

Historic civil rights tour upsets 2 students

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

The goal of the Freedom Tour is to promote cultural awareness and foster an awareness of the painful birth and growth of the civil rights movement in America.

Overall, it has succeeded, most participants agreed.

But it came under some stinging criticism from two students who participated — one, a native American from Detroit, and another, a Jewish teen from West Bloomfield.

"In theory, I think it's a wonderful idea. I thought it might be a wonderful experience. I don't think it lived up to its promise," said Whitney Lakin, who lives in West Bloomfield and attends Detroit Country Day School.

Lakin, 13, left the tour in San Antonio, Texas, and was flown home by her parents.

"It wasn't what I expected. I was disappointed," Lakin said.

Prayers and churches

As one of only two non-blacks on the tour, she said she was uncomfortable with the predominantly Christian slant of the tour, including saying prayers at meals and attending Baptist church services.

Meanwhile, a scheduled visit to a synagogue in Alabama was canceled because the synagogue was closed.

Patrice Farmer, 17, who is partially of Cherokee background, said, "I felt the Freedom Tour did not achieve its goal of acknowledging cultures other than African-Americans."

Farmer said, "I went representing the Indian community of Detroit. When I returned I felt like I represented nothing."

"Instead of learning about the effects of racism on native Americans and Hispanics over the past 500 years since the invasion of Columbus, I learned little of anything except of the black majority on the

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*Whitney Lakin
Country Day*

tour," Farmer said.

Freedom Tour is an annual bus tour that takes students from southern Michigan to visit areas of the southern United States that have figured prominently in the U.S. civil rights movement as well as other sites representing different cultures, such as a Jewish synagogue in Alabama and an Indian reservation in Mississippi.

Between July 18 and Aug. 1, 23 students went to Atlanta, Little Rock, Ark.; Jackson, Miss.; Memphis, Tenn.; Montgomery and Selma, Ala.; and San Antonio, Texas.

Each student paid \$100 and raises an additional \$500 from sponsors to go on the trip.

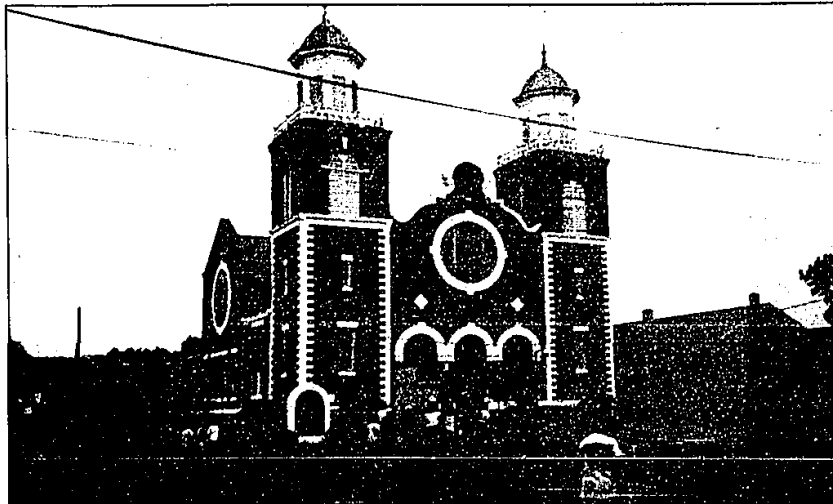
'Great experience'

"The tour's purpose is to educate, develop a commitment to racial justice, build leadership and create awareness of the current challenges of the civil rights movement," said Freedom Tour co-chair John Breitmeyer, who is marketing vice president of Health Alliance Plan, one of the tour's sponsors.

Breitmeyer said he was surprised to hear of the negative comments.

"I went on the bus, and it was a great educational experience for me," he said.

"I don't think the tour is geared for a single ethnic persuasion. Certainly there is no design to slant one ethnic or religious persuasion.



Too Christian?: Students on Freedom Tour IV visited a variety of churches through several southern states, including the First Baptist Church in Selma, Ala. Some students felt uncomfortable with the emphasis on black Christian culture.

We certainly have no intent to exclude anyone," Breitmeyer said.

He said the rigors of the long bus ride and hectic schedule, which can run from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., can create stress among the students.

Lakin's mother, Cecilia, said her daughter wanted to complete the tour, "but she decided the value was not worth it."

Cecilia said the tour staff "kept talking about 'our' black youngsters. And there was a lot of praying."

"I work with interfaith groups, and I was unhappy about the in-

sensitivity. It was geared for the black Christian community."

Sponsor investigates

Kathryn Savoie, executive director of the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, the chief sponsoring organization, said the group is looking into the matter.

"We are talking with the parents to see what the problems are," said Savoie. She added, "We are very disappointed they had a negative experience." But she added the tour does a lot to promote ethnic understanding.

Other students on the tour agreed.

"It gives you a sense of self-awareness. Now I know how important education is. Now I know how hard it was to get the things we got," said Alice Brooks, 16, of Beverly Hills. She will be a junior at Groves High School in the fall.

