

# Farmers push for mediation of discrimination claims

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prodded by a federal judge, the Clinton administration agreed Friday to a six-month mediation process aimed at settling hundreds of discrimination complaints brought by black farmers against the Agriculture Department.

The move postpones a costly court battle over a \$2 billion lawsuit filed by 227 black farmers who contend they are victims of discrimination over repeated denial of loans and other benefits.

"I'm glad the government finally agreed to mediation," said Tim Pigford, a North Carolina farmer and the lead plaintiff in the court case. "This is killing folks. They need money so they can farm."

On Dec. 17, Rep. Eva Clayton (D-N.C.) garnered a meeting with the president in support of her efforts to achieve justice for the disadvantaged and small family farmer.

The congresswoman from North Carolina says she has fought tirelessly to bring to the forefront the past slights of the small family farmer. The Congressional Black Caucus held a hearing in April, and the first ever full Agriculture Committee hearing to address the plight of the disadvantaged farmer was held in October.

Earlier this year, Clayton introduced legislation, the USDA Accountability and Equity Act, which now has more than 60 co-sponsors.

"I hope that we will be able to bring attention to the terrible injustices that have been wielded against these true American workers," said Clayton. "Without our farmers, there are no food products, we must support all of our farmers."

U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman said the mediation process would be directed by Michael

Lewis, an experienced Washington arbitrator, and would begin immediately. Since the lawsuit was filed in August, Friedman has repeatedly urged the Justice Department to accept a mediated settlement instead of insisting on a trial.

"I'm willing to sit here forever if it's needed to get this thing moving," Friedman said.

Lawyers for the black farmers had sought blanket mediation that would cover all of the estimated 2,000 farmers, most of them from the South, who may have suffered discrimination. The Justice Department adamantly refused, saying each case must be investigated separately even though the Agriculture Department has acknowledged past discrimination.

See FARMERS on A2

75 cents

WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

Vol. XXIV No. 17

**The**

121197\*\*\*\*\*CAR-RT-SORT\*\*C012  
N C ROOM  
FORSYTH CNTY PUB LIB  
660 W 5TH ST # Q  
WINSTON SALEM NC 27101-2755

**CHRONICLE**

The Choice for African-American News and Information

For Reference  
Not to be taken  
from this library

**LE**

e-mail address: wschron@netunlimited.net

THURSDAY DECEMBER 25, 1997

## Robinson lashes out against Burke

By SHARON BROOKS HODGE  
The CHRONICLE Editor

Alderman Vernon Robinson has accused fellow Alderman Vivian Burke of trying to weaken police effectiveness and morale.

On Friday, shortly before new police recruits were scheduled to graduate from their training program, Robinson contacted local media and offered terse words for Burke.

"Act like a chairman of public safety," admonished Robinson, a political neophyte.

Robinson said his remarks were intended to keep Burke, who is chairman of the Public Safety Committee, from "playing politics at the graduation."

In a written statement to reporters, Robinson said, "I'd hope that today Mrs. Burke would conduct herself with the decorum befitting her post as Chairman of Public Safety and celebrate the achievement of these hardworking men and women who will graduate today rather than continuing her attack on the morale of the police department."

Burke, however, said she isn't interested in getting into a verbal confrontation with Robinson, who is vice chairman of the Public Safety Committee. The two disagree over police use of pepper spray.

"I would hope that when we have disagreements we're able to move on," said Burke.

Robinson was one of three aldermen who supported a resolution to back police in their continued use of the substance. Burke was one of the five Democrats who voted to kill a motion supporting police use of pepper spray.

## Lawyers raise community awareness

By FELECIA P. McMILLAN  
Community Correspondent

GREENSBORO—Attorney Walter T. Johnson Jr. is serving his first year as president of the Guilford County Association of Black Lawyers. On Saturday, Dec. 13, he invited the group to come to his home for a holiday gathering. Many of the attorneys and their spouses, friends and relatives attended. Although this was a lighter moment, the group has a profound purpose.

According to Johnson, the goals of the association include working together to improve African-American lawyers' participation in the profession, to promote continued education, to improve their skills and especially to speak out and educate the community on issues they believe are important. The group has been in operation since the late 1960s.

Judge Patrice Hinnant places high value on the work of the Black Lawyers Association. "I am a lawyer first. Though I happen to be a judge, I'm still a lawyer," she said. Hinnant sees the importance of being connected in order to strengthen the

unity of black professionals in a support system. Working together helps all of the members stay informed about current issues.

