

# Atkins High alums take umbrage with official's comments

By T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

Three well-known Atkins High School alumni want to let everyone know that their alma mater was not substandard in any way.

They want you to know that during its 40-year reign as the city's premiere black high school, Atkins produced countless numbers of lawyers, doctors, teachers and politicians.

They also want you to know that even though the city-county

school board virtually annihilated the possibility of Atkins Middle School returning to a high school, the fight for a high school in East Winston is far from over.

The events of last week have left Victor Johnson (class of '53) a little frustrated. The week started out pretty good for the school board member.

After fellow board member Rick Bagley said last month that there was little support for the Atkins High School proposal, Johnson quashed the notion by

producing a legion of enthusiastic supporters at a public forum on the issue last Monday.

But less than 24 hours later, Johnson found out that the place where the proposal truly lacked support was on the board which he sits. The board rejected the proposal at a meeting last Tuesday.

But even more disheartening, Johnson says, were the comments County Commissioner Walter Marshall made about his alma

"What was he thinking about?... That was kind of low," Johnson said.

While expressing his opposition to the proposal to convert Atkins back into a high school, Marshall told the board that Atkins - like all black schools in the segregated South - was never as good as white schools.

"Atkins has always been a substandard school. It was never as good as the schools on society hill," Marshall said.

Marshall went on to say that

many of those who spoke in support of the proposal the night before, had rejected Atkins for a private Catholic school and later for Reynolds High School.

Both charges, Johnson says, are "unfounded" and "off base." Johnson said he has been inundated with telephone calls from angry Atkins High alumni since Marshall's comments.

Atkins High School was an exception to the rule, Johnson said, producing some of the best educated students, black or white,

in the state. He says Atkins had the best principals and the most devoted teachers in the city.

"I had a very good education... Those kinds of remarks are no different from things whites used to say," Johnson said.

Johnson added that while some blacks did go to Saint Anne's Catholic school, the vast majority of blacks proudly went to Atkins.

Johnson's and Marshall's friendship stretches nearly 15

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WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

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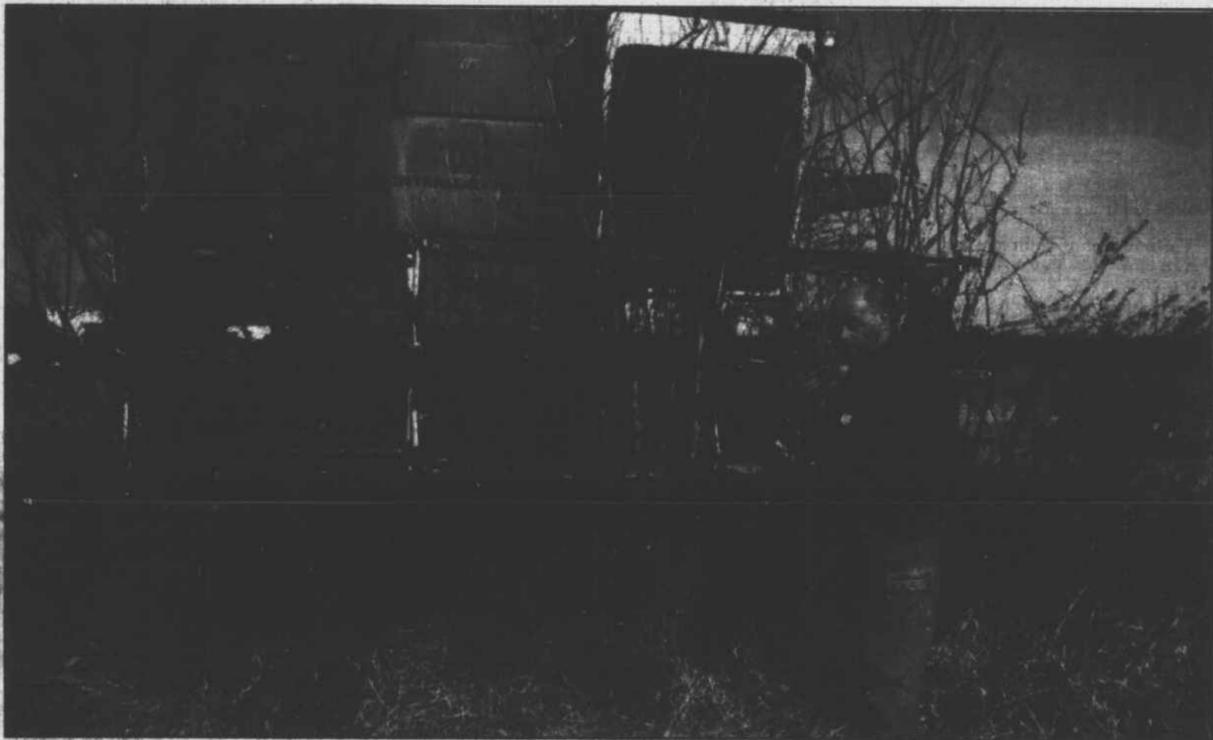
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THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 1999

