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Author talks about gang life

BY PAUL COLLINS THE CHRONICLE

About 200 people, including quite a few students, crowded into the auditorium at Central Library last Thursday night to hear former gang member turned poet and author Luis L. Rodriguez, author of the award-winning international best seller "Always Running - La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A."

Jon Sundale, head of Hispanic services for Forsyth County Public Library, introduced Rodriguez. "Mr. Rodriguez is the final author of ... our multicultural writing project. He has done a wonderful job. This is his fourth day of inspiring kids with his life and with his writing. The power of writing is very, very important for him."

"He had a very tough childhood. He grew up in East L.A., East Los Angeles. He is the son of immigrant parents from Mexico. At the age of 11 he joined a gang, and by the age of 18, 25 of his friends were dead from the violence of gang life. He had the courage and intelligence to leave that life and begin a new life. He also had some adults who cared a great deal about him and who helped him and encouraged him to do that."

"He became a better father, a better husband; he began a new life. That's a ... message to us. Mr. Rodriguez' message here is not just for youth and it's not just for those struggling with gangs and drugs, it's also a message for the whole community that if we want a society where people grow up well we have to help make sure that happens."

"At this point Mr. Rodriguez is a very well-known author. He has published six books. He is known internationally. He has been on many radio and television shows. He has won over a dozen literary prizes, including the Hispanic Heritage Award. He's done a great job of connecting with the kids."

Rodriguez began by saying, "I want to say how honored I am to be here...I've been almost a week here in Winston-Salem. I've met a lot of good people and made a lot of good friends. I'm really honored to be here among you...."

"For some of you who may not know, I wrote this book primarily for my son. My son Ramiro joined a gang in Chicago when he was 15. So then as a

See Author on A10



Photo by Kevin Walker

Clarence "Big-house" Gaines, left, shakes hands with one of his most famous protégés, Earl Monroe, at Saturday's NAACP Humanitarian Banquet.

Honoring Greatness

Gaines 'nets' Humanitarian Award from state NAACP

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

Clarence "Big-house" Gaines was not in the stands Saturday as his beloved Winston-Salem State Rams basketball team beat up on the Johnson C. Smith University Bulldogs.

His absence was noticeable. Gaines has been a presence at Ram home games since he led the team to national prominence during 47 seasons as head coach.

He had good reason for missing Saturday's showdown. The N.C. NAACP presented Gaines with one of its highest honors, the Humanitarian Award. Gaines received the award at a banquet at the close of the NAACP's Winter Conference at the Adam's Mark Winston Plaza.

"I think this is more important (than being at the game)," Gaines said before receiving the award. "If somebody thinks enough of you to think that you have touched human lives in a positive manner, that means a lot. That's what life is about anyway."



Gaines on the sidelines during his coaching days at WSSU.

Presidents and board members from chapters from the coast to the moun-

tains packed the hotel's grand pavilion for the Humanitarian Award Banquet. Many made a beeline to Gaines before the program, telling him of the impact his work at WSSU had on them and congratulating him on his honor.

Gaines said he never really considered his coaching as a humanitarian effort. Sure, he knew that he has had a hand in shaping the lives of thousands of students, but Gaines said that was just part of his job - the part that he liked most.

Skip Alston, president of the state NAACP, said Gaines was an obvious choice for the award.

"He has made outstanding contributions to African Americans throughout his years as coach at Winston-Salem State. He has been a role model for all African Americans throughout this country and he has done a lot to uplift African Americans throughout this country," Alston said.

To many, it was Gaines who put

See Gaines on A11

State NAACP sets agenda for 2001

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

For the first time in 2001, Skip Alston had the ears of all NAACP chapter presidents in the state at one time. The state conference held its annual winter meeting at the Adam's Mark Winston Plaza last weekend. Hundreds of officials from local chapters made the trip to Winston-Salem, the first of three state events that will be held this year.

Alston, state president of the NAACP, said the conference gives chapter presidents an opportunity to get up to snuff on the latest mandatory guidelines required by the national organization.

"We want our people to know how to represent the NAACP in our local chapters, so we train them to be good leaders throughout the NAACP organization," Alston said.

The 2001 agenda for the state NAACP was laid out Friday night,

Alston said. The main planks of the agenda are: education, economic empowerment and political empowerment.

