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## **Univ. Marks Integration Anniversary**

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Four decades ago, two black students strode through the University of Georgia's arch and past the white columns of its Academic Building to register for classes, cutting a swath through the crew cuts and bobby soxers.

Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes ended more than 175 years of segregation at the state's flagship university on Jan. 9, 1961. Their enrollment came years before other Southern state schools were integrated, but it is rarely mentioned among civil rights milestones.

On Tuesday, the university will mark the day's 40th anniversary by naming the Academic Building for Holmes and Hunter.

Ernest Vandiver, the Georgia governor who threatened to close the school rather than allow black students, will share a stage with Charlayne Hunter-Gault, now the bureau chief for CNN in South Africa. Holmes, a prominent Atlanta surgeon, died in 1995.

But the celebration will take place on a campus that administrators say is still sharply divided by race and still too white.

Blacks make up more than one-quarter of the state population, but just 6 percent of the student body. The university is waging a court battle to defend a policy that gave a boost to minority applicants.

The school's ornate Greek houses remain bastions of racial exclusivity. In September, administrators suspended a sorority accused of rejecting a potential pledge because she was black.

"Integration is still happening on this campus," said Mark Anthony Thomas, a black senior from Stone Mountain who organized a student diversity celebration for the anniversary. "If you're at the student center, you're still going to see blacks and whites in separate social cliques."

Integration at the university happened long before the civil rights flashpoints best known to Americans: bloody violence in Mississippi, George Wallace staring down federal troops at the doors of the University of Alabama, Martin Luther King's assassination.

The reason Georgia's desegregation is often overlooked, some historians say, is simple: It was relatively peaceful.

Tensions did run high for a few days after Hunter and Holmes arrived. And a riotous crowd of 2,000 people raced to Myers Hall, where Hunter lived, triggered by Georgia's loss of a basketball game to archrival Georgia Tech in overtime.

Police had to break up the crowd with tear gas, but unlike the violence elsewhere in the South no one died.

Hunter and Holmes graduated two years later.

"In many ways, Georgia has gotten buried," said Robert Pratt, an associate history professor who will publish a book on the university's desegregation later this year. "The brutal violence got so much attention in Alabama and Mississippi. UGA has been placed on the back burner."

The university has planned a full day to observe the anniversary, beginning with a speech by Hunter-Gault. Roundtable discussions will include journalists who covered tense days in 1961 and state officials who weighed closing the university rather than allowing black students. Dozens of student organizations will produce the evening's celebration of diversity.

The celebration comes as the university awaits a ruling from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on a federal judge's decision that its admissions policy is unconstitutional. About 90 percent of Georgia students are admitted based solely on grades and test scores. The remaining 10 percent are evaluated using a number of criteria and minority students used to receive a statistical edge, along with students from poor counties and children of alumni.

The school has suspended its consideration of race while it awaits the appeals court's decision.

University officials hope Tuesday's festivities help the school's image among black high school students and potential transfers.

Maurice Daniels, a social work professor who will speak Tuesday, said he hopes the university will use the occasion to think about ways to improve racial equality, including addressing low numbers of black tenured professors.

After 175 years of exclusion, he said, just opening the doors to black students is not enough.

"What happened in 1961 was the admission of two black students for the first time," Daniels said. "We're still in the process of trying to desegregate the university."

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On the Net:

UGA Desegregation: <http://www.uga.edu/news/desegregation>

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