

### Abner Louima battles his former defense team in New York courtroom

Special to the NNPA - New York City police torture victim Abner Louima has been in court once again, this time to settle a claim with former attorneys that have laid claim to his \$8.7 million settlement.

Forced to travel from his home in Florida to a federal court hearing in Brooklyn last week, Louima blasted his former attorneys for making racist remarks, leaking information and resigning, which paved the way for Johnnie Cochran and his legal team.



Louima

Attorneys Brian Figeroux, Carl Thomas and Casilda Roper-Simpson resigned from his legal team and, by doing so, forfeited any claim to the fees, Louima testified. The lawyers are now fighting over a share of nearly \$3 million in fees.

"I don't think they are entitled to any money," Louima said at the hearing before Magistrate Judge Sheryl Pollack. "They resigned the case, and, by doing so, they let me down."

Louima also testified that he was frustrated when Figeroux was quoted in a newspaper article about the brutality Louima suffered at the hands of police in 1997, despite his request to the lawyers that no one comment without his approval.

Figeroux and Thomas were hired soon after Louima was sodomized with a broken broomstick at the 70th Precinct station house on Aug. 9, 1997. Cochran, Sanford Rubinstein, Scheck and Neufeld replaced the team in September 1997.

Cochran testified that Figeroux and Thomas had called him an "Uncle Tom" for bringing white, Jewish lawyers into the case and had used a slur to refer to them. A decision in the case is pending.

### Convicted Birmingham church bomber says that he is a 'political prisoner'

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) - In a letter from prison, former Ku Klux Klansman Bobby Frank Cherry declares himself a "political prisoner" and blames the federal government for the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls.



Cherry

Cherry, who was convicted in the bombing in May and is serving a life sentence for murder, called himself "an innocent man" in a three-page letter to The Associated Press, his first public comment since his imprisonment.

"I am a political prisoner in Ala.," the 72-year-old Cherry wrote on the envelope, delivered this week.

The prosecutor dismissed Cherry's claims. "It's ludicrous," Doug Jones, a former U.S. attorney now in private practice, said Friday.

Klan members and their sympathizers have maintained for years that the federal government or blacks were behind the bombing, which they often portrayed as an attempt to win sympathy for the Civil Rights Movement.

A powerful bomb went off at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Sept. 15, 1963, as Birmingham's public schools were being racially integrated for the first time.

The blast killed four girls inside the stone-and-brick church, which was a gathering spot for demonstrators seeking an end to legalized segregation in the city.

Cherry did not testify during his trial. He was the third ex-Klansman convicted in the bombing, and prosecutors said no more suspects are alive.

### NAACP, farmers want trade with Cuba

Special to the NNPA - The NAACP and Cuban President Fidel Castro are interested in creating trade links between Cuba and thousands of black farmers, by taking advantage of a U.S. law that will allow agricultural transactions.

A delegation including NAACP leader Kweisi Mfume and John Boyd, president of the National Association of Black Farmers, met and discussed the issue with Castro for more than four hours last week. The talks are intended to open the embargoed island nation to more than 12,000 growers in 48 states.



Mfume

During the visit, the NAACP delegation also met with government, American diplomats in Havana and representatives of the National Assembly, Cuba's parliament.

"President Castro seemed very interested and had around him all the people in the government who could make that happen," Mfume told reporters. "We hope to build a bridge between the NAACP and the people of Cuba, many of whom are descendants of Africa."

The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act, passed in 2000, erodes the trade embargo imposed by the United States in the early 1960s, soon after Castro came to power. So far, Cuba has purchased hundreds of millions of dollars worth of American food.

- Compiled from staff and wire reports

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# Study: Coal pollution affects blacks more than whites in South Carolina

