



New documentary to spotlight 60 years of integration in Hendersonville



HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. (828newsNOW) — This summer, a new documentary celebrating six decades of racial integration in Hendersonville schools will make its world premiere in western North Carolina.

Color Beyond the Lines, a documentary by filmmaker David Weintraub and the Center for Cultural Preservation, will debut at 7 p.m., Saturday, June 21 at the Thomas Auditorium at Blue Ridge Community College.

The film celebrates the 60th anniversary of integrated schools in Hendersonville through a look back at the local Black community's drive to secure strong education.

In a press release, Ronnie Pepper, president of Hendersonville's Black History Research Group, said "going back to when our people were enslaved, we realized that if we were going to truly be free it was important to have a good education." A focal point of "Color Beyond the Lines" is the 9th Avenue School. The "union" school, serving students from 1st to 12th grade in the same building, was founded in 1951. Despite the hand-me-down supplies from white schools and limited resources, the 9th Avenue School was a tight-knit setting for the community.



(Courtesy: David Weintraub) Ronnie Pepper, president of the Black History Research Group, was interviewed for "Color Beyond the Lines."

"The educational atmosphere at Ninth Avenue was, above all, caring, with the teachers and administrators compensating for the lack of resources with an almost family-like concern for their students," described Gary Franklin Green in an excerpt from "A Brief History of the Black Presence in Henderson County."

In 1965, integration was placed in effect, granting the Black community of Henderson County greater resources but closing the doors of the 9th Avenue School.

"What struck me as I interviewed Black elders throughout the county was their great desire to instill a good education in their children," said Weintraub in the press release. "Although most embraced integration of schools, they were saddened by the loss of precious institutions like the 9th Avenue school."

"Color Beyond the Lines" is made up of interviews with 9th Avenue alumni and local Black leaders, as well as archival footage from the period. The film covers the discrimination baked into the newly-integrated community and how Black students worked to overcome



(Courtesy: David Weintraub) Members of the 1972 Hendersonville High School Bearcats basketball team with filmmaker David Weintraub.

“Growing up we knew that we had to out-perform, out-think and out-read the white community if we were to succeed,” said interviewee and 9th avenue alum Edward King. “We had a great pride in our Black schools and we felt like something was taken away from us.”

The “Color Beyond the Lines” premiere will begin with local live music, followed by the screening and ending with a discussion with local Black leaders on progress and challenges in the community.

Future screenings of the film are tentatively planned for later in 2025 at the Asheville Museum of History and in Madison County.

Tickets for the June 21 screening are available at www.saveculture.org.



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