

# Activists recall Wilmington unrest

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students and their leaders. On Feb. 6, several fires were set and a small downtown grocery store was firebombed. Snipers on the roof of Gregory Congregational Church, where Chavis and a number of students were barricaded, shot at firemen when they arrived on the scene. Two people were killed in the battle that raged into the night and the next day. On the final day, Feb. 8, National Guardsmen forced their way into the church only to find it empty.

Based on the testimony of two African-American men that were in the church that night, the group of mostly young students was sentenced to a combined 282 years in prison on charges of arson and conspiracy to fire on fireman and policeman,



## School's good for more than learning

Welcome to the college edition of Fly on the Wall, a satire of mischief, mayhem and malfesance for those of you who don't know any better. Fly ain't trying to hurt nobody's feelings, since all (but editors) are friends of Charlotte's No. 1 pest.

You know how it goes: as long as Fly is feeding rumor, innuendo and a smattering of truth, it's all good, as required by the legal eagles at Dewey Cheatham and Howe. If not, well, there's always that quail hunting trip with Vice President "Deadwood" Dick Cheney we've been dying to take.

- It's a good thing N.C. Rep. Beverly Earle isn't in Sonja Stroud's district.

Stroud, a N.C. Central University student and Gastonia native is beefing with Earle for non-response over a request to help fund an overseas trip to China and Japan. According to an e-mail Stroud sent Earle, the Legislative Black Caucus chair gave the impression that the LBC would pass the cheddar. Problem is, the help didn't come, the students are still in the States and sistah student is feeling salty.

"The way you handled this situation makes me question your leadership style, and your understanding of the purpose of the LBC as well as the LBC's effectiveness as long as you are presiding Madame Chair. This experience has really shown me the importance of my vote."

- Only if she moves to Earle's district

- While Fly's still on campus, Johnson C. Smith University's golf team has a terminal case of the shorts, and looking for a helping dollar or two.

A letter is circulating around the golf crowd that JCSU is looking for donations to help the Golden Bulls get through the 2006 season. Seems the budget has been slashed for the spring and without an infusion of loot will be forced to the clubhouse. Fly doesn't golf, but consider this a public service. Donations can be sent to the JCSU golf team in care of Christopher Parker, 800 Radio Road, Charlotte NC 28216.

- Tickets for R&B diva (and

Please see PATTI/3A

and thus became known as the Wilmington 10.

Chavis said he organized the boycott because the schools were unsafe, not because he opposed desegregation. He organized an orderly walkout by the students to Gregory Congregational Church, even though churches were not even a safe haven during that time.

With the political and social unrest,

Amnesty International stated that the Wilmington 10 were political prisoners. A CBS documentary in 1977 revealed that the charges posed against them were fabricated. Three years later, their convictions were overturned after a federal investigation found evidence of prosecutorial misconduct.

Panelists compared the climate prior to the arrest of the Wilmington 10 to the 1898 Wilmington race riots led by the Democratic Political Party to take away black political power.

The 1898 riots are recorded in history as the only coup d'etat to occur on American soil. Officially, 25 blacks died from the riots, but some estimate hundreds more. Their bodies were dumped into the Cape Fear River.

"You can't understand Wilmington without understanding the 1898 coup d'etat," said Chavis, the former president of the national NAACP. "Look deep, because there's an albatross around the state. Some of the forces are still debating whether or not to let the truth come out about 1898 and whether or not to let the truth come out about what happened in

1971."

Dr. William "Sandy" Darity, director of the Institute of African American Research at UNC Chapel Hill, and moderator said, "We are not yet in the process of healing, but we are in the process of recovery. That is the recovery of the factual records."

Darity referred to the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission report, a draft of which was issued last December by historian LaRae Umfleet. The 450-page report can be found online at [www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/1898-wrrc/](http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/1898-wrrc/).

The road to recovery has


been difficult for Willie Earl Vareen, a Wilmington 10 member.

"I've finally got myself together," he said. "I've come to find out there is a real world out here. There is love out here."


Larry Reni Thomas, a Chapel Hill-based scholar, decided to become an activist after reading about the 1898 events.

"In researching this incident, I kept running into 1898. The only thing I've ever tried to be is a gentleman and a scholar, and this incident has turned me into an activist," he said.

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