

Watkins

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be a part of young people," said Watkins, who is a grandfather many times over. "I extract the energy that they have. They keep me going."

Watkins, the co-founder and board chair of Veterans of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, served as the guest speaker of Neighbors for Better Neighborhood's (NBN's) "Pursuing Peace from Broken Pieces" event at Salem College last week. The Nov. 16 event, held in the Elbersen Fine Arts Center, was part of a weeklong cultural celebration NBN has dubbed, "We've Got Roots."

"I support and believe that peace will come when justice prevails," Watkins said. "...It's about how we're going to create a system of justice, fair dealing with each other, and I think once we begin to do that, we'll usher in the peace, little by little."

"We've Got Roots" was expanded from one day to a full week for the first time this year, organizers said.

"We really wanted to folks to learn to celebrate themselves and the work that they do," said Program Officer Dee Washington. "We are a society of doers, but we seldom look back on the work we've created. We thought it was important that people recognize the roots that they have created that give wings to the people behind them."

Jackson, Miss.-based Southern Echo has worked extensively on efforts to block redistricting efforts that seek to dilute the black vote, environmental justice issues, and advocated for meaningful education reform.

"He was influenced by some things that were already happening around him," NBN Executive Director Naomi Folami Randolph said of Watkins.



City Council Member Dan Besse (standing, far left) welcomes the audience. Seated (from left) are Rev. Williard Bass, Hollis Watkins and Marilyn Young.



Naomi Folami Randolph

"But he took it a little further, from the grassroots to the institutional level, as the founder of Southern Echo. For us, that was the perfect storm to make sure that the work continues."

Southern Echo also serves as a funding source for similar grassroots agencies, including Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods, which is completing a three-year grant the organization awarded to help NBN continue its 22-year tradition of building the capacity of local communities through

grassroots efforts that are designed and led by the people who live in them.

"Neighbors for Better Neighborhoods is one of our best groups that we love. That is why we continue to fund them," Watkins declared. "We make an effort to get to know the people that we fund. It's not just about funding, it's about sustaining and making those changes within the community."

Watkins and Southern Echo Community Organizer Marilyn Young addressed the modest assemblage of community organizers and citizens via a candid conversation with facilitator Rev. Willard Bass, founder of the Institute for Dismantling Racism.

Young, the president of the Tunica County (Mississippi) School District Board of Education, warned the audience not to leave youth out of the equation when planning for a brighter future.

"If we're going to make this social justice system (work), we have to make sure that we bring these young people into

the process," she remarked. "...You have to allow them to do that so that the work can be carried on."

Watkins told the community organizers to practice "aggressive patience" in their pursuit of social justice.

"We definitely need to work as hard as we can work, doing all of the things we can do, but not get discouraged when things do not come overnight. We are dealing with people who have been in bondage for 40 years," he said. "...The work has to be done, we have to be committed, and we have to instill those genes into our children and grandchildren."

In order to be effective in their chosen movement, grassroots leaders must create strong, lasting relationships based in truth and exercise "good, clear communication" at all times, Watkins concluded.

"One of the things that I think we have to do is tied directly into organizing and mobilizing. Too

often, when we look at that, we forget that the major aspect of this has to do with building a relationship and building a relationship that will last," he remarked.

"We have to begin to dialogue and engage one another in the things that they see, the things that they feel, and understand also that we are all human beings."

The We've Got Roots celebration also included a floating reception, a workshop about accessing healthy food and the Arts for Social Change spoken word event. The program culminated with an awards banquet at Goler Memorial AME Zion Church's Enrichment Center on Saturday.

For more information about NBN, visit www.nbncommunity.org or call 336-602-2519. For more information about Southern Echo, visit <http://southernecho.org>.

Coleman concedes

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Linda Coleman, the democratic nominee for Lt. Governor, conceded the race to her opponent, Dan Forest, on Monday.

Coleman had been holding off on bowing out because her campaign insisted that provisional ballots could give her the edge over Forest. But after provisional ballots were counted, she still trailed Forest by more than 6,000 votes.

"Our post-election effort has, so far, shined a bright light on the flaws of our provisional ballot counting process. Together, we helped get at least several hundred additional ballots counted," Coleman said Monday, reading from prepared remarks delivered at the North Carolina Democratic Headquarters in Raleigh. "I'm proud to live in a state that made history during this campaign by nominating the first-ever African-American woman to seek statewide executive office."



Coleman

Nutcracker

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The full performance schedule for the UNCSA production of The Nutcracker is: Saturday, Dec. 8 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, Dec. 9 at 2 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, Dec. 13 and Dec. 14 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 15 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 16 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Tickets start at \$25 and are available at www.uncsa.edu.

NCAA DIVISION II FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYOFFS • SECOND ROUND
 Saturday, November 24, 2012 • Bowman-Gray Stadium • 12:00 p.m.
 Winston-Salem, N.C.