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## 'Grave concern'



Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturists Association, stands in front of a rusting combine at his Tillery, N.C. farm. Grant says a proposed USDA settlement with black farmers is inadequate. "There's grave concern about what's on the table," he said.

## Black farmers cast wary eye on settlement

By DAMON FORD  
THE CHRONICLE

Though U.S. Department of Agriculture secretary Dan Glickman says the settlement with black farmers is a good deal, leaders from the agriculturalist camp say it's not.

"We would say progress has been made," said National Black Farmers and Agriculturist president Gary Grant. "However, I find the settlement neither honorable, moral or just. There's grave concern about what's on the table."

Farmers alleged in a class action suit filed two years ago that the government entity practiced discriminatory policies against black farmers between 1981-1996.

With the decent decree settlement, which was given two weeks

ago black farmers have only two options.

One entails a \$50,000 payoff plus some right-offs of debts if evidence of discrimination is found. The other option gives a farmer the chance to get more money if they are able to prove substantial discriminatory practices by the USDA.

But attorney Stephon Bowens says in many instances black farmers are not able to get this information together.

"In some instances when farmers are discouraged at the door and they're told 'We're not making any loans today' there is no paperwork to follow up on," he said. "So how do you prove (discrimination) other than the farmer's assertions by looking back at the years where there were droughts - where there was some sort of disaster and looking

and seeing whether or not farmers received assistance in taking his or her word for the fact that they were denied that opportunity."

Besides the problem of burden of proof Bowens, who also serves as executive director of the Land Loss Prevention Project says there are three other issues of concerns farmers have with the decent decree. One is equity. Will all the black farmers in the suit be treated the same?

Number two is future benefits. Black farmers want some assurance that the discriminatory practices that took place in the early 1980s and 90s won't happen again.

Last, but not least, is the tax issue. Right now the government is only looking to pay a quarter of the taxes on any money the farmers may receive in payments.

That is not acceptable according to Bowens.

"Twenty five percent of any settlement doesn't necessarily pay all the taxes that are involved," he said. "So some farmers may in fact have to pay other taxes as a result of this settlement."

Outside of the decent decree options, farmers can choose to get out of the class action suit and fight the USDA on their own.

But Bowens says farmers should continue to hang on.

"We believe the case is still alive," he said.

And it is scheduled to go to court on Feb. 1 in Washington D.C. Black farmers are being advised to look toward this date.

"Across the south where other states are involved, (farm-

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## Clinton lays out ambitious agenda

During 77-minute speech, Clinton draws icy response from GOP, raves from members of Democratic party

By ALAN FRAM  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - President Clinton is making dramatic concessions to Republicans on revamping Social Security, but the spotty GOP response to his State of the Union address shows that bitter fights lie ahead on the retirement program, tax cuts and White House plans for higher spending.

Barely six hours after the Senate ended another day in Clinton's impeachment trial, the president strode into the House chamber and confidently delivered a 77-minute speech laden with proposals ranging from more defense spending to helping communities fight pollution.