According to Greensboro Councilman Yvonne J. Johnson, the Black Lawyers Association is greatly needed: "They do very important work. Even meeting and sharing ideas is a plus for all involved," she said. She is also the executive director of One Step Further Inc., which houses the Sentencing Alternatives Center, Mediation Services of Guilford, and the Victim Offender Restitution Program.

Wanda Bracks Daughtry sees the group as a way for them to combine their talents and be of more service to the community. "We serve as a legal voice for black attorneys and minorities in this area," she said. "If we don't speak up, no one else will."

President Walter Johnson agrees that the group has a crucial role in educating the public. One issue in particular that concerns the association currently is the proposal that was developed under former Chief Justice James Exum regarding the reorganization of the judicial system. The

See JUDGES on A6



(Left to right) A.J. Moore from Berkwood Elementary School, Jerald Bellins of Wiloy Elementary School, and Ischia McCord of Hampton Elementary School were the first to sit on Soulful Santa's lap at the Providence Baptist Church SCDAP tutorial party.

By FELECIA P. McMILLAN  
Community Correspondent

"Ho! Ho! Ho! Merry Christmas. Come sit on my lap and tell Soulful what you want for Christmas this year?" This is Soulful Santa's most famous line.

More than 20 years ago Soulful Santa (Wendell Carr Sr.) made his first appearance at Providence Baptist Church on Tuscaloosa Street in Greensboro, where he attends. The Rev. Howard Chubbs is his pastor. Serving as the center of the church Christmas play, Soulful Santa found his calling. He returned in his glorious splendor Thursday, Dec. 18, to bring hearty laughter and charm to the children who par-

ticipated in the Sickle Cell Association of the Piedmont's (SCDAP) annual Christmas party. The children raced to hug him, kissed him, rested on his lap and told him their heart's desire. Dr. Alfreda McCauley, coordinator of the SCDAP tutorial program, invited Soulful to the party.

Soulful was glad to volunteer his services to cheer the hearts of these special children. The members of the SCDAP tutorial program either have sickle cell, sickle cell trait, or they have parents or siblings who do. The tutorial program meets at Providence Baptist on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:15 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. The children in the program range from kindergarten to fifth grade. Currently the program is funded by the Cemala Foundation Inc. for 1997; however, this United Way agency is searching for sponsorship

for 1998.

"What the SCDAP wants for Christmas this year is a source of funding for next year," said Dr. McCauley. "The tutorial program is a must because the children are ill very often." Having sickle cell disease does not affect learning ability, but it often causes respiratory problems, swelling of joints and other complications. However, because of advanced treatments, the life expectancy of those with sickle cell has greatly increased. "Some of our patients are in their 70s, and this is good news," said Jo-Heather Layton, public relations coordinator. The SCDAP serves as a liaison with medical centers, as they offer transporta-

See SANTA on A2



President Walter T. Johnson Jr. (seated), is joined by (left to right) Angela Foster, secretary Camille Payton, Judge Patrice Hinnant, Wanda Bracks Daughtry, Tracey Banks-Coan, and Angela Liverman, director to the Board of Governors.

## Former slaves share stories of bondage in radio project

By STEVE GILLIAM  
Special to THE CHRONICLE

GREENSBORO—The actual voices of ex-slaves will soon be telling their stories of life in bondage to a national radio audience through a project on which linguist Dr. Jeutonne Brewer of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro has been working.

Tentatively titled "Slaves No More," the project is being undertaken by Radio Smithsonian, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the Institute of Language and Culture, based in Clanton, Ala.

Brewer is part of a group of scholars who are working on the project. They are examining and working with the recordings that will comprise the series. All of the interviews were recorded in the late 1930s and early 1940s with individuals who were born into slavery and who survived.

In her office in UNCG's McIver Building, Brewer works on a transcribing machine with earphones to carefully set down the actual words of the ex-slaves on her computer. To her, as a sociolinguist, there's a world of difference in

whether someone says, "I tol' him" or "I told him," in terms of accuracy. And the stories, even 60 years later, are fascinating, said Brewer.

"I cannot listen to these tapes without being moved," said Brewer. "The stories of survival from the ex-slaves, the stories about how they chose — when they chose — to resist. When they tell us those stories, it's hearing history from people who lived it and who are recounting it in their own words."

"These are very moving stories, and the images are very vivid. Whenever you hear very good storytellers tell about their lives, the accounts are usually engrossing. That's what happens with (hearing) this material. In a very important way, we gain an understanding of those times, what slavery was like and how people managed to survive."

Part of the material came from the Federal Writers Project, a WPA enterprise during the Depression which sent interviewers all over the country in 1937 to locate and interview ex-slaves. Brewer had earlier analyzed these written narratives.

Recently, Brewer's work has been

See SLAVES on A2