"We want to make sure we try to educate our community as it relates to those



Alston

See NAACP on A11

Police chief breaks chain of command

Some blacks in the department unhappy about Davis' decision to bypass popular assistant chief; Davis says she has not broken any policies

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

Police Chief Linda Davis' professionalism is being questioned by some in her ranks after she recently decided to leave a captain in charge of the department instead of the department's only assistant police chief, 27-year veteran Mike McCoy.

Davis left Capt. Mike Culler in charge during a period in the middle of January while she was out of town. Culler was promoted to captain by Davis in November of 1999.

Department officials who spoke to The Chronicle under anonymity said that McCoy did not take the slight well and has filed a grievance over the matter with City Manager Bill Stuart.

McCoy would only confirm last week that Culler was left in charge instead of him; he would not confirm whether or not he had taken the matter to Stuart.

"I can't comment on that at this time," he said.

Davis would not say much about her decision, citing personnel and privacy issues.

"The decision to leave (Culler) in charge is one that is allowed by our policy," she said. "That's a decision I made in the best interest of the department."

Davis said she considers a number of factors when deciding whom to leave in charge. She said she makes the decision on a case-by-case basis, taking into account "efficiency" and who in the department is working on days she'll be away.

But those who talked to The Chronicle said that under past chiefs responsibility always fell to one of the assistant chiefs. Even Davis in the past, they assigned duties to either McCoy of Assistant Chief David Walker, who recently retired from the department.

"It's a double slap in the face because (McCoy) is not only an assistant chief, but the only assistant chief at this time," one person said.

McCoy and Davis have been co-workers for almost the same length of time at the department. They both served as assistant police chiefs under Chief George Sweat before Sweat left the department two years ago.

McCoy was among those who were being considered for the department's top job, but Stuart chose Davis, despite the fact that she had not applied for the job and was serving as interim police chief so that Stuart could fairly and evenly evaluate the candidates who had applied - all of whom were working in the department at the time.

McCoy said publicly that he was disappointed in Stuart's method of hiring Davis, but he told The Chronicle that he would support the new chief vigorously.

"I want Chief Davis to be successful and I'm going to do everything I can do to help her be successful because she is the first female chief that we've had. I want to see her do well," McCoy said during a March 1999 interview, shortly after Davis' appointment.

Davis, at the time, said McCoy's support made it easier for her to accept the job as chief.

"We worked very well as a team under Chief Sweat....Had we not been such a good team before hand, I might have thought twice about this," she said.

But the relationship between the two has been somewhat awkward over the last year or so, insiders say, especially after McCoy publicly supported three African-American police sergeants that Davis demoted after a sex-filled melee broke out at a concert they were hired to patrol at Joel Coliseum.

McCoy and other police personnel attended a Board of Aldermen meeting to support the officers in their quest to have their demotions overturned. All three were eventually given back their stripes.

Some inside the department believe that Davis still holds grudges against those who supported the officers and retaliated against McCoy by bypassing him.



Davis



McCoy

Organizers have lofty dreams for beauty pageant

First-ever Miss Latina Triad Pageant featured a parade of young women representing a diverse mix of Latin American nations

BY T. KEVIN WALKER THE CHRONICLE

Growing up in Mexico, Lucy Padilla was a big fan of beauty pageants. The elegance, the dance numbers, the fashions - all grabbed Padilla's attention as a youngster; her attention is still being held hostage by pageants.

She's not the only one. In a culture big on pageantry and razzle-dazzle, beauty contests are a big deal throughout Latin America, a time to celebrate Latin womanhood in all its glory.

Padilla and about a dozen other young Hispanic women helped to bring the pageant tradition to the Triad Saturday, as they sashayed, smiled and danced through the first ever Miss Latina Triad Pageant.

"I think this is a good way to meet other people and to learn about different Hispanic cultures," Padilla said as she pre-

pared for pre-pageant interviews with the judges.

Each contestant represented her native land, resulting in a showcase of far-flung Latin American nations, from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, to Nicaragua and Guatemala. All the contestants currently live in North Carolina, mostly in the Triad area.

The pageant was spearheaded by Hispanos Unidos Media Corp., a Greensboro-based company that publishes a Spanish/English newspaper.

"We created this pageant to give Hispanic young women more of a voice in the community, not just a presence," said Carlos Solis, publisher of Hispanos Unidos.

Solis envisions one day having a statewide pageant and even a national contest. In the Triad and beyond, Solis wants



Photo by Kevin Walker

Judge Eduardo Espinola talks with two contestants.

See Miss Latina on A5

See Police chief on A4

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