



Greensboro to host reconciliation summit

By Ed Whitfield

CAROLINA PEACEMAKER

GREENSBORO — Representatives of truth commissions around the world are here to discuss the prospects for additional panels in the U.S.

Representatives from Wilmington, Rosewood, Fla., Tulsa, Okla.; Moore's Ford, Ga.; Abbeyville, S.C., and Jackson, Mississippi have been invited to attend the

conference, which runs through Sunday. These U.S. cities and towns are just a few places where past racial violence has been documented. Participants will discuss the possible formulation and

utility of truth commissions in their local communities.

This gathering is co-sponsored by the International Center for Transitional Justice which has offices in the United States, South Africa, Belgium, and Switzerland and the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro. The event will culminate in a public celebration of the work of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission sponsored by the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project. The GTRC is the first initiative in the United States to use the truth and reconciliation process as a tool for conflict resolution. The ICTJ served as consultants to the work of the GTRC and the GTRC.

International participants will be on hand such as Bongani Fica with the South African Truth and

Reconciliation Commission and Eduardo Gonzales with the Peruvian Truth Commission to discuss their own experiences with the truth and reconciliation process. Representatives who have been involved with truth and reconciliation commissions in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka will share the differences as well as the broad similarities of this work around the world. A written and video report on this part of the gathering will be produced and made available at a later date.

A meeting by invitation only will be held at Bennett College and a public gathering will be at North Carolina A&T State University on Saturday at 9 a.m. with a panel discussion facilitated by Vincent Harding, a former consultant and speechwriter for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the senior consultant

for the PBS TV special "Eyes on the Prize" series.

The panel will focus on what has been learned from the international truth and reconciliation experience, what has been learned in the Greensboro application of that experience and what that might mean in other communities around the country.

Following the panel discussion will be public thanks to the commission and words of encouragement from around the world. Plans for a community-wide public discussion designed to move this process into the next phase will take place. The event is free and starts at 9 a.m. at the new Alumni Foundation Event Center on the A&T campus.

For more information email info@gtrcp.org or call the Beloved Community Center at (336) 230-0001.

WORTH THE CLIMB

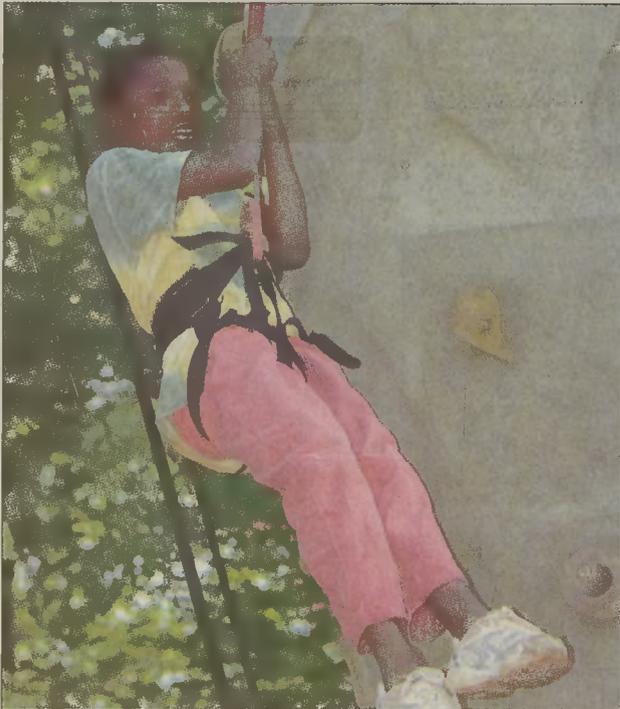


PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

Destiny Vaughn tries her hand at climbing an artificial rock wall at Survivor Day Camp last week at Copperhead Island in southwest Charlotte. The camp is aimed at gang prevention for children age 11-18 and sponsored by a coalition that includes Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police, Steele Creek Youth Network and Mecklenburg Park and Recreation.