"It is a really good educational program," she said. She enjoyed the sites visited, such as the birthplace of author Alex Haley, who wrote the book "Roots," which chronicled the lives of his ancestors who were brought to America as slaves.

She said the group did not encounter any animosity along the route.

"I didn't have a hard time with any people. What they say about southern hospitality is true. People were waving at us."

She said that while most Americans are aware of the nationally known civil rights leaders, such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, the tour showed the students the more grass roots freedom fighters who did not get national attention.

"I wish it had been longer," Brooks said.

Detroit man, 19, dies after jumping out of moving car

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police are investigating the death of a 19-year-old Detroit man after he jumped out of a car traveling on Orchard Lake Road on Aug. 9.

Mark Anthony Laforce died Wednesday at the University of Michigan Hospital, Ann Arbor, according to Farmington Hills police.

Following the accident he was immediately taken to Botsford General Hospital, Farmington Hills, and

'They (the others in the car) said he just suddenly jumped out of the vehicle. He hit the shoulder and rolled.'

Sgt. Charles Nebus

later transferred by helicopter to U-M Hospital with severe head injuries, said Det. Sgt. Charles Nebus.

Police received a call that a man

had fallen out of a car traveling 40 mph about 1:21 a.m., on the shoulder of Orchard Lake, south of Rocky Crest. The car was occupied by Laforce, another man and a woman. The three had apparently just left a party, where Laforce had an argument with a woman, Nebus said.

"They (the others in the car) said he just suddenly jumped out of the vehicle," Nebus said. "He hit the shoulder and rolled."

The driver stopped the car and the woman in the car ran back to the party where she called police.

POLICE/FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

FOLLOWED HOME

A 10-year-old girl was chased home by a landscaping crew in her neighborhood Aug. 13.

According to a Farmington Hills police report, five men chased the girl as she was roller skating in the rear of the Country Ridge apartment complex about 2 p.m. She ran home and reported the incident to a parent.

BREAK-INS

Two break-ins in the Chatham Hills subdivision in Farmington were reported Aug. 10-11, according to Farmington Department of Public Safety reports.

Both incidents occurred on Smithfield.

In one case, two class rings valued at \$400 were taken. In the second, an unknown amount of items were taken. In both cases windows were broken and damaged.

THEFTS REPORTED

Jewelry valued at \$3,800 was reported stolen from a house on Congress in the Hills July 22. The items were reported missing after the house was cleaned.

Rollerblades and pads, and two bicycles valued at \$1,000 were reported stolen from a garage on Brookhill, July 16-17.

VCRs, video camera and 355 mm camera valued at \$2,850 were reported stolen from a house on Middlebelt, Aug. 7-8.

On Aug. 13, two incidents of stolen televisions were reported at the Greenery Care Center, 34225 Grand River. The incidents occurred late July and Aug. 10-12.

At Green Hill Apartments Aug. 13, quilt, towels, kitchen items and a telephone answering machine valued at \$370 were reported stolen from a car. Damage of \$275 was done to the car.

A police scanner and citizens band radio valued at \$450 were stolen from a car parked on Old Timber Aug. 12-13. Damage of \$700 was done to the car's hood and trunk in the incident.

A 1991 GMC Jimmy truck valued

at \$18,000 was reported stolen from the 21000 block of Orchard Lake Road Aug. 13.

A stereo system valued at \$820 was reported stolen from a vehicle parked at Fox Pointe Apartments on Halsted Aug. 13.

A bicycle valued at \$275 was reported stolen from the Putt 'N Games, 30749 Grand River, Aug. 13.

DAMAGE REPORTED

Owners of the Farmington West Apartments, 32777 Grand River, reported \$200 in damage was done to the complex fence when a shopping cart was pushed through it recently. The cart was then thrown over the fence.

Damage was estimated at \$500 when someone shot out windows at Forest Elementary School, 34545 Old Timber, Aug. 7.

A total of \$100 in damage was done to the building at Franklin Hills Country Club, 31675 Inkster when someone attempted to break into the building Aug. 13.

Damage was estimated at \$225 when a lawn statue on Livingston Court was knocked down and broken Aug. 12-13.



FALL/WINTER

ST. JOHN KNIT

COLLECTION

SHOW

Tuesday, August 18
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Birmingham

Friday, August 21
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Livonia

We invite you to come
in now to see daytime dresses,
suits, sportswear and
cocktail designs. Brights,
black and fabulous mixes.
Shown: Four-piece suit
with fringed edging,
print blouse and
scarf. \$1180.

Jacobson's

Quakertown DAR to meet Tuesday

The Quakertown Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will hold its first meeting of the season at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 18, at the home of Becky

Davis in Farmington Hills.

The program will feature Michelle Davis and Sandrine Bourgeois speaking on "Compelling Life in the U.S. to Life in the Ivo-

ry Coast." Sandrine is an exchange student staying with the Davis family for the month of August. Call Davis at 477-3956 for a reservation.

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