

Chapter Summary and Discussion Questions - colorandcharacter.org

Chapter 1: **An African American School 1936-1954**

Focus: Building an African American institution during segregation

Tells the story of growth on Charlotte's west side during a time when the city's African American population was not only growing but also shifting from the center-city communities of Second Ward/Brooklyn to the new neighborhoods being built on the west side.

Details the multi-class community fashioned by west side residents, and the way that West Charlotte High School, which opened in 1938, became a key focus of community activities and aspirations.

Explores the ways that talented and dedicated staff members turned West Charlotte into a point of contact between the community and a larger black political and intellectual world.

Covers early civil rights activities, and examines the dilemma faced by African American education advocates such as Charlotte's NAACP: whether to focus on integration, or on securing more resources for all-black schools.

Questions to explore

What factors go into building strong communities?

What were the strengths of West Charlotte High during this era?

What kinds of choices did early civil rights advocates face?

Connections

What role did public schools play in the community/communities where you grew up?

As you look back, what historical forces do you see affecting your childhood communities?

What similarities and differences do you see between Charlotte's west side schools and communities and your childhood schools and communities? How would you account for those similarities and differences?