

### Harvard president supporting diversity Afro-American studies

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Harvard President Lawrence Summers pledged his commitment to diversity in response to reports that three prominent black professors are considering leaving because of problems with his leadership.

Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates and K. Anthony Appiah — all of whom are in the school's Afro-American studies program — were reportedly frustrated that Summers had not made a strong enough statement in favor of affirmative action.

The Boston Globe reported last month that members of the black studies department were frustrated with Summers, a former U.S. Treasury secretary who replaced Neil Rudenstine as president last year.

Summers also reportedly rebuked West for recording a rap CD, for leading a political committee for the Rev. Al Sharpton's possible presidential campaign and for allegedly allowing grade inflation in his introductory black studies course.

Summers and a university spokesman have called the episode a misunderstanding.

In the statement, Summers said diversity "contributes to educational excellence by enabling outstanding students, faculty and staff of all backgrounds to come together and learn from one another."

Summers' statement came a day after he agreed to meet with Rev. Jesse Jackson, who has said the school's commitment to diversity and affirmative action needs "clarification."



Jackson

### Dorothy 'Dot' Thompson dies at 57

ROCK HILL, S.C. — Dorothy "Dot" Thompson, a Winthrop University English professor, poet, mentor and tireless advocate for black students, has died. She was 57.

After surviving breast cancer four and a half years ago, Thompson was again diagnosed with the disease, which spread to her vital organs. She died at home Friday.

Last year was a breakout year in Thompson's literary life. She published her second book of original poems, "Priest in Aqua Boa," in April. Her third book, "Hurrying the Spirit: Following Zora," is in publication. It was inspired by Harlem Renaissance novelist Zora Neale Hurston.

Thompson also edited an anthology of poems focusing on women's issues. It grew out of a writing workshop Thompson conducted for unemployed women in Charlotte.

At the time of her death, Thompson was working with a colleague on a book about race in the educational process, titled "The Elephant in the Classroom: Race and Writing."

A Winthrop University faculty member since 1985, Thompson was promoted to full professor in July.

She coordinated the university's African-American studies program and advised Taking Integrity Back, a black student group focusing on cultural, historical and current issues.

### 51 members of family killed in accident

SEPHAKU, South Africa — Mass funerals were held Sunday for 51 members of an extended family who died in a truck accident while on a pilgrimage to their ancestral graves.

About 120 members of the Chego family were crammed into the back of an open truck when it overturned on a narrow dirt road on Dec. 30. Forty-seven people were killed instantly, and another four died of their injuries while hospitalized.

Mourners wailed and several fainted during the burial of 36 of the victims at the Sephaku cemetery, about 187 miles north of Johannesburg. The other victims were buried in the nearby towns of Tafelkop and Sterkfontein.

### Leaders pleased with outcome of MLK Day vote in Davidson

LEXINGTON — Black leaders say they're pleased to see Davidson County make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a paid holiday for employees after a decade of opposition by elected officials.

County commissioners voted 4-3 last Thursday to make the King Holiday a paid holiday for county workers. The holiday will be observed Jan. 21 this year.

The commissioners rejected the holiday many times in recent years, voting 5-1 against the idea back in August. Davidson County was one of only a few N.C. counties that didn't recognize the holiday.

"I'm appreciative, but at the same time, it should've been done a long time ago," said Skip Alston, president of the state chapter of the NAACP.

Commissioner Fred McClure, who introduced the motion for the holiday last Thursday, had said the county should end controversy and adopt the holiday to improve its image in attracting new industry.

Commissioner Rick Lanier, who voted against McClure's motion, said he believed the holiday eventually would be approved.

Lanier said he would rather that a black American such as Frederick Douglass be honored with a holiday because he serves a better role model. Some King critics have cited his stand against the Vietnam War and allegations of marital infidelity.

"I'd no sooner vote to have a day for (King) than I would to approve a day for Bill Clinton," Lanier said.

The commissioners' decision will heal resentments within the community, said Leon Hargraves, president of the Davidson County chapter of the NAACP.

"It will be a great, enjoyable celebration this year," Hargraves said. "Now we can work together without this thorn."

— From Wire Reports



Alston

# Ruffin: Blacks used to terrorism

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHAPEL HILL — All Americans saw the face of terrorism on Sept. 11, but the chairman of the UNC Board of Governors says black Americans have seen terrorism for hundreds of years — and no one has paid attention.

In a fiery speech at the annual Freedom Day celebration Jan. 1 at First Baptist Church, Ben Ruffin pointed out that blacks have long suffered from bombings, lynchings and other acts of terror.

"But when that happened to us, we didn't have a national day or mourning," he pointed out in remarks that were frequently punctuated by shouts of amen. "We didn't have all America wanting to help us out."

Concern about what happened on Sept. 11, Ruffin said, should not erase the memory of what has been happening to blacks for centuries, and continues to happen.

"I'm concerned about Sept. 11," Ruffin said. "I love America. I detest what happened in New York and Washington. But if you've been up on the wall with black folks, you've already seen terrorism."

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks formed a backdrop for Ruffin's speech as well as remarks by other speakers at the event sponsored by the Chapel Hill and Carboro Vicinity Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance. The alliance hosts the celebration every New Year's Day at the church to remember the Emancipation Proclamation, which President Lincoln signed on Jan. 1, 1863.

