

Payback?

TransAfrica founder says blacks should receive reparations

BY T KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Randall Robinson told a crowd at Winston-Salem State University Tuesday night that African Americans continue to carry the scars of slavery and oppression, but many are too preoccupied with other issues to realize it.

Robinson — founder of the Washington-based group TransAfrica, an advocacy agency that works on issues of economic and political empowerment for blacks in Africa and the Caribbean — said one of the most devastating effects of slavery that is still carried by blacks today is an almost total ignorance of African history and culture.

"I was taught that it all began in Greece," Robinson said, commenting on what he said college professors told him about the dawn of civilization.

It was not until later, he said, that he learned about the great African civilizations that predated Greece and Europe altogether.

Robinson told students to

study history on their own and not to take what a professor says as gospel.

"Study your history," he said, wagging a finger toward the crowd, "so that you will know that you have been great before and you can be great again."

But Robinson also criticized history courses, saying that they were much too limited in their scope, starting black history with slavery and ending it with the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

"Next month is black History month," he said. "You will talk about Sojourner (Truth), you will talk about Harriet (Tubman), but you will likely not (touch) history that goes back more than 100 years."

Robinson said the legacy of poverty that has been passed down, has been equally as devastating to blacks in this country. He pointed out many prominent institutions that became prosperous through the dollars they made in the slave trade; he then juxtaposed the wealth of those who benefit from those companies with the plight of a great

deal of blacks.

He said regardless of the few blacks who "make it," too many start life at ground zero and end it the same way.

"Poverty, like wealth, is inherited," he said. "And do not tell me about Michael (Jordan) and Oprah (Winfrey). That is statistically insignificant."

Robinson has been one of the leaders in the nationwide reparations movement, in which blacks and others are trying to lobby Congress for some type of payment for the century of unpaid work slaves did.

His latest book, "The Debt," focuses on why African Americans are owed back pay. Robinson said reparations is a very small price to pay for all that African Americans have lost.

"We lost our language... We lost our customs... We lost any trace of what we had been before and we were fitted with an alien culture that was not ours," he said.

Before wrapping up his remarks and taking questions from the eager audience, Robinson lashed out at the prison sys-



Photo by Kevin Walker

Randall Robinson tells students and faculty at Winston-Salem State that blacks have lost sense of self.

tem, and increasing efforts to privatize it more.

He called the prison system a modern form of slavery, an institution where blacks and other minorities perform services and produce goods but see no profit.

He criticized towns for lobbying for prisons so that dead

economies can be rejuvenated. He singled out Malone, N.Y., which he described as an all-white town that was on the brink of economic purgatory before landing several prisons.

"The all-white town of Malone got their economy (turned around) by a prison population that is 82 percent black and His-

panic. It is the new slavery," he said.

Robinson said that he and a group of high-profile black attorneys and educators are in the process of trying to sue the government for reparations. Attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Willie Gary are among those involved, Robinson said.

Big names dominate WSSU Black History Month events

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The senior editor of Ebony magazine, a Texas clergyman, a former convict turned millionaire and a movie star will be among the list of speakers, seminars, performances, exhibitions and films for the Black History Month celebrations at Winston-Salem State University in February. Free and open to the public, Black History Month activities begin on Thursday, Feb. 1, with a 9:45 a.m. lecture of Dr. Frederick Douglas Haynes III, pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas.

He will present the third in the year-long James A. Gray Religion and Ethics Lecture Series in Dillard Auditorium of the Albert H. Anderson Conference Center. A gifted and flamboyant speaker, Haynes has lectured extensively across the United States and abroad.

"Health Issues Confronting the African-American Community" will be the subject of a panel discussion during Black Health Awareness Day Friday, Feb. 2, at noon in Room 207 of the Cleon F. Thompson Student Services Center. In addition to the panel discussion, health care professionals will be conducting health screenings throughout the day in various locations on campus.

This event is a prelude to the "Love My Body Fitness Breaks" scheduled for each Saturday during the month of February in the university's Fitness Center from noon until 4 p.m.

On Saturday, Feb. 3, at 4 p.m., Diggs Gallery presents WSSU: A Legacy in Fine Art to honor the artists and instructors who have contributed to the study and creation of fine art on the WSSU campus. The exhibition will feature the works of more than 30 faculty, former faculty, students and alumni, including works by Selma Burke, Hayward Oubré, Eva Miller and James T. Diggs, the former art department professor for whom Diggs Gallery is named.

Jazz Night is scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 4, at 7 p.m. in Room 207 of the Cleon F. Thompson Student Services Center. The program will feature local jazz guitarist Charles Green and his trio.

Dan Narvaez, assistant to Winston-Salem mayor Jack Cavanagh, and Art Malloy, WSSU associate director for student affairs, will lecture on the subject "Embracing Cultural Diversity" on Monday, Feb. 5, at 7 p.m. in Room 207 of the Thompson Center.

