

The Donald Sterling Fiasco: The Real Story

By Carl Smalls

[continued from page 1]

sports teams owned by those on Forbes' Richest 400 Americans who have an estimated average net worth of \$3.1 billion). Also, very interesting is that these two sports are predominantly played by young, urban African American males who are seen by the owners primarily as property.

One does not have to think long before you can reflect back on how Dan Gilbert (owner of the Cleveland Cavaliers, and Founder of Quicken Loans with an estimated net worth of \$3.9 billion) ridiculed LeBron James for leaving the Cavaliers for the Miami Heat. It appears as though Gilbert felt LeBron had escaped.

The NBA players' action of demanding respect from the league after Sterling's debarring comments is commendable. However, it is bigger than that; it speaks more to structural racism in professional sports, and society in general. It is not about a private conversation between two individuals, but about institutionalized bigotry woven into the everyday lives of African Americans.

Let's take it further and look into the front offices of the NBA teams, the NFL teams, and the Major League Baseball teams and see how many blacks are functioning at the executive levels in these organizations. Similarly, how about the sports agents at law firms, representatives of sports management firms and finance firms hired by your black athletes. Perhaps our efforts can be better spent focusing on the culture that created and sustained Sterling versus his bigotry.

In light of the NFL, the Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League, the NBA appears to have embraced diversity more. However, they still have much more work to do when only 3.33% of ownership at the majority level is African American. Furthermore, when you compare the percentage of black players in the league to the number of black executives in the front office of your sport teams, law firms, sports management firms and financial firms it is dismal at best.

You only have to drive down 52 South and then onto 85 South and stop in Salisbury early next month and attend the 55th Annual National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Annual Awards Banquet and observe how many black faces are not among the sportscasters and sportswriters

It goes without saying that Sterling's actions were crude and vulgar, but is he an outlier or simply part of a cultural that makes similar messages by cultivating an environment that excludes African Americans?

This reminds me of a biblical parable that speaks to a woman who was caught in the act of adultery, and is brought by

her accuser to Jesus to be judged and stoned. He replied to her accuser by saying, "whoever among you is guiltless may be the first to throw a stone at her." It is interesting to observe those that are self-condemned who judge others, and yet do the same thing.

Let me suggest that the concerned parties not close the book because light has been shown on the actions of a billionaire bigot, but instead continue to the next chapter of how to shine light on the those whose actions are perhaps more subtle, but much more impactful and longstanding.

Let me suggest dialogue take place on how the leagues can be more proactive about pursuing majority ownership among African Americans, and hiring blacks in the front office.

Let me also suggest that it not only stop there, black players must be proactive about demanding that the firms that represent them hire African American at the executive levels.

Until there is real dialogue and a meaningful commitment to address racism from all parties, the environment of exclusion will continue.

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Students Promote Slave Dwelling Restoration

By Brittany Everett



Brittany Everett

Slave cabins are becoming more and more rare in the United States as time progresses. Joseph McGill is working hard to ensure that each cabin is preserved, and that their stories are not forgotten. McGill is the founder of the Slave Dwelling Project which works to develop resources to preserve African-American slave dwellings across the United States. On Friday, May 9, McGill along with local historians from Rockingham County gathered at

McMichael High School to host a History Fair that was a joint partnership between the McMichael History Club, the Madison Historic Districts and Properties Commission, and the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC). Later that evening, he along with three others stayed the night in a slave cabin at McCollum Farm in Madison. To close the overall program, McGill and others put on program at MARC the following morning.

Five stations were offered to more than 300 students who attended the fair. The first station was monitored by the Madison Colored School Restoration group featuring Lee Mills, Arthur Miller and Jeff Bullins. Pictures, background information and videos were distributed in the hopes of bringing awareness to the current renovation project of the now abandoned historic school. The second station was represented by the Museum and Archives of Rockingham County (MARC). The director Kim Proctor attended and brought some early to mid-nineteenth century artifacts and exhibits. Rockingham County Historian Bob Carter was also at this station sharing information pre-civil war times. Joseph McGill was present at the 3rd station with his Slave Dwelling project. During this station, he explained his purpose and mission to students. The 4th station hosted Bob Rodenbough, author of "Settle: A Family Journey Through Slavery" and he talked about the Middle Passage, his Sauratown Project and the slave trade in Rockingham County. The 5th station and final station featured Kitty Williams, Fletcher Dalton, and Beulah Hayes discussing early 20th century African-American history in Madison, North Carolina.

John Dillard was one of the people who attended the History Fair. Dillard worked at the Madison Colored school in his 20's and soon became very important in the school community. Due his service, Dillard Elementary school was named after him. "I learned that most black homes and communities that were once in our town are now parking lots to grocery stores and fast food restaurants," Dillard was quoted as saying before his death. The Madison Colored School also had 6 classrooms instead of some of the smaller African-American Rosenwald Schools that were prevalent throughout the South during the time of segregation. Rockingham County had ten Rosenwald Schools, but all have now been torn down except for the one in Madison.

County Historian Bob Carter also presented and exclaimed, "It's amazing that buildings that occupied slaves and even the white people are still standing." Carter also spoke about the history of the McCollum Farm at the program after school.

McGill has stayed in 54 different slave dwellings in over 12 different states including Pennsylvania and Connecticut in the North Carolina. Slave cabins are scattered randomly all throughout the United States. Not only are they near plantations, but they're also near big houses in the city limits too. During the time period, slaves lived in the cabins outside of their

owners home. The jobs they occupied included farming, cleaning and etc. The slaves had a curfew while they were living in the slave cabins. If they weren't home by a certain time, then they could face punishment.

"I woke up to the sounds of dogs barking at 3 am, it made me think of slaves trying to escape," McGill said referring to one of his overnight stays in a slave cabin. McGill along with the McCollum family, a descendant of Thomas Jefferson, and other community members gathered at the slave cabin after school to extend the historical experience. The event lasted until 10pm and McGill and other members spent the night in the cabin then headed to MARC museum the following day.

At the slave cabin McGill, historians and family members gave tours of the main house, the cabin, and the other out-buildings on the property. Dinner was served to everyone that attended. The menu included turtle stew, fat back, pinto beans, field peas, collard greens, corn mush and much more. After dinner everyone gathered around the cabin and the McCollum family, descendants of the family, Jefferson's fourth great granddaughter as well as Joseph McGill shared their experiences around the cabin. After strong winds arose, the gathering was moved inside the cabin.

McGill shared his experiences from many different stays he has had over the past few years which started in 1999. Most of the time, he was accompanied by various other people, but sometimes he stayed in the dwellings all alone. He has seen everything from dried up snakeskin, cats, and alligators. His friend also encountered a tarantula during his stay at a cabin.

Civics teacher Jon Williams alongside MARC museum director Kim Proctor, and Kitty Williams of the Madison Historic Districts and Properties Commission helped sponsor and plan the entire program. The History Club also had cupcake and doughnut sales to raise money for the event. It was a huge success that couldn't have happened without the participation of everyone involved. The McCollum family were very supportive of the cause and became closer by investigating the history of the families that lived on the property from years ago. Descendants of the former enslaved McCollums and the previous owners were in attendance. McGill ended his information session at the cabin by encouraging everyone there to look for more slave dwellings and saying that he hoped to return back. The cabin is privately owned and the owners graciously gave permission for the event to occur. Joseph McGill closed the program by saying, "Now that I have the attention of the public by sleeping in extant slave dwellings, it is time to wake up and deliver the message that the people who lived in these structures were not a footnote in American history."