But even 140 years after the signing, Ruffin said, blacks in America still are not completely free.

"It is harder to stay free than it is sometimes to get free," Ruffin

said. Blacks cannot be fully free, he said, "when we represent 12 percent of the population, but 50 percent of the prison inmates."

Blacks cannot be free, he added, when 1.2 million black men are incarcerated and one of every two young children has no health insurance. One out of three children in North Carolina never graduates from high school, Ruffin said, "because they are pushed out, kicked out or get out."

Despite those problems, "We still love America, despite the fact that America doesn't always love us," Ruffin said. "We still support this country, even when this country did not support us. We've loved this country, stayed with this country. Now is the time for this country to stay with us."

The president of Winston-Salem's Ruffin Group did acknowledge that some progress has been made. He pointed out that 40 members of Congress are black and that 25 members of the state's General Assembly are black.

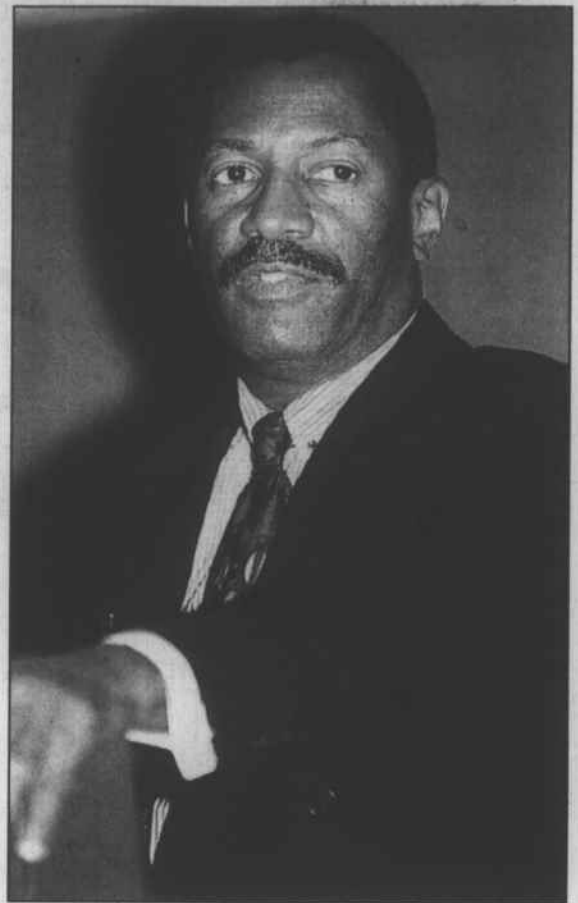
"They put us in jail, but they couldn't keep us in," Ruffin said to shouts from the congregation. "They couldn't kill the dream."

For full freedom to be achieved, he said, blacks in America would have to do it themselves.

"We can do better," he said. "Nobody will save us but us," Ruffin said, as he implored his listeners to use their power of the pocketbook and the power of the ballot box. "People will never respect us until we respect ourselves."

Ruffin elicited perhaps the loudest reaction from his audience when he emphasized the importance of doing well in school.

"There's nothing wrong with getting A's and B's," he said. "But there is something wrong with



File Photo

Ben Ruffin, a former R.J. Reynolds executive, is known for speaking his mind, even on controversial issues.

(going to school) and dropping your britches down so far."

At the end of his 25-minute speech, Ruffin pointed out that the U.S. Senate had no black members.

His voice rising, his arms waving, he said, "That's a shame. We can do better. We have to do better."

As Ruffin sat down following his emotional talk, Pastor L. Gene Hatley, the president of the alliance, noted that the remarks might have been different from those Ruffin usually gives.

"He can't do that in front of the board of governors," Hatley said. "He can't let it out there like he let it out here."

## Holiday traffic fatalities down

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

RALEIGH — The Highway Patrol reported that traffic fatalities investigated by the Patrol were lower than anticipated this Christmas and New Year's holiday season in North Carolina. Nine people lost their lives on N.C. roadways this holiday season compared with 17 over the same period in 2000.

"It saddens us to hear of any deaths that occur on North Carolina highways, but it is encouraging to see that traffic fatalities have dropped this holiday season," said Col. R.W. Holden, commander of the N.C. Highway Patrol. "I think the reduction in fatalities can be attributed to a concerted effort by the troopers working the roadways and the safe driving efforts of citizens who were traveling. The Highway Patrol will continue to be vigilant on the highways, but citizens must do their part by buckling up, slowing down, and driving sober."

The Christmas holiday period ran from 6 p.m. on Dec. 21 until midnight Dec. 25. The New Year's holiday period ran from 6 p.m. on Dec. 31 until midnight on Jan. 1.

Troopers are encouraging motorists to exercise patience not only during holiday travel but also throughout their daily

travels, especially with the threat of winter weather on the way.

"In this new year, everyone should resolve to do their part to make the highways safer," said Bryan E. Beatty, secretary

of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, which oversees the Patrol. "It takes all of us working together to improve traffic safety."

Motorists are reminded that they can contact the Highway

Patrol to report traffic accidents, drunk drivers or stranded motorists by dialing \*HP (47) on their cellular phones. This is a free call that goes to the nearest Highway Patrol communications center.

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 Rev. Kedric Lowery  
 The North Carolina Black Repertory Company is a Funded Member of the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Arts Council and receives  
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