

# Fisher makes history with N.C. GOP chairwomanship

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

In terms of racial diversity, the Republican National Committee has little to show-case. The party's recent convention in St. Paul was its whitest ever, with less than two percent of African-Americans serving as delegates.

The state party is making an effort to promote diversity. Dr. Ada Fisher, a Salisbury physician and frequent candidate for office, is now officially the Republican National Committeewoman for North Carolina.

The state's GOP committee has some say in the agenda and affairs of the National Republican Party and works to elect GOP candidates and raise funds for various races.

The 150 people of the N.C. committee also includes Party Chair Linda Daves and Rep.



Dr. Ada Fisher lives in Salisbury.

David Lewis, the N.C. National Committeeman.

Fisher has unsuccessfully run for the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. She

is currently running for the N.C. House of Representatives in District 77.

Fisher believes she is the first known black woman in the

nation to serve as a Republican National Committeewoman. She insists that the state GOP is making progress in showcasing diversity. Other prominent African-Americans Republicans in the state include Buncombe County District Chairman, Joseph Avery; County Chairman Dr. Timothy Johnson from Asheville. Fisher is also one of six black Republican candidates running for the General Assembly.

## Mohammed

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traditional Islam won him many "friends" at home and abroad, particularly in the Muslim World.

He was the first Muslim to give an invocation in the United States Senate and in 1993, the Imam gave the prayer during the first Inaugural Interfaith Prayer Service for President Bill Clinton.

Imam Abdul Karim Hasan, the resident Imam of Los Angeles' Masjid Felix Bilal, had known Mohammed for decades, personally, socially and as a religious leader.

"He was a great inspirational leader, and he, with the help of God, was responsible for turning us in the direction of mainstream Islam," Hasan said. "Because of his efforts, we were able to make great strides and progress in every city because of the decentralization of the community, making each Imam responsible for his own growth and development there."



Lee

As the minister responsible for the Nation's businesses in Mosque No. 27, Hasan was keenly aware of the fundamental difference between the past and the present, as espoused by Mohammed. Hasan continued, "He was directing business activities and also encouraging Muslims to forget about their past injustices and start looking towards the future. He was a member of the World Council of Mosques, which is headquartered in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and through that office, he was able to introduce to them the vastness of the American community of Muslims."

Malik Saleem, who labored for the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and then as a follower of the Imam, had some pleasant memories.

"What impressed me the most is that he said if Black people take care of their family and let your family be your number one priority, he, as a leader will be a happy man! He told us, those of us who labored for the Honorable Elijah Muhammad and gave

up our college careers, go back to college and get those college degrees; that this is our country and in order to benefit from it, we should be able to give a minimum to the military service of our country, which I had already been in the Air Force, but these are the things that inspired me."

The Rev. Eric Lee, president of SCLC said, "Anyone who embarks on a course to lift humanity to a higher level is a noble calling. The loss of Warith D. Mohammed will be a loss to all of our community and all of mankind."

## Davis

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for a long time, that's exactly what it was, eventually becoming the oldest black-owned resort in the United States. By the 1990s, however, business began to slip. And it fell to their son to keep the Hillside afloat.

"Deconstructing Sammy" follows Murray as he struggles to save the Hillside - and the Sammy Davis Jr. brand.

Murray, now 59, never thought much of Davis. Like many other blacks who came of age during the tumultuous 1960s, he saw Davis as little more than a minstrel, an Uncle Tom, a plaything of the white establishment.

But he felt sorry for Davis's widow, Altovise Davis, who was virtually penniless, in the grips of a life-threatening alcohol addiction, and, as it happened, living in a private home on the grounds of the Hillside. And the more Murray dug into Davis's life, the more he came to appreciate his contributions to American culture and civil rights.

"He was much more than the Stepin Fetchit that he appeared to be," Murray said in a recent interview at the Hillside. "He went through struggles as a black man, he went through struggles with his own identity, he went through all of the things that we go through as minorities. At the same time, he gave of himself as an entertainer. And yet, at the end of his life, there was nothing to show for it."

Murray worked hard to rectify that. He struck a deal with the IRS in 1997, and with the tax debt finally settled, offers began pouring in. A four-CD retrospective was released in 1999 and Murray helped secure for Davis a lifetime achievement award at the 2001 Grammys.

Yet the story continues to unfold, and both legacies face an uncertain future.

Murray and Altovise parted ways in 2001, and the Davis estate has once again fallen into disrepair, "mired in failure and controversy," as Birkbeck writes. Altovise Davis has sued two former business partners in federal court, claiming they tricked her into signing away the rights to her husband's estate. The suit is pending.

Murray, meanwhile, has put the Hillside up for sale. His parents are deceased and the 33-room resort, he says, is a dinosaur. Blacks have long been able to stay at any public accommodation they want, and increasingly, they're choosing to stay somewhere else. And whites may be reluctant to go to a resort whose clientele is primarily black.

Murray hopes it is bought by a nonprofit, perhaps a shelter. Which would be a fitting way to honor the Hillside's history.

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## Small Business Training Program

A City sponsored Business Training Program is set to begin on Thursday October 16, 2008. The series of seminars meets on Thursday evening from 6:00pm to 8:00pm in the Anderson Center, Continuing Education wing, on the Campus of Winston-Salem State University. The class will meet in room # C002. Classes end on December 18.

Every year through the City's Minority and Women Business Enterprise Program a series of seminars are offered to interested City residents thinking about entering into the business world. Topics include Market Analysis, Legal Issues, Customer Service, Insurance Needs, Book Keeping and Taxes, Writing a Business Plan, and How to Apply for Funding. Qualified participants who complete the program are then eligible to apply to the City's Small Business Loan Program for funding to assist in starting a small business.

Please call, Ruben Gonzales, Development Office, at 747-7474 if you'd like to register or have questions.

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