Black family has long OSU tradition

By James C. Calmes  |  James C. Calmes  |  August 2, 1999  |  0

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For Charles Warfield III, Ohio State is a family affair. Warfield has worked at OSU for the past 30 years, but his connection goes way beyond the last three decades. Both of Warfield’s parents attended OSU. His father received his law degree in the 1920s and was partner in Walters and Warfield, a black-owned law firm in Columbus. His mother enrolled at OSU in the late 1920s when she was 15. She was the first black homecoming queen at OSU at the age of 18 when she still carried her maiden name, Martha Bryant. Warfield said his mother was declared the ‘Most Beautiful Colored Woman on Campus’ and the ‘Most Beautiful Colored Woman in Columbus’ in the early 1930s. She went to school at a time when blacks were largely excluded from student activities. Warfield said, “Black students on campus began the separate pageant as a means of recognizing the beauty that existed in their community.” Campus activities were the only things blacks were barred from when their parents were students, Warfield said. The blacks who did live on campus were allowed to live in separate dorms specifically for ‘colored’ students. While black students were allowed on campus during the day to attend classes, those who did not live on campus were expected to be off campus by nightfall, he said. There was no legal or written rule to enforce the policy but it was understood. Warfield said blacks students were turned away if they sought service at the shops and restaurants on High Street, Warfield said. “Segregation was a lot stiffer then and it was not subtle at all,” he said. The hostile climate on campus did not keep the Warfield family from remaining part of the OSU community. Warfield, who works as a storekeeper in the Biological Sciences building, said his wife, mother-in-law and two brothers-in-law have all worked for OSU, and now his three daughters are carrying on the tradition. Monee, a senior majoring in business; Shanelle, a junior majoring in family and human development; and Keysa, a freshman majoring in business, are the latest in the Warfield family to be part of OSU.