moving away from my family."

The Sacramento students said they were amazed at the warm welcome they received from students at each of the colleges they visited.

"They asked me a lot of questions about myself," Stephens said. "They made me feel at home."