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WINSTON-SALEM GREENSBORO HIGH POINT

Vol. XXVII No. 6

THE CHRONICLE

The Choice for African American News

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2000

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CITY OF NC CHAPEL HILL
CHapel Hill, NC 27599

Demotion still haunts former police officer

BY CHERIS HODGES
THE CHRONICLE

Former police Sgt. Stephen Hairston spent 20 years on the police force. He was honored by national, state and local officials for his work in the community. But the one thing that most people in the city know about this former Employee of the Year is that he was demoted after an out-of-control rap concert at the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

"This one thing comes along and they chop you off at the knees," Hairston said. "It was very painful; it was very emotional."

The one thing was at the August 1999 concert at the LJVM featuring Luther Campbell. A report by City Manager Bryce Stuart alleged that police supervision at the

concert was lax, which led to an atmosphere of violence.

Of the nine Winston-Salem police officers that were hired that night, only three officers were demoted - Hairston, Sgts. Chuck Byrom and Victor Johnson. Although the men were later given their ranks back, Hairston said things were not the same.

When he was reinstated, Hairston said that he was placed back on the street. His previous position was heading the Criminal Investigations Division.

"(Chief Linda Davis) said there wasn't an opening in CID and she put me where there was an opening," Hairston said.

Even though the issue of the demotions was resolved months ago, Hairston felt that there were a lot of things left out of the dis-

cussion. One of the reasons he is coming forward now is to thank all of the people who supported him during the months after he was demoted.

"I just want to thank the community and all of the organizations that came out and spoke in support. I feel if they hadn't come forward, this whole thing would have went unnoticed or whatever," he said.

The state NAACP, several aldermen and many community groups supported Hairston and the other officers. George Allison, executive director of the N.C. NAACP, said in February that Stuart "botched the grievance process through months of inaction and by possibly violating the officers' rights."

He also questioned the relationship

See Police officer on A3



Photos by Cheris Hodges

Sgt. Steve Hairston displays some of the many awards he received during his 20 years on the force.

Commissioners HOPE VI

Walker

Walker

Winston-Salem Housing Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to send H.J. Development Corp. The Atlanta-based company was hired earlier this year to last three phases of HOPE VI project, an reform the Kimber-

Andrews, chair of the decision was the company did not keep its end

said phone calls turned by company HAWS and that members were H.J. Russell Corp.

control of the Win- project to a third Baltimore-based development Company

not performed for said.

representatives from ny were present at Andrews said the and a notice of ter- oth companies this orm them of the

's decision comes of criticism from s of the Board of o have griped that or HOPE VI has and progress has

See Hope VI on A5

The new pro-lifers



Photos by Kevin Walker

Jennifer Thompson and Ronald Cotton talk to an unidentified woman after the death penalty symposium at Wake Forest. Thompson fingered Cotton for raping her in 1986. DNA tests later proved he was innocent.

Death penalty opponents air gripes with criminal justice system

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

When Alfred Rivera speaks out about the death penalty and the inequities in the criminal justice system, he speaks with personal, hands-on knowledge about both topics.

Convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to die in a Forsyth County courtroom more than year ago, Rivera spoke as a free man Sunday evening at a death penalty symposium held at Wake Forest University School of Law.

"I was not a choir boy," Rivera told a crowd of mostly lawyers and law students. "I did bad things, but I didn't kill anyone."

Rivera was described as

"one of the fortunate few" by the symposium's moderator. Rivera's attorneys were able to get his death sentence reversed by the N.C. Supreme Court on an appeal. He was retried and found not guilty.

Rivera believes that many of those on death row and in prisons today are just like him, serving time for crimes they had no hand in. They are victims of overzealous prosecutors and a crime weary public that sees punishment as a plus.

"When certain people walk into a courtroom, we are already branded a certain type of person... We are not given a chance," Rivera said.

The symposium was sponsored by a number of universi-

ty organizations, including the Association Against the Death Penalty and the Black Law Students Association. The event was scheduled so close to yesterday's presidential debate in order to garner as much attention as possible, one organizer said.

"With this being an election year, we want to bring the death penalty into the public eye," said Alex Maclenahan, a second-year law student at Wake and president of the Association Against the Death Penalty.

Although the death penalty issue has taken a back seat to many other issues in the presidential race, one presidential

See Death penalty on A10

Million Family March will live up to name, several organizers say

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

The Nation of Islam is expecting the Million Family March to live up to its name. The national director of Monday's much-anticipated event said 1 million or more families will be there for a day of atonement and unity.

"We have gotten field reports that thousands of buses have been chartered. Some people have even chartered planes. Families are mobilizing," said Min. Benjamin Muhammad during a telephone news conference last week.

The Million Family March will take place on the five-year anniversary of the Million Man March, an event where the size of the crowd was estimated in the hundreds of thousands by government officials, although the Nation of Islam contends that more than a million men attended the rally.

"God knows that we had more than a million last time," Muhammad said.

He said the Nation will use its on head counters and helicopters at Monday's march so that it can counter inaccurate counts that may be given by other sources.

At the time of the news conference late last week, Muhammad said many of the details of the march were still being ironed out. He did say that a long list of political icons had already signed on to speak at the march, including Martin Luther King III, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Dorothy Height, former president of the National Council of Negro Women. Other elected officials from across the nation also are expected at the event.

But the two men seeking the nation's highest elected office are not scheduled to make appearances, Muhammad said.

Muhammad said Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush will be allowed to address the crowd only if they endorse the national agenda of the Million Family March, which calls for everything from less gun violence to efforts to eradicate poverty. As of last week, neither campaign had made an effort to take part in the event, Muhammad said.

Well-known entertainers have signed on to support the march, and some will even be on hand to provide entertainment on the three sound stages that will be erected around the National Mall.



Mikal Muhammad



Benjamin Muhammad

See MFM on A10

City puts on the 'Presidential Debate Show'

BY CHERIS HODGES
THE CHRONICLE

With the first two presidential debates out of the way, both camps are claiming victories.

According to Ron Klain, senior adviser for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, Gore is winning the debates.

"He is the candidate with 'real plans for real people.' Whether the issue is tax cuts, or education, or health care, tonight's debate showed that the (George W.) Bush plan benefits the few, while Al Gore's plan is focused on working and middle class families," he said.

Wednesday's debate was held after the Chronicle's press time. But in the days leading up to the event, polls had Bush slightly ahead of Gore.

Gore prepared for the Wake Forest debate in Florida, while Bush flew into the Tar Heel state the day before the face-off. The governor's plane arrived at Piedmont International Airport a little before 4 p.m.

Tuesday. Bush made no public appearances before the debate.

