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Students at NCCU, Duke going to ballgame

BY WILLIAM F. WEST AND BRIANNE DOPART : The Herald-Sun

news@heraldsun.com

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DURHAM -- Brian Shackelford says he likes the idea of students from NCCU and Duke getting together for a harmony event in the aftermath of the Duke Lacrosse scandal.

However, he says he thinks there's a feel-good, public relations motive.

"There hasn't been a resolution in the case," said Shackelford, a Durham resident and a student at N.C. Central University.

Student leaders at the two educational institutions have signed off on what's being billed as NCCU-Duke NITE, set for Wednesday evening at Durham Bulls Athletic Park, where the Bulls will take on the Columbus Clippers.

The occasion highlights a growing number of partnerships between the universities.

In October, the student governments from Duke and NCCU will hold a Unity Day in conjunction with the N.C. Human F Commission.

Shackelford said he thought there instead needed to be a frank discussion about race relations in Durham.

He said a black exotic dancer's claim this spring that she was raped by white members of the Duke lacrosse team brought historically longstanding, underlying tensions between blacks and whites in the Bull City.

Still, Shackelford said he did favor a student get-together because he thought it would ease tensions that also develop campuses after the lacrosse incident.

Duke Students Government President Elliott Wolf and NCCU SGA President Mukhtar Raqib have been meeting all summer gatherings to improve relations.



Raqib said a better connection between NCCU and Duke made sense, considering the proximity of the campuses and each university use the other's resources.

"The more people you know, the better," he said. "The benefits to having friends are limitless."

Wolf did acknowledge that the plans grew out of criminal accusations, but said he and fellow student leaders were trying best of the situation.

"Before the lacrosse incident, Central wasn't really on our radar and it's something that should have been," Wolf said.

Meanwhile, Nikki Canada is skeptical about such a gathering.

Canada, originally from New York and studying nursing at NCCU, said she thought the occasion was needed for healing.

"I don't knock it at all because anything that is positive will result in positives, so I'm all for it," she said.

But Canada, like Shackelford, thinks there needs to be candid talk. The difference, she said, is the discussion should be open -- money green -- which she points out Duke has long had more of than NCCU, in addition to a more attractive campus.

She argued that when students went to expensive universities such as Duke, "they feel like they are superior, and if you're superior, you feel that you can do anything to other people."

The strain between the two institutions has long been apparent, said Duke student Kyle Danielson, and preceded the incident.

"It's sad because they're so close," Danielson said.

Danielson and another Duke student, Mike Schneider, agreed that whatever the plans were to form a better bond between universities, the events should be large and offer something for everyone.

Plans for food and music, such as those Raqib said would be incorporated into the unity gathering in October, are a great idea. A trip to a Bulls baseball game might be awkward, Danielson and Schneider said.

"Everybody is just going to segregate themselves," Schneider said.

What: NCCU-Duke NITE

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Durham Bulls Athletic Park

Cost: \$5-8

Additional information: NCCU's band will play the national anthem. Duke President Richard Brodhead and NCCU Chair Ammons will throw out first pitches as the Bulls take on the Columbus Clippers. A Unity Day is being planned for October.