Blacks with asthma greatly suffer because of output from plants

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

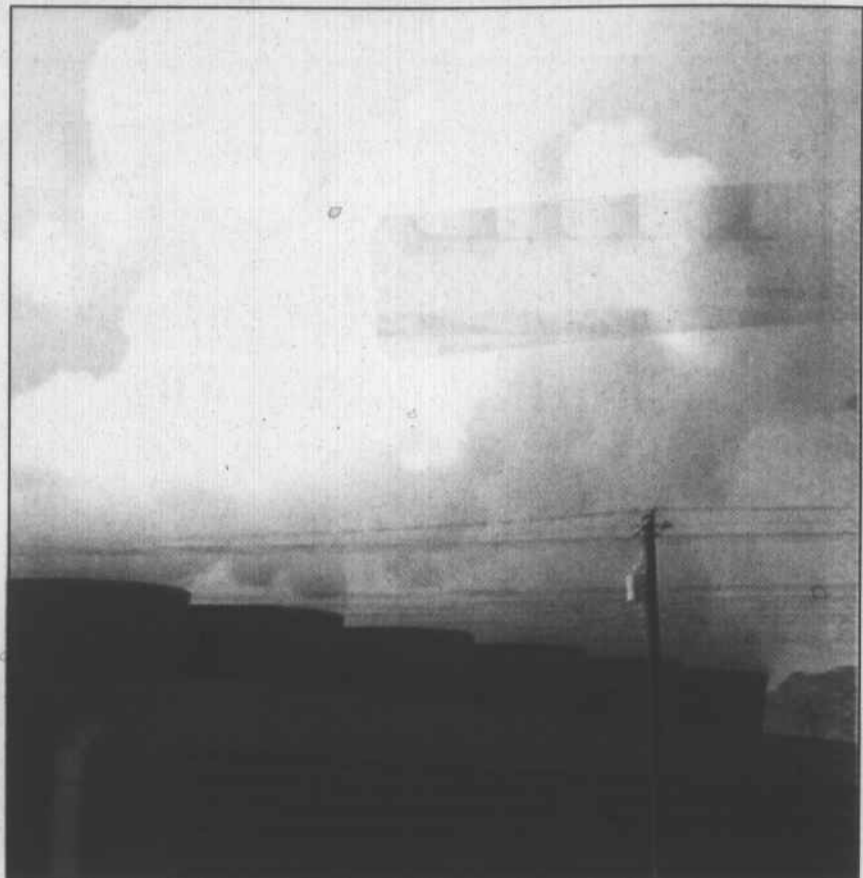
COLUMBIA, S.C. - Blacks in South Carolina are disproportionately affected by pollution from coal-fired power plants, according to a new study on the impact of the state's 12 facilities.

The report, "Air of Injustice," was released nationally last week by a coalition of civil rights, public health and environmental advocacy groups. It shows increased asthma attacks and consumption of mercury-contaminated fish by blacks and other minorities.

"What that means is when this report says African-Americans have asthma attacks that send them to the hospital at three times the rate of white folks, and that our death rate from asthma is twice that of (whites), it gets personal," said Mildred Myers, executive director of South Carolina Environmental Watch, one of the groups that met last Thursday in Gadsden near the Wateree power plant to publicize the report's findings.

Myers is black and is a chronic asthma sufferer. "It's talking about our families, the people that make our lives worth living," she said.

The study shows that blacks have 174.3 emergency room visits per 10,000 population because of asthma attacks, compared with 59.4 visits per 10,000 for whites. There are 38.7 deaths per million from asthma among



File Photo

There are 12 coal-fired power plants in South Carolina. A new report says that African-American residents in the state are paying the price for the toxins the plants produce.

blacks compared with 14.2 deaths per million for whites.

Blacks also eat more fish and in larger portions than whites, increasing their exposure to mercury, which is emitted by the power plants.

While some evidence shows heredity plays a role in the incidence of asthma in

blacks, activists say heavy pollution from coal-fired power plants near black communities aggravates the problem.

The state Department of Health and Environmental Control says seven of the state's 12 coal-fired plants operate under less-stringent

rules that were in effect before the federal government tightened air-pollution standards in the past 20 years.

South Carolina Electric and Gas, the state's largest utility, operates in compliance with state and federal air pollution laws, spokesman Brian Duncan said.

## Ballance to head Democratic freshmen

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

On Nov. 5, Frank W. Ballance Jr. was elected to Congress from the 1st Congressional District of North Carolina, succeeding Congresswoman Eva M. Clayton.

On Nov. 14, Ballance once again followed Clayton by being elected president of the Democratic Freshman Class of the 108th Congress.

The election took place during the 10-day New Member Orientation Session held in Washington, D.C. Also during this time, each political party

selected its leadership team for the 108th Congress.

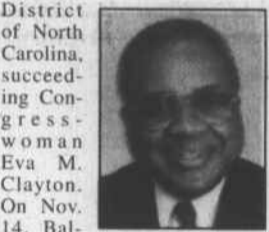
Ballance was quoted as saying: "I am honored that my colleagues in this Freshman Class had enough confidence in me to elect me president. I am certain that my 18 years of legislative experience and my six years of service as deputy

president pro tempore of the North Carolina Senate were influential in my selection. I look forward to working

closely with the Democratic leadership."

The New Member Orientation for the 108th Congress

will continue through Nov. 21. Ballance will take the oath of office in a ceremony Jan. 7, 2003, at the U.S. Capitol.



Ballance



Clayton

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102F	02 Sable	GS Edition, White/Grey, Aluminum Wheels	\$12,999
102F	02 Sable	GS Edition, White/Grey, Aluminum Wheels	\$12,999
239F	02 Sable	GS Edition, White/Grey, Loaded	\$12,499
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208F	99 Villager	Sport, White/Grey, loaded, 46k	\$13,999
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