



(From left): WFU Law Review Editor Ashley Snyder with symposium editors Brian Dempsey and Alanna Zuchelli.

Symposium focuses on courts' response to bias in the workplace

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Wake Forest University explored the complex issues raised by the Civil Rights Act of 1991 during a day-long symposium last Friday. Hosted by the school's Law Review, "Twenty Years After the 1991 Civil Rights Act: What Does the Future Hold?" drew panelists and contributors from across the nation.

Not as well known as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 — which essentially ended racial and gender discrimination at schools, in the workplace and at public facilities — the Civil Rights Act of 1991 was passed by Congress in response to a series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions that many believed made it harder for employees to file discrimination complaints. The 1991 Act made it possible for employment discrimination trials to be heard by a jury and clear the way for plaintiffs to seek emotional distress damages. The Act also — to the dismay of many — capped the amount of damages a jury can award in such cases.

Symposium presenter Michael Selmi of George Washington University Law School said that the damages cap is almost laughable.

"It's astounding that within the 20 years, those damage caps remain at \$300,000," stated Selmi, who said that raising or lifting the cap "is something that does need to be done."

Selmi and Duke's Professor Katharine T. Bartlett took part in a discussion titled, "The Role of Courts in Change."

Bartlett questioned whether courts and affirmative action legislation are effective in ridding society of the evils of racism and sexism. Many object to current affirmative action measures that appear to give preference to women and minorities, Bartlett said. She added that studies have shown that both the recipients of affirmative action and their peers often see affirmative action candidates as less qualified.

Though well meaning, "the law on its own is not a very effective instrument for controlling everyday behav-



Professor Luellen Curry took part in the discussion.

iors," she stated. Wake Forest Law Professor Luellen Curry moderated a session entitled "Changing Procedure, Changing Outcomes."

Curry, who has taught at Wake since 1989, said the issues of race, gender and the workplace warrant exploration.

"They're issues that affect everyone," she said. "This country is only going to be successful when everyone is able to exercise those rights that we hold most dear. That can only happen with a real understanding of race and how it has impacted us in the past, and how it continues to impact us today. We can't solve those problems until we understand that. So I think it's important that everyone has an education (on the subject)."

As an African American female, Curry says she has benefitted greatly from the presence of affirmative action. Though it is viewed negatively by many, especially those who believe that it allows unqualified candidates to occupy jobs simply because of their race or sex, Curry says affirmative action has enabled many qualified candidates to be productive and successful in careers that they were once shut out of.

"I don't mind someone giving me the opportunity to show that I can do this just as well as everyone else," she said. "I think that's all it is, just giving people the opportunity to show that they can do the job."

Brian Dempsey, a third-year WFU law student, co-

produced the symposium with fellow law student Alanna Zuchelli.

"I think the level of interest that we've had from local attorneys, and the support that we've received from other members of the Triad community has shown us that there is a continuing dialogue about Civil Rights in North Carolina and the U.S.," said Dempsey. "I think the idea of civil rights is woven into the community and the fabric of society. I don't think it's an issue that ever gets away from people's hearts, and the attendance at today's event speaks to that."

News Clips

Artist needs donations of items

The Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) will be presenting an exhibition by artist Shinique Smith beginning on Nov. 18. For the exhibition, titled "Every Brick," Smith is collecting donations of the following items for use in her new sculptures: throw pillows (any color, any shape), decorative blankets, stuffed animals (any size) and spare change (pennies are perfect). Donations can be dropped off at SECCA, 750 Marguerite Drive.

All donations are 100 percent tax deductible, and donors will receive a tax receipt. If more items are donated than are needed for Smith's artwork, all extra materials will be donated to Goodwill Industries of Northwest North Carolina. SECCA requests donations to be dropped off no later than Nov. 13.

For more information, call SECCA at 336-725-1904.

Churches to educate about organ donation

National Donor Sabbath will be observed from Nov. 12-14. During this time, faith communities throughout the country will recognize the need to unite and increase the awareness of the crucial need for organ and tissue transplants to help save the lives of many. Religious leaders are invited to spread the message of how important it is for their congregation to make a decision to donate and ultimately offer the opportunity to share the greatest blessing of all — The Gift of Life.

Carolina Donor Services is currently assembling free materials to distribute to pastors, churches and other faith communities for the observance of National Donor Sabbath.

Hundreds of churches

across the nation will distribute bulletin inserts and donor pins to their congregations. Pastors will have sermon outlines for various denominations to answer questions about the gift of life made possible through organ, eye and tissue donations.

Cox completes Air Force basic training

Air Force Airman Isiah D. Cox graduated from basic military training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills.

Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force.

He is the son of Hosea and Yvonne Cox of Winston Salem. Cox graduated in 2009 from Mount Tabor High School.

Grants available from state's MLK Commission

Grants of up to \$5,000 each are available from the Martin Luther King Jr. Commission to non-profit organizations wishing to create or strengthen programs that support of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., especially those which benefit youth.

The MLK Commission is staffed by the Human Relations Commission of the N.C. Department of Administration. Grants will be awarded to entities located within seven regions to ensure statewide distribution of funds.

Interested non-profits should use the application form on the Human Relations Commission web site (www.www.doa.nc.gov/hrc) to identify their organization and to define the specific program they wish to present

that will foster and promote the legacy and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Examples include, but are not limited to: youth programs to enhance race relations; voter education and registration; reducing the high school drop-out rate; literacy programs (including essay contest); anti-gang activities; leadership training; and promotion of cultural arts.

Applicants are encouraged to use the checklist to ensure that applications are complete. Applications must be postmarked no later than Nov. 30. Awards will be announced by Dec. 17. If you have questions, call the Human Relations Commission at 919-807-4420.

Virgil has new role at Symphony

The Winston-Salem Symphony has appointed Sheila M. Virgil as its first vice president of patron and institutional advancement.

In this role, Virgil will be responsible for cultivating relationships with patrons and key business/artistic partners. She will also supervise ticket sales, marketing, public relations, and development staff, and work with Symphony President and CEO Merritt Vale on strategic planning, major gift cultivation, planned giving, endowment building, and organizational development.

Virgil has worked in fundraising, executive management and consulting in the nonprofit sector for almost 20 years, including eight years with the Cleveland Orchestra. Since moving to Winston-Salem from Omaha in 2008, Virgil has managed projects for Wake Forest University and Salem College, where she is an adjunct faculty member in the Not-for-Profit Management Program. She has also served two years on the Symphony's development committee.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts from St. John's College and a Master of Nonprofit Organizations degree from the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University.

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