

## UGA desegregation anniversary celebration begins with service, speech

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The Blacks and whites gathered together in Athens on Sunday, first at church and then on the University of Georgia campus as UGA and Athens began a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the university's desegregation.



Charlayne Hunter-Gault, center, speaks to a large crowd as University of Georgia President Michael Adams, left, Mary Frances Early, right, and Hamilton Holmes Jr. listen during a kick-off reception Sunday at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education's Magnolia Ballroom to observe 50 years since desegregation at UGA. (Richard Hamm / Athens Banner-Herald)

The sight of hundreds of blacks and whites mingling at a reception on campus was a inspiration for Charlayne Hunter-Gault, one of the university's first two black students.

**[See more photos from the reception.](#)**

Hunter-Gault and the late Hamilton Holmes broke the color barrier at UGA on Jan. 9, 1961, when the pair made national news and history by enrolling in UGA classes.

"This is the dream of America," said a radiant Hunter-Holmes as she looked out over a mixed-race, standing-room-only crowd in the Georgia Center for Continuing Education's Magnolia Ballroom.

"Let's hope they took a picture of this room, because this is why Hamilton and I walked through the arches of the University of Georgia. This is America as it should be. This is our dream," she said.

The Georgia Center reception was the first day of a planned 50-day series of events that continues today with a 3 p.m. speech by Hunter-Gault in the Georgia Center's Mahler Auditorium.

A 5 p.m. panel discussion with Horace Ward, a retired federal judge who became one of the lawyers who successfully fought to knock down UGA's race barrier, will follow Hunter-Gault's speech.

Ward's panel discussion also will be held in the Georgia Center, along with an 8 p.m. screening of a movie about Donald L. Hollowell, another member of the Holmes-Hunter legal team.

Despite the dire weather forecast of heavy snow and freezing rain, today's events will go on as scheduled, even though the university itself will be closed, officials said Sunday evening.

Just a couple of hours before Hunter-Gault spoke at the Georgia Center, area ministers of different denominations and races joined together to launch desegregation anniversary observances with an ecumenical service before about 200 people in Athens' First United Methodist Church.

"Fifty years ago, it would have been illegal for us to gather together as we do today," noted the Rev. James Kendrick, who delivered the sermon in the ecumenical service.

Back then, everything blacks and whites did in the South was coded by race, he told the mixed-race worshippers - separate drinking fountains, separate school systems, separate everything.

"Thank God those barriers no longer exist," Kendrick said. "When God decides to move in history, all of the devils in hell cannot stop him."

But barriers still exist, he said.

"We have come a long ways, but we still have a long way to go," said Kendrick, who celebrates his own 50th anniversary this year - 50 years as pastor at Athens' East Friendship Baptist Church. "We still live in a divided world."

But "we are all God's children," he said.

Jesus said we must love not just our friends but our enemies, Kendrick said, reminding the gathering of Jesus' words as he hung nailed to a cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Another of about two dozen ministers who gathered for the ecumenical service called for congregations of different faiths and races to come together.

“There’s 50 years of hard work ahead of us,” said the Rev. Edward Bolen, senior pastor of Milledge Avenue Baptist Church.

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