

Forty acres and a mule? Conyers reintroduces bill for reparations

By HERBERT L. WHITE
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

Forty acres and a mule has never been so controversial.

The idea of reparations for people of African descent is a hot-button issue not only among African Americans but among all Americans.

Next week, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America will meet in St. Louis for a national conference that could determine the tone of the reparations debate. N'COBRA is one of the leading advocates of reparations. Although the U.S. government has yet to even publicly apologize for slavery or its effects on African Americans, more blacks are weighing the pros and cons of reparations. Seventy percent of African Americans favor reparations, according to a poll conducted by the National Newspaper Publishers Association, a trade group representing black newspapers in the United States.

"More people are becoming aware," said Melodye Micere

Stewart, co-chair of N'COBRA's Charlotte chapter. "That's the key. As the community becomes informed, we can make an informed decision."

America has made reparations in the past. Japanese Americans were compensated for internment in prison camps in World War II, and native peoples have been given land and tax exemptions under terms of treaties signed between their leaders and the government. Black survivors of the Rosewood, Fla., massacre of 1923 received compensation for their suffering at the hand of whites who destroyed the mostly-black town. Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reached a \$350 million settlement with black farmers for years of discrimination. As a group whose labor helped build the U.S. economy without pay and bore the burden of racism, reparations is an idea whose time has come, said Robert Brock, a Washington, D.C. attorney who has represented U.S. slave descendants in lawsuits against

the government and Internal Revenue Service.

"The wealth of America is our legal property," he said, "but we must make our legal claims to get money as others have made their claims and gotten money."

That wouldn't work, says David Almasi, director of Project 21, a black conservative consortium. The cost of compensating millions of Africans and their descendants would be counterproductive fiscally and socially.

"It's a rather silly idea that'll produce more animosity than it's worth," Almasi said. "It's an idea that should've been considered (when slaves were freed after the Civil War). We can extend the hand of friendship and understanding, but we can't consider reparations."



Conyers

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus want the government to at least study the idea. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., has introduced a bill that would fund a reparations study commission. The bill, which has been introduced every year since 1989, has failed to win much support outside the caucus, but Conyers remains optimistic.

"The time is ripe now to push for a galvanizing of national efforts to put the reparations movement and H.R. 40 at the top of the American agenda," he said. "The president's recent initiatives on American race relations underscore the longstanding domestic imperative of healing and repairing the suffering from the legacy of slavery and its continuing effects on African Americans today."

N'COBRA and the NAACP also back the bill, which will be discussed in St. Louis as a precursor to an international forum in Ghana in August.

"There'll be studies, but the entire black world should get reparations," Stewart said.

"Politically, if that person is black in the way they're treated — like being stopped for driving while black — they should be eligible."

N'COBRA, which is out to recruit 1 million new members, stresses that reparations aren't necessarily about money. Free health care, education and tax exemptions could also be part of the deal. Another progressive group, the Moorish Movement, insists that the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Lincoln in 1863 is only one of three provisions for the newly-freed slaves. In addition to freedom, the Moors say Lincoln provided a congressional representative for every 30,000 African Americans, property in what is now the U.S. Midwest and \$100 for every U.S. slave in 1863 — about 4 million — paid at 6 percent interest beginning in 1900. The cost to the American gov-

ernment, needless to say, would be astronomical.

"Where would the U.S. government find the money to pay everybody," Almasi said. "Our country would be bankrupt in months. It would decimate our system by all the people who would immigrate here to take advantage of reparations."

Stewart is amazed that some blacks oppose reparations much like the 1950s and '60s when African Americans questioned the wisdom and methods of civil rights. Once legal discrimination was abolished, everyone benefited, which she says would likely happen if blacks are compensated.

"They're going to be the first folk to get in line to get theirs," Stewart said. "There'll always be those naysayers who say we should be picking cotton or be in segregated sections."

Briefs

from page A2

serious cereal pest in southern Somalia, threatens the entire crop of the main "Gu" season. This crop is still at a young stage.

