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Student gets hands-on experience of Civil Rights Movement

Kierra Payne
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

My thought upon arriving at Jena, Louisiana, was how deserted and rural the town is. The landscape is quite different from North Carolina. The bus trip to the "Jena 6" rally felt like it took forever, and the anticipation was driving me nuts. I just wanted to get there.

The anticipation became even greater the next morning, Sept. 20 when we headed to Jena from our hotel in Alexandria. I did not know what to expect from the town or the people. I did not know how many people would be there. I just knew that I could not wait to be a part of history; something that would be in books years down the road and that I could tell my children and grandchildren about. I had always wondered what the Civil Rights Movement was like, and I wanted something reminiscent of that experience.

The closer we got to the town, the more my eyes widened. The town was loaded with charter buses and motorcycles, and there were African-Americans everywhere. All wearing some sort of "support Jena" T-shirt.

Because of the number of people rallying for the cause, our bus had to park a couple of miles away from

the town. When I stepped off the bus, I was in awe. I was so amazed, because I had never seen anything like that before. The kindred spirit I felt from everyone was indescribable.

While walking up to the town, we saw Mychal Bell's brother and cousins, and they expressed their gratitude for our being there.

We rallied with Jesse Jackson and the NAACP, and there were so many people marching. An American Red Cross vehicle was set up on the side of the road with bins full of Gatorade, chips, cookies, granola bars and just about everything else. That was a nice gesture; it made me feel like we were accepted there.

Everyone was expressing their support in different ways. There were African dancers in front of the courthouse. One negative image I remember was a man standing atop an RV, telling everyone to do the Electric Slide and "party for a cause." I did not think a party was appropriate at that day and time.

At one point, there were so many people just standing around, I began to interview people on their experiences from that day. A man from the "New" Black Panther Party was there. When asked if he felt like anything was being accomplished on that day, he responded, "If everyone

came to be around a bunch of black people, then yes; but what will be different when we've dissembled?"

It was amazing that someone would say something negative about a positive event, but the truth is, I felt that way, too. We came to rally, but at the same time, we could have done more. I felt incomplete at one point in the day, but by the time our group left, I felt some sort of minute satisfaction.

I also remember that no native of Jena wanted to be put on camera; it was as if they were so afraid to speak out, for fear of persecution. They did not want trouble.

Even though it was not given as much media coverage as O.J. Simpson's raid on someone's hotel room, the experience was one that will forever be remembered.



Photos by Matthew Hairston

WSSU students traveled to Jena, Louisiana, to support the "Jena 6".



Field house renovation in final phase

Larry Williams
ARGUS STAFF

Take one look around the campus of Winston-Salem State University, and it's obvious that the school is undergoing a facelift. The football program is set to join the expansion with the completion of the new field house at Bowman Gray Stadium.

The building carries a price tag of \$5.1 million and is on schedule to open Thursday, Nov. 1. The new field house is a joint venture between the city of Winston-Salem (which

owns Bowman Gray Stadium) and WSSU. The university is contributing about \$3 million toward the cost of the new field house.

"All of the sports administrative offices as well as the athletic director and sports medicine offices will be moving to the new facility," said Chris Zona, WSSU's sports information director.

With such a hefty price tag, the city and university are banking on the field house being a first-class facility. The two-story building will have 20,000 square feet of space. It will have locker rooms and training rooms for the home and visiting teams, a referees' locker room, and a weight room. It will also have a large banquet room, along with a kitchen and conference rooms. A new video score-

board, measuring 18 by 23 feet, will be built into the field house.

WSSU head football coach Kermit Blount spoke about the excitement surrounding the opening of the field house on Nov. 1.

"This is a big step forward for the program," he said. "It will provide a huge step up in our recruiting efforts. We need the facility as we move forward into division 1 football."

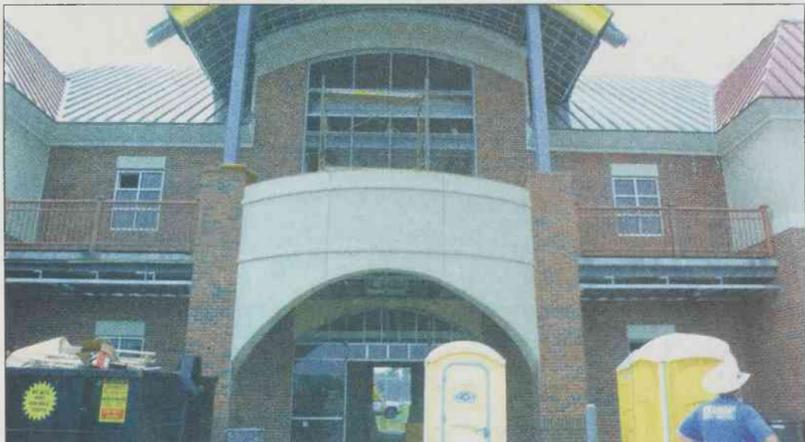
Non student-athletes will not be allowed inside the field house unless they're attending a conference, workshop, forum or special event such as a ball.

As for the football players themselves, Blount says they are excited as well.

"The kids are looking forward to the new field house."

Photo by Lee Adams

The Rams new field house is expected for completion before Homecoming on Nov. 3.



Grammy-winning vocalist Dianne Reeves to perform at WSSU Tuesday, Oct. 16

Stephanie Douthit
ARGUS STAFF

Smooth sounds from Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean — with a hint of gospel and R&B — characterize the world-renowned jazz vocalist, Dianne Reeves.

Known for being the only artist to win Grammys for Best Jazz Vocal Performance for three consecutive recordings, Reeves has been compared to the likes of Carmen McRae and Billie Holiday.

Winston-Salem State University's Lyceum Cultural Events and the Division of Student Affairs will present Reeves on Tuesday, Oct. 16, 7:30 p.m. in the Kenneth R. Williams Auditorium.

Reeves' musicianship offers powerful storytelling, and when her autobiographical hit "Better Days" debuted, many believed it conveyed the message of hope that sparked all of her work. Reeves is currently the Creative Chair of Jazz for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and she maintains an active touring schedule.

Tickets are available at the Winston-Salem State University Ticket Office or by calling (336) 750-3220. Ticket costs are \$20 - Day-of-show; \$18 - general advanced tickets; \$7 - WSSU students with valid I.D.



Photo courtesy of Blue Note Records

Reeves' performance is being sponsored by WSSU's Lyceum Cultural Events and the Division of Student Affairs.