Panel tackles relationships

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African American community," said Roberts, who attended the forum. "There are rumblings and hearing those comments, I think there's a need to listen to those concerns."

The committee will bring together the National Conference of Community and Justice and Community Building Initiative to discuss recent trends and concerns of immigrants and natives.

"I'm glad she's doing it," said Dianne English, CBI's executive director. "There's probably on of the realities is immigration gives us a chance to look at things related to race and communities. There are certainly hard edges that immigration as a container is part of the issue."

The meeting will also include representatives from the Latin American Coalition responding to a Latino needs assessment compiled by UNC Charlotte and panel its

implication for Mecklenburg. The panel will also discuss the impact of Confederate History Week, which has touched off controversy the past two years when commissioners approved an official celebration. The Democratic majority split on support for the May commemoration, with African Americans Norman Mitchell and Valerie Woodard voting against it. A third black commissioner, Wilhelmina Rumbert, supported it, as did Roberts, a Democrat.

The relationship between blacks and Hispanics has been tenuous as immigration of Latinos has picked up steam locally. Formerly all-black neighborhoods have become browner as immigrants have moved in, causing some strains along economic and ethnic lines. Everyone — native-born and immigrant alike — faces adjustments, Robert said. "The reality is the Latino

population has grown so fast we haven't had a chance to catch up," she said. "There are misunderstandings on all sides right now."

English said CBI research has found growing concern as immigration reform has become more of a national issue. Regardless of class or ethnicity, opinions vary about what political and community leaders can do.

"You kind of wonder," she said. "It's a quarter with a gazillion sides. Are we scratching something because it itches or is it itching because we're scratching? But something's definitely there."

Said Roberts: "It's not just African American versus Latino; it's Latino versus white and Latino versus Asian, too. I think we need to educate everybody. We don't want to look at educating minorities (exclusively) when we need to educate whites, too."

Were 'terrorists' fall guys?

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ly a punishable offense. While the Justice Department and the U.S. Attorney General's office touted last week's FBI bust of the Miami Seven as a significant victory in the war on terror, critics of the government's methods have suggested the raid was part of a "pre-emptive" criminal justice policy that presumes guilt before the fact.

These same critics have suggested that the Miami Seven, or the Seas of David, as they called themselves, were nothing more than a bunch of loudmouth boozers who went around spouting anti-American rhetoric, and whose plan to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago was hatched and encouraged by an FBI informant posing as an al-Qaida operative.

So now the question becomes, were these men entrapped?

Is dissent a tangible criminal offense?

And if so, where is the hue and cry from the various human and civil rights groups, like the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union?

"There are groups like the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations that recruit over the Internet and talk loudly about taking certain actions," said former FBI counter-terrorist special agent Tyrone Powers.

"Shouldn't they be charged under the same statutes as the Miami Seven?"

John White, director of communications for the national office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the organization has contacted its office in Miami to get a feel for the situation there. But so far, White said, there has been no hue and cry from anyone regarding the case.

"It's premature," said White, "for us to have a take on this."

The ACLU, saying they weren't familiar enough yet with the case to comment, suggested the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers might be able to help.

"I read the (federal) indictment this morning," said Jack King, an attorney with the Washington, D.C.-based lawyers' group. "It was so thin, it was unbelievable."

King likens the Miami Seven to the 1968 Panther 21 case in which New York Black Panther Party members were indicted on charges of plotting to blow up the New York Botanical Gardens and several department stores.

King called the Panther case a classic example of police infiltration and frame-up linked to COINTELPRO, the government's '60s-era program designed to disrupt domestic dissent.

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Panelists

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- Bridget Ann Hampton, President, JHR & Associates, LLC, Member of the NC Lottery Commission
- Ramona Moore Big Eagle, Dare to Soar Enterprises, Storyteller and Speaker
- Elisa Rodriguez, Allstate Insurance, Latin American Chamber of Commerce
- Patricia Shafer, President, Compel Consulting International

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