The report of the Food Security Assessment Unit of the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization warns of major food shortage in Somalia if the invasion is not stopped.

The worm outbreak was first reported in late April in Rwanda and Burundi, followed by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The

worms have destroyed thousands of hectares of cereal crop in these countries.

"Should a serious outbreak occur in Somalia, given the absence of a government, there would be no time available for the international community to organize and launch interventions before irrevocable damage, potentially of a very large scale, occurs to the 1999 Gu season crop," the FSAU report says. — *Judith Achieng for IPS*

Renowned saxophonist dies
COPENHAGEN, Denmark —

Ernie Wilkins, an American-born composer and saxophonist who played with Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie and Lionel Hampton, died Saturday of a stroke. He was 79.

Born Ernest Brooks Wilkins Jr. in St. Louis, he got his big break in 1951 when trumpeter Clark Terry recommended him to Count Basie.

In the late 1950s, Wilkins joined Dizzy Gillespie's band, and later went on to write for Tommy Dorsey and Lionel Hampton.

Though Wilkins won wide acclaim for arranging and com-

posing, he never lost his love for playing sax. In the 1960s, he and Terry recorded "One Foot in the Gutter," which features a four-minute solo by Wilkins.

Wilkins moved to Copenhagen in 1980 and started his own orchestra, Ernie Wilkins and His Almost Big Band.

He also was guest conductor with several other bands. The list of musicians he worked with included Earl Hines, Sonny Rollins, Milt Jackson, Sarah Vaughn, Lena Horne and Quincy Jones.

Wilkins retired in 1991 after suffering a stroke.

Presidential hug



Associated Press photo by Doug Mills

President Clinton meets with Miss Stop the Violence National Queen Sescily Conroy of Camden, N.J., in the Rose Garden of the White House last week. The president urged Hollywood and video-game makers to "show some restraint" in using bloody images to market their wares. Clinton ordered a government investigation Tuesday of how the entertainment business markets violence to children.

The Chronicle's e-mail address is:
wschron@netunlimited.net

Transitions...

For the changes in your life

Evening College Programs at A&T

- Marketing
- Elementary Education
- Sociology
- Construction Management
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Manufacturing Systems



For further information, contact Phyllis Cole
Office of Continuing Education and Summer Sessions
(336) 334-7607 • 1-888-323-OCES
Fax (336) 334-7081

or visit 1020 E. Wendover Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27405

With FHA's new
higher loan limits,
you can buy your
dream home.

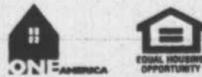
How's that for a housewarming gift?



Since 1934 we've helped over 26 million Americans get into new homes. And starting this year, HUD can help you get a home loan for up to \$208,800. Be sure to check with your lender to find out what the FHA-insured loan limits are in your area. We can also help you with any questions you might have. Just call 1-800-HUDS-FHA and ask for our free 100 Questions and Answers brochure. It'll tell you how to get an FHA loan for as little as 3% down. How to choose the right lender. How to prepare yourself for the homebuying process. And much more. In fact, if you're looking for a home, it's all the information you need.



HUD and FHA are on your side.



1 800 HUDS FHA

THE ARTISTIC STUDIO SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

1415 SOUTH MAIN STREET • WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. 27127
JANICE PRICE-HINTON • ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE 2ND ANNUAL PERFORMING ARTS RECITAL



"HOORAY FOR HOLLYWOOD"

SUNDAY JUNE 13TH, 1999

4:00 PM

KENNETH R. WILLIAMS AUDITORIUM
ON THE CAMPUS OF WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

HOSTED BY:

WANDA STARKE OF WXII NEWS CHANNEL 12

AND

BUSTER BROWN OF 102 JAMZ

FOR TICKET

INFORMATION

PLEASE CALL

(336) 723-7473

Part of the proceeds go to raise funds for an Animal and VAC Emergency Vehicle for the Human Solution Society