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Occupy, civil rights groups join at NC event

By Martha Waggoner

RALEIGH (AP) - Members of a traveling Occupy group met Dec. 29 with civil rights leaders in Greensboro and announced marches reminiscent of the one in Selma in the 1960s in an unusual confluence of interests of blacks and the mostly white anti-Wall Street movement.

Walkupy protesters marched from a campus statue on North Carolina A&T State University to the International Civil Rights Museum, where the co-founders met them for a news conference. The Walkupy protesters, who are walking from the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial in Washington, D.C., to his gravesite in Atlanta, called on citizens to join them March 23 and march to statehouses across the country.

They called on people to find out whether their legislators work for the voters or for corporations.

The February One statue where the march began Dec. 29 honors the four young A&T students who led the lunch-counter sit-in at Woolworth's that began Feb. 1, 1960, and led to the desegregation of that shop and to other non-violent protests across the South. The Greensboro march seems like a calculated strategy to attract blacks to the Occupy movement, said museum co-founder Melvin "Skip" Alston.

"I'm not sure where the disconnect might have started from the beginning, but better late than never," Alston said. "Their cause is addressing the things that African-Americans are concerned with - more than just African-Americans, 99 percent of Americans as a whole."

Some blacks have supported the Occupy movement. The Rev. Jesse Jackson addressed the group in Atlanta, while singer Kanye West visited protesters in New York's Zucotti Park. Hip hop artists also have shown up at Occupy Oakland protests in California.

But minorities haven't embraced the movement as much as some whites, even though the unemployment among blacks was 15.5 percent in November, more than twice that of whites - 7.6 percent. And the Pew Research Center found that from 2005 to 2009, inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by 66 percent among Hispanic households and 53 percent among black households, compared with just 16 percent among white households.

Museum co-founder Earl Jones said at the news conference that blacks do support the goals of the Occupy protesters.

"Make no doubt that the African-American community throughout this nation supports the principles and goals of this movement, which are centered around economic disparity," Jones said.

The Occupy protests have touched a populist nerve and will resonate in the black community, he said earlier. "The issue of the 20th century was race," Jones said. "The issue of the 21st century is going to be class. And you're beginning to see that."

Blacks and the Occupy protesters share common goals, Alston said.

"You can ask that of a lot of people: Where were they?" he said. "They're here now and we should appreciate that and build on it. We don't have the time and luxury to point fingers now at people trying to help our causes."

The protesters are calling for the marches "to keep the reality of economic inequality front and center in the national dialogue during election year 2012," said Walkupy member Paul Sylvester. "We seek to evict corporate lobbyists and corporate-funded elected officials who now occupy the people's statehouses."

Nathan Stueve, who's marching with Walkupy, said he believes there's some validity to criticism about the lack of minority support for the Occupy movement. The march into Greensboro isn't focused on civil rights but on a national call for action for all Americans, he said.

(Continued On Page 4)

Charter schools allowed into desegregation lawsuit

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - A federal judge has decided to allow charter schools in Pulaski County to intervene in the Little Rock school desegregation lawsuit.

The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reports that the ruling Dec. 29 by U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall allows the schools to fight the Little Rock School District's efforts to limit enrollment at charter schools.

Marshall, however, denied the charter schools' request to challenge the constitutionality of a 1989 financial settlement between the state and the Pulaski County school districts, writing that it "comes too late in the case."

"They may intervene to oppose that part of the LRSD/Joshua motion dealing with them," Marshall wrote. "Their participation, however, is limited to opposing that motion."

The Joshua Intervenors, who joined the Little Rock district in the dispute, are black students in the three Pulaski County districts.

The Little Rock district argues that charter schools draw students who would otherwise attend public schools and take part in programs that are intended to promote racial desegregation.

The district also argued that more affluent, higher achieving students move to charter schools, leaving the districts with greater concentrations of high-need students and fewer resources to serve them.

Chris Heller, an attorney for the Little Rock district, told the newspaper that Marshall's decision "seems fair."

"The charter schools will not be allowed to raise new issues but only argue against a remedy that could change the way they operate," he said.

In September, a team of attorneys headed by former Rep. Mike Wilson of Jacksonville and Jess Askew III of Little Rock filed the motion to intervene on behalf of the charter schools.

"Today's decision is very good news for the charter schools," Askew said in an e-mail to the newspaper. "They will be permitted to defend themselves and their contracts. That is what the charter schools sought."

Marshall concluded in his order that the charter schools have standing to participate in the case because the Little Rock district and Joshua Intervenors seek to limit their enrollment and the charter group's request was timely.



Eddie Davis speaks at Hayti Heritage Center on the 60th anniversary of the Durham Equalization Lawsuit, the Blue v. Durham decision, See story and some participants on page 4.

Muslim bakery attorney set to lose law license

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) - The attorney for former Your Black Muslim Bakery head Yusuf Bey IV is expected to be suspended from practicing law after acknowledging that she smuggled documents for Bey.

Under a deal with the State Bar Court, 65-year-old Lorna Patton Brown would have to serve at least six months of a two-year suspension. The settlement was reported on Dec. 29 by the Chauncey Bailey Project, a group of journalists who investigated reporter Chauncey Bailey's death.

Bey was convicted in June of murdering Bailey.

