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# Trial begins on lawsuit challenging Virginia voter ID law

#### By Larry O'Dell

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - A 69-year-old black woman who grew up in a small, segregated city wept on the witness stand Feb. 22 as she testified about the trouble she had voting in 2014 because she could not comply with Virginia's voter identification law

Josephine Okiakpe said she plucked several forms of ID from her purse - birth certificate, Social Security card, voter registration card, even a bank statement - and handed them over

to workers at her Woodbridge polling place. The only things she had with her picture on them were her North Carolina driver's license and an expired Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles

"They wouldn't take any of that," said Okiakpe, who earlier had described attending an allblack public school in Clinton, North Carolina, that got handme-down books when the white schools got new ones.

As she haggled with the poll workers, she said some other

ID card.

voters looked at her and snickered.

"I felt very frustrated, very upset," she said, trying to fight back tears.

Okiakpe was the first witness in the Virginia Democratic Party's lawsuit challenging the state's 2013 law requiring voters to show a valid photo ID at the polls. The trial before U.S. District Judge Henry Hudson is expected to last at least a week. The outcome will not affect the state's March 1 presidential primaries.

The plaintiffs claim the photo ID law is unconstitutional because it suppresses voting by blacks, Latinos and young people - voters who tend to support Democrats. Their attorney, Bruce Spiva, said in his opening statement that Republicans deliberately passed a discriminatory law because they saw the state's demographics shifting to their detriment after President Barack Obama carried Virginia in back-to-back elections.

Mark F. Hearne II, an attorney for the Virginia election officials named as defendants, argued that the law is a "racially neutral" attempt to prevent voter fraud and inspire public confidence in elections.

Hearne said that some voters might be inconvenienced by the photo ID requirement, but people are not being disenfranchised. He said the mandate has broad public support, and Virginia has

many of the more than 30 states that have enacted such measures. Lawsuits challenging photo ID laws are pending in several other states. A six-day trial on North Carolina's law wrapped up Feb. 1, and the judge is expected to rule in a few weeks. Okiapke testified that she

was given a provisional ballot that was counted only after she obtained a new photo ID at the voter registrar's office in Manassas and produced it a few days after the election.

Another witness, Meghan Cotten of Arlington, said she was not even offered a provisional ballot after being told that her Alabama driver's license was not a valid form of ID under the Virginia law. Cotten, a 32-yearold public relations representative, said people turned and stared after a poll worker loudly expressed surprise that she did not have a passport.

"It was pretty humiliating, to be honest," Cotten said. "It was very hard to be singled out." She left without voting.

Spiva said there are tens of thousands of other registered voters who do not have current Virginia driver's licenses, work ID badges or other forms of photo identification accepted at Virginia polling places. Virginians can obtain free photo IDs at voter registrar offices, just as Okiapke did, but Spiva said the state has done little to spread the



JAMES A. ANDERSON

## **Proposals Perpetuate Unequal Treatment Of Select' UNC Schools**

#### **James A. Anderson Chancellor & Professor of Psychology Fayetteville State University**

Recent articles published in several newspapers and online have attempted to represent the position of those who publically call for radical changes in the UNC system. Specifically, one of these proposals involves potential changes to mandate that the least qualified of students accepted to UNC schools be required to attend community colleges and earn an associate's degree before they are allowed to attend a UNC school. Other proposals include such options as: a) Raise the admissions criteria at all UNC institutions from the current Grade Point Average of 2.5 to 2.7; b) Specify that a percentage of students already committed to UNC schools be directed to NC Community Colleges; c) Lower the in-state tuition to \$500 and out-of-state tuition to \$2,500 of "selected" campuses, a plan that would potentially alter the size and diversity of certain "select" campuses; and d) Merge and re-name certain "select" campuses. Generally, these potential options are proffered as ways to increase graduation rates, to reduce student debt, to increase college readiness, and to reduce the number of UNC campuses. However, the potential also exists to have a disparate impact on certain campuses. At the outset I unequivocally state that it is the responsibility of the General Assembly and the Board of Governors to monitor persistence and graduation rates, student debt, and the efficiency and effectiveness of all 17 UNC institutions. And, when possible changes are discussed, especially radical changes, that they involve a review of the best research, best practices, best models, best data/metrics, and predictive analytics that are available. Anything less embodies conjecture, subjective projection, and the dangerous possibility that outcomes will be produced that are harmful to our most precious commodity - students enrolled in UNC institutions who will drive the economy of this state one day and emerge as its future leaders. The "select" institutions who are the primary targets of many of the proposals are three of the five Historically Black Universities and UNC Pembroke whose original mission involved the admission of American Indian students. But the question remains: Why these institutions? Fayetteville State University is one of the most diverse campuses in the system so why is a diversity criteria being applied to us? We are racially diverse and we serve high percentages of adult students, commuters, the military, and online students. One would think that a discussion this critical about potential radical changes to certain UNC institutions would involve their respective Chancellors and Board of Trustee chairs. This is more striking since our institutions have a history of being underfunded and treated in a less than respectful manner. I have not been contacted by anyone who previously have suggested changes. Like most people I read about it in the media or have picked up information on the grapevine. Since the size, make-up, and economy of any UNC institution are fundamental to their very existence, I find it profoundly unprofessional that others, who know little about FSU and the other "select" institutions are having public discussions about our future. The only person who has contacted me and some of the other Chancellors is Mr. Craig Horn, the Chair of the House Standing Committee of Appropriations for Education. I am very grateful for his courtesy and for extending us his professional respect. He is seeking to encourage thoughtful and collaborative discussions about the proposals.



Dr. Angela Davis speaks at NCCU.

### Angela Davis Addresses NCCU Audience

Political activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis appeared at North Carolina Central University on Feb. 10, where she spoke about America's longstanding struggle to ensure civil rights for all.

Davis was invited to campus as part of the university's Rock the Mic speaker series sponsored by the Department of Student Engagement and Leadership in the Division of Student Affairs and spoke to an audience of students, faculty, staff and community members.

Davis, a well-known civil rights activist who later became an advocate for prison inmates and a college professor, said her dream is to one day live in a society that "no longer thrives on racism" and no longer disproportionately incarcerates people of color.

"What we are now experiencing is not new, even though people act like it just started to happen," she said in reference to organizations such as Black Lives Matter and Dream Defenders that have been formed in recent years. "We are seeing a renewed dedication to what has been a long, black radical tradition.'

Citing the efforts of many civil rights leaders, and noting the 50th anniversary of the Black Panthers Party, Davis pointed out that more than 2 million people remain behind bars in the U.S., and one out of every 35 adults is subject to some type of court or police order.

She tied the struggle against excessive incarceration to the abolitionist movement in the slavery era, saying "the essence of black history is the struggle for freedom."

Black incarceration rates grew swiftly following the Civil War, she said. Today, the prison industry has largely become privatized and generates billions of dollars annually, making it difficult to reform or dismantle, Davis added.

Davis said she recently returned from a trip to Europe, where she met with members of the minority Basque community, recognizing that the struggle for human rights is an international issue.

Davis herself was incarcerated for 16 months in the early 1970s on accusations of assisting a deadly prison break. She was released after being found not guilty of charges.

Now a distinguished professor emerita at the University of California, Santa Cruz, Davis said she was honored to be at NCCU because it is the oldest liberal arts college founded for African-Americans. She said both her parents attended historically black colleges;

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a more lenient photo ID law than

### As Clinton takes delegate lead, Sanders vows to fight on

word.

By Lisa Lerer and Stephen Ohlemacher

WASHINGTON (AP) - With Hillary Clinton taking the lead in the competition for Democratic delegates, rival Bernie Sanders is vowing to fight on, saying on Feb. 22 that he has no plans of leaving the race anytime soon.

Sanders downplayed Clinton's weekend victory in Nevada, pointing out that the win only resulted in her picking up four additional delegates, out of the 2,383 needed to win the nomination. He says his campaign has plenty of time to make up lost ground.

"This is about a slog, state by state by state," he said. "Even if we do well, Secretary Clinton will get a lot of delegates and we'll just have to keep moving on.'

Clinton pulled ahead of Sanders late Feb. 22, when she eked out the final delegate from Saturday's Nevada caucuses, giving her a total of 52 caucus and primary delegates. Sanders has 51

"HRC now takes (national) delegate lead," tweeted Clinton spokesman Brian Fallon. "Not planning on ever giving it back."

The milestone is important because once a candidate establishes a sizable delegate lead, it can be hard for opponents to make up the lost ground.

Eight years ago, then-Illinois Sen. Barack Obama outgunned Clinton for the party nomination by establishing a 100 delegate advantage that she was never able to overcome. Clinton's team, who hired Obama's former aides to run their delegate effort, hopes to copy his strategy this spring by parlaying their strength with African-American voters into a string of wins in South Carolina, on Feb. 27, and the southern contests that follow on March 1.

There are more than 1,400 delegates at stake in states such as South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Louisiana, and depending on the outcome and proportional allocation of delegates, Clinton could build a comfortable lead.

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### 106-year-old says she can 'die happy' after Obama meeting

**By Josh Lederman and Rick Gentilo** WASHINGTON (AP) - At 106 years old, she's seen more than a dozen presidents come and go, but Virginia McLaurin says she can finally die happy after meeting President Barack Obama.

Video of the centenarian shaking her groove with excitement quickly went viral on the Internet after last week's Black History Month reception at the White House.

The grandmother tells The Associated Press that when she saw the president and first lady Michelle Obama in the flesh, she was so happy, she started dancing.

She says in a video interview that she never imagined she'd have the opportunity.

McLaurin had started an online White House petition for a visit more than a year ago. The African-American said in the petition that she never thought she'd live to see a black president.

#### LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT PROPOSALS

As I indicated earlier it is reasonable, professional, and ethically important that discussions about radical changes among UNC institutions be guided by what we know that works, what is effective, and what benefits students the most. Virtually little evidence has been offered to support the aforementioned proposals. In fact, there exists a strong body of research and evidence that directly contradicts some of the proposals and suggests that they will result in more harm than good. Some states that have instituted radical changes in tuition and performance measures have experienced unexpected outcomes.

Of course persistence and graduation rates need to improve and no one challenges that. However, relying solely on a fouryear graduation rate masks the fact that those rates are influenced by multiple factors: students may lack funds, students are raising families, academic majors are not available every semester, state budget reductions cause a loss of faculty and a reduction in available classes, etc. Over the last several years the UNC system schools have increased admission standards and progression standards (semesterto-semester persistence), and have accepted their evaluation against 10 mutually agreed upon assessment/evaluation metrics initiated (Continued On Page 14)