On Tuesday, Feb. 6, at noon, students participate in a panel discussion on "Civil Rights vs. Civil Wrongs," which will focus on some of the positive and negative outcomes of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Black Inventors Tour will move into the Thompson Center on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at 11 a.m. This exhibit is a touring tribute to the artistry and innovations of African Americans who exhibited extraordinary genius in the face of extreme adversity. More than 100 authentic inventions, patent designs, rare photographs, biographies, and documentaries comprise this amazing presentation.

On Friday, Feb. 9, a Black Film Festival will begin at noon on the third floor of Thompson Center. That evening, beginning at 7 p.m. in Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium, a Gospel Extravaganza Benefit Concert will be held. Several local church choirs, soloists and WSSU's Gospel Choir will participate. This event is not free. Proceeds from the concert will go to the Sickle Cell Foundation and the Samaritan Soup Kitchen.

A scholarship ball sponsored by the Beta Iota chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. will be held Saturday, Feb. 10, at 8 p.m. in Kennedy Dining Hall at the Thompson Center. This event is not free. Proceeds will benefit the Andrew A. Means Scholarship Fund. Uehendi Nwani, a former convict who is now a 28-year-old millionaire, will lecture Monday, Feb. 12, at 6 p.m. in Room 207 of the Thompson Center. He will discuss his life and how he became a multi-million-dollar entrepreneur.

The gospel play "Order My Steps," starring actress Starletta Dupois, will be held at 7 p.m. in Williams Auditorium Wednesday, Feb. 14. Dupois played the mother of Whitney Houston in the film "Waiting to Exhale," co-starred with actress Cicely Tyson in the USA Television Network movie "The Road to Galveston," and has appeared in the HBO movie "Strapped," and the recent Martin Lawrence blockbuster "Big Mama's House." Internationally acclaimed novelist, playwright, historian and poet, Dr. Jan Carew will make Humanities Lecture Series presentations at 9:30 a.m., 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. in Room 228 of the Hall-Patterson Building on Thursday, Feb. 15. His topic will focus on links among the Caribbean, African and African-American cultures.

WSSU's international students will participate in a "Shades of Color Around the World" panel discussion on Friday, Feb. 16, at noon in Room 207 of the Thompson Center. They will discuss the cultural differences they have experienced in the United States as persons of color compared to their experiences in their own countries.

Bryan Beatty, recently appointed N.C. secretary of crime control and public safety, will be on a panel dis-

cussing the subject "Driving While Black" at noon in Room 207 of the Thompson Center on Tuesday, Feb. 20.

The following day, Wednesday, Feb. 21, Tom Morris, senior correspondent on "America's Most Wanted: America Fights Back," will deliver the Joseph N. Patterson Lecture at 10 a.m. in Room 228 of the Hall-Patterson Building. His lecture will focus on African Americans, the media and the importance of having

excellent communication skills.

That evening at 7 o'clock, Lerone Bennett, senior editor for Ebony magazine and acclaimed historian, will lecture in Williams Auditorium. Bennett will also discuss his newest book, "Forced into Glory: Abraham Lincoln a Racist."

Politics will be the subject of discussion among African-American representatives of the Winston-Salem Board of Aldermen, the Forsyth County commissioners and

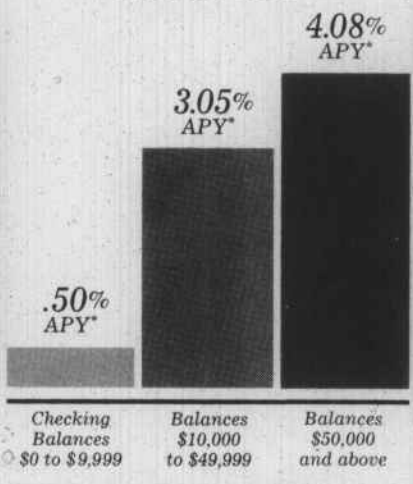
the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School Board. Their panel discussion will be held at noon in Room 207 of the Thompson Center on Thursday, Feb. 22.

On Saturday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m., Williams Auditorium will be the site of a concert featuring several gospel recording artists. An admission fee will be charged for this event.

The month will culminate with CIAA Tournament activities in Raleigh Feb. 26 through March 3.

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Police chief

(From page A1)

"The feeling is (the decision to leave Culler in charge) stems from Assistant Chief McCoy supporting the demoted officers and other disciplinary decisions made by (Davis) that he has not backed," said a department employee.

Sources also said Davis' decision is seen as a major sign of disrespect to one of the most respected people in the department and one of its longest serving African-American members.

"The relationship between black officers and the chief is strained in my opinion," a source said. "But it's not just blacks; everybody is on pins and needles when it comes to the chief."

Davis dismissed the talk that she is holding some sort of grudge

against McCoy because of the demoted officers saga.

"I discussed that with (McCoy) at the time. That's over with; I have a department to run," she said.

As for her relationship with African Americans in the department, Davis said though there are differences of opinion, to her knowledge the relationship is "cordial."

Stuart would not confirm whether or not he is looking into a grievance filed by McCoy. He did say Davis — under the Police Department's general orders — has the ability to choose anyone she wants to act as chief while she is away from the department.

"The police chief can designate whomever she wishes to designate as acting chief... Most instances that would be an assistant chief, but not all instances," he said.