According to the bar court, Brown thought the sealed envelope she was smuggling out of jail for Bey during his trial contained an intimate card for his wife. But it actually was a letter from Bey instructing his wife to destroy evidence.

The deal between Brown and the bar court still requires approval from the California Supreme Court.

Osama bin Laden's Death Voted Top Story of 2011

Special to the NNPA from the St. Louis American

The killing of Osama bin Laden during a raid by Navy SEALs on his hideout in Pakistan was the top news story of 2011, followed by Japan's earthquake/tsunami/melt-down disaster, according to The Associated Press' annual poll of U.S. editors and news directors.

The death of bin Laden, the al-Qaida leader who masterminded the Sept. 11 terror attacks, received 128 first-place votes out of 247 ballots cast for the top 10 stories. The Japan disaster was next, with 60 first-place votes. Placing third were the Arab Spring uprisings that rocked North Africa and the Middle East, while the European Union's financial turmoil was No. 4.

The international flavor of these top stories contrasted with last year's voting - when the Gulf of Mexico oil spill was the top story, President Barack Obama's health care overhaul was No. 2, and the U.S. midterm elections were No. 3.

Information from The Associated Press contributed to this report.

A Tribute to Attorney Romallus O. Murphy: Troubling the Waters Of Jurisprudence in Order to Transform the Nation

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president
North Carolina State Conference of NAACP Branches

King Ahab ruled over a political system wrought with injustice. When he met the prophet Elijah, King Ahab asked him: "Are you he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah's prophetic, moral vision of justice - rooted in the laws of God - collided with the arrogance and oppressive rule of Ahab. It could be said that Attorney Romallus O. Murphy used the law and moral authority to "troubleth" North Carolina and the United States.

Romallus O. Murphy "troubled the waters of jurisprudence." He used the law to trouble those who would preside over systems of racist and legal injustice. Attorney Murphy stands in the long tradition of Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall and so many more NAACP legal practitioners, who refused to be satisfied in the face of social wrongs. He troubled the powerful. He troubled the protectors of racism by summoning them into the courthouse, and forcing their policies and actions to be examined under the microscope of the Constitution, which promises "equal protection under the law." He greatly troubled the powerful in this state and nation.

Surely they often said, "Who is this Romallus?", son of the South, graduate of Howard University, the powerful rules of North Carolina ask. Who is this challenger of the status quo at UNC Law School, always underfunded and outnumbered, who challenged our defense of the past, who dared to trouble us and challenge our power? Never turning back, Attorney Murphy moved steadily forward, often alone in hostile courtrooms. His necessary troubling helped transform the nation and continues to inspire us never to be satisfied with inequality.

Thank God for those who would trouble the nation for the cause of righteousness. Thank God for the meaningful accomplishments of Romallus Murphy that have improved the lives of many people across the State of North Carolina and across this Nation.

Romallus Murphy served as Chair of the Legal Redress Committee of the North Carolina Conference of the NAACP beginning in the 1960s. Over the last half-century he and the many colleagues he inspired and recruited to the cause, gave invaluable counsel to clients and young lawyers alike who were, and still are, engaged in dismantling the old walls that have divided people of North Carolina along artificial lines of color and creed.

Romallus Murphy was a native of Houston, Texas. He attended college at Howard University in Washington, DC, graduating in 1951. He started at Law School at Howard University, but finished his legal education at the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1956 where he was the lone student of color.

Attorney Murphy began his legal career in Wilson, North Carolina, the only African-American attorney in this eastern North Carolina community. Since 1956, Attorney Murphy was a "steady and ready" legal warrior and advocate for civil rights. He was never afraid to engage forces of repression and regression in the struggle to elevate the lives of African-Americans. From the beginning of his legal practice, he fought mightily to end segregation and was a substantial force in the enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

In 1987, Attorney Murphy was legal counsel to the North Carolina State Conference of Branches for the NAACP, and helped lead the legal team that forced the State of North Carolina to create electoral opportunities for black lawyers to become Superior Court Judges. His lawsuit was the catalyst that forced the General Assembly to create majority black judicial districts. As a result of his efforts, at least eight African-American judges were elected to the Superior Court bench.

Attorney Murphy never sought the limelight. Instead, he chose to be a servant of the people. Without receiving the public acclaim which many civil rights leaders attained, Attorney Murphy worked in the trenches with those same leaders, achieving significant legal and political battles, and providing legal advice and leadership to the North Carolina NAACP for 45 years.

Without a doubt he will be missed and remembered as that quiet, but passionate, effective role model for the lawyers who follow his big footsteps. He was greatly admired and respected by everyone who knew him. His life's work is honored each year by the North Carolina NAACP's Annual Romallus O. Murphy Civil Rights Continuing Legal Education Program.

Romallus O. Murphy did trouble the Nation and the State for the right reasons and we are all the better for it, a little closer to the goals of liberty and justice for all. His living was not in vain. He fought the good fight and now, victory is his.

Signed,
Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II, president and National Board
Ms. Carolyn Q. Coleman, 1st vice president and National Board
Mrs. Amina J. Turner, executive director
Atty. Irv Joyner and Atty. Al McSurely co-chairs of the Legal Redress Committee
Atty. Jennifer Marsh, Legal Redress coordinator