Clinton also announced the Justice Department would sue the tobacco industry, and that he would again seek a tax increase on cigarettes, this time 55 cents a pack. It drew an icy response from Republicans, as it did last year. Nonetheless, many Republicans said they sensed chances for accommodation this year on Social Security, defense, education and patient's rights.

Still, GOP leaders emphasized the differences that remained - including Clinton's omission of tax cuts as a way to use federal surpluses projected to total an enormous \$4.4 trillion over the next 15 years.

"A \$4 trillion surplus, and not a penny for tax cuts?" House Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Texas, said.

"I didn't work this hard to get a balanced budget to ... spend it all on new programs," said the Senate Budget Committee chairman, Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., said today that



Clinton

Clinton "has stepped out smartly with a very, very creative, and I think, a sound, plan" to safeguard Social Security. Interviewed on ABC's "Good Morning America," Gephardt said he expects the president to flesh out his proposal in the next few weeks and called on House and Republican leaders to schedule hearings as soon as possible so the problem can be resolved this year.

Clinton's audience on the House floor - Democrats sitting to his right, Republicans to his left - reacted throughout as if listening to two different speeches. Democrats lustily cheered his entrance, and led the way in interrupting his address 95 times with applause.

Republicans were unusually quiet, with many often not responding to what might normally be GOP applause lines, like Clinton's prediction of budget surpluses for the next 25 years. Small numbers of them didn't attend, and many who did conceded that it felt eerie listening to a president whom their party has pushed to the brink of removal from office.

"Of course it was awkward," Sen. John Ashcroft, R-Mo., said. "But does that mean it shouldn't have happened? Not necessarily." As Senate Majority Leader, Trent Lott left the chamber, photographers overheard him asking a companion whether Clinton had "no shame."

Clinton made no mention of the sex and cover-up case that led to his impeachment and imperils his presidency.

Army and House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, R-Texas, sat side by side looking pained and bored, applauding only for spectators whom Clinton introduced, such as civil rights figure Rosa Parks and Chicago Cubs slugger Sammy Sosa.

"I didn't mean to look grim," Armey said later. "Obviously, we were all concerned about how we were going to respond to the president, and I had made up my mind ahead of time I would applaud

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## Hundreds join march for King

By T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

The weather conditions for this year's Martin Luther King Jr. holiday were less than harmonious. But hundreds of local people refused to let the threatening clouds overhead rain on their parade.

The young, the old, the black and the white gathered at Mount Zion Baptist Church for a flurry of King Day services that began with an early morning fellowship breakfast and culminated with a dramatic march through downtown for a noontime ceremony at the M.C. Benton Convention Center.

Less than a half hour before the march's 10:45 a.m. kickoff

time, violent thunderstorms reeked havoc on the city and much of the South. But like Dr. King had done on many occasions, the crowd - donned in colorful slickers and umbrellas - vowed to march, rain or shine.

"The struggle for justice continues through rain, sleet or snow," Alderwoman Joycelyn Johnson said as she prepared to make the trek.

For many, the march has become a yearly ritual and one of the most visible ways to pay homage to the slain civil rights leader.

Doretha Shannon brought her four grandchildren to the march. The children, ranging from ages five to nine, caused quite the sensa-

tion among their fellow marchers, due in large part to the miniature cardboard signs they each carried.

"Happy Birthday Martin Luther King," read one sign.

The others proclaimed: "I Have a Dream," "Free at Last," and "We Shall Overcome."

"They came up with their own slogans," a proud Shannon said.

Many local groups and organizations also took part in the march, from American Legion posts to Boy Scout chapters.

Decked in white t-shirts with their logo sewn on the right side, 18 members of the Prodigals Community participated in the event. The Prodigals Community is a nonprofit recovery ministry for

See March on A10

## 'Whatcha say now'



Gospel artist Kirk Franklin lit up Greensboro Coliseum during a concert Friday. For full story see page A4.