

After Chiding Wal-Mart for Lack of Black Images, He Gets Results

By DAVID L. DILLARD
Chronicle Staff Writer

Wilbert L. Richardson is an ordinary, hard-working citizen. He worked for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. for 32 years before retiring last year, but he continues to do mechanic work and ground maintenance. But his most enjoyable task is creating pride in young African Americans.

Case in point: This past April, Richardson was shopping at Wal-Mart on University Parkway and noticed a wall in the children's department covered with images of kids from various ethnic groups. But a noticeable exception, according to Richardson, was that of an African-American child. So Richardson decided to confront Wal-Mart's local and national management.

"All the blacks are spending their hard-earned dollars with no representation," said Richardson, who is black. "They (other races) can't compare to what we spend there."

Richardson said he wrote a letter to the store's home office in Arkansas, because he felt the absence of an African-American child was a disrespect to the large number of African-American shoppers of Wal-Mart.

His letter stated, in part: "I will not go into your store any more until this problem is corrected, and in the meantime . . . let the general public be aware of this international practice."



Wilbert Richardson

Three weeks ago, Wal-Mart's corporate headquarters responded to Richardson's letter, saying they have "contacted our vendor for another photograph to correct this oversight."

Richardson said he has resumed shopping at Wal-Mart and was pleased to see the problem corrected.

"I wanted to congratulate the store for investigating the matter and doing something about it," he said. "Little things like this are a good start."

Richardson said that it made good business sense for the store to respond to his request.

"It's a big flow out of their revenue they may lose," he said. "You

will be surprised with what the general public can do."

Robert Todd, co-manager of the Winston-Salem store, said it was Richardson's letter that prompted the corporate office to add a black

child's picture.

"We appreciate it when a customer lets us know about something they have a problem with — good or bad — so we can correct the issue," Todd said. "It apparently

offended him, and we think that our home-office people showed a serious commitment to its associates by responding in a timely manner."

Richardson and his wife, Sheron, volunteer their services to chil-

dren under court supervision and feel the Wal-Mart issue needs to be known to set an example for black youths.

"People need to be aware of this issue," he said. "We need to get our kids on the right track."

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Winston-Salem Chronicle

Three Men Charged with Killing Stoner Sentenced

By DAVID L. DILLARD
Chronicle Staff Writer

Prosecutor Vince Rabil said he was "very happy" that all four men charged with the mutilation and stabbing death of Carlos Colon Stoner 15 months ago have finally been sent to prison.

But he's still upset that one of the men — Rickey Eugene Knight — did not receive a death sentence.

Rabil is pleased with the sentencing of James Andrew Gilbert, Mark Anthony Smith and Dwayne Gregory Doby, but said he's not satisfied with Knight's sentence.

"I'll never get over that. I feel let down and hurt due to one juror holding out," he said. "I didn't know Stoner, but he was a human being. (The death penalty) was the only justice in this case."

On Aug. 30, a jury found James Andrew Gilbert, 24, Mark Anthony Smith, 22, and Dwayne Gregory Doby, 23, guilty of second-degree murder.

Knight was sentenced to life in prison in May, one vote shy of becoming the sixth person executed in this state since the death penalty was reinstated in 1977.

Police found Stoner's body on a greenway off South Broad Street on May 27, 1992. He had been castrated, had a gaping hole in his chest and his penis stuffed in his mouth.

Superior Court Judge William Z. Wood Jr. sentenced Gilbert to life in prison plus 10 years, Smith to 25 years and Doby to 10 years.

Rabil said all three men have been in jail since the stabbing and Doby could be released in a few weeks, while Smith could be eligible for parole in another year.

Gilbert, who allegedly stabbed Stoner, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and conspiracy to commit murder but maintained his innocence. Rabil said there wasn't enough evidence to seek the death penalty for Gilbert.

"It was very close, but we never had any aggravating factors," he said. "We couldn't prove actual conspiracy to commit murder, but we could prove he conspired to trick Stoner to get him in the car."

Gilbert's sentence seems longer than Knight's, but Rabil said he could serve from seven to 10 years on his sentence, but the state could fight it to hold him longer.

Intern Joins Old Salem

Tonya Thacker has joined Old Salem Inc. in a one-year internship position as special assistant, African-American programs.

Thacker, who comes to Old Salem with a degree in sociology from Hampton University in Virginia, will be working in the Department of Interpretation and Visitor Services.

As a special assistant, Thacker will be responsible for researching the African-American neighborhoods served by St. Philip's Church in the late 19th and 20th centuries, for completing an oral history project based on her findings, and for planning enrichment meetings for the interpretive staff.

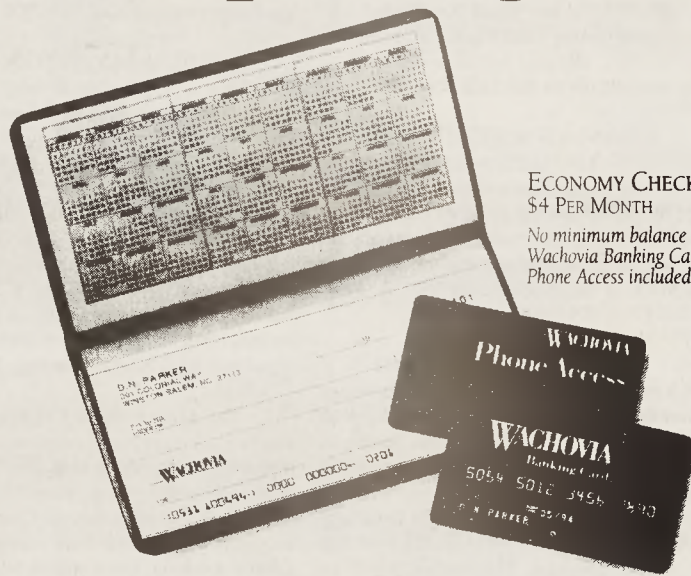
In addition, Thacker will develop and coordinate projects



Tonya Thacker

with the Best Choice Center and the Sims Community Center in Happy Hill Gardens and will be in costume two days per week working as an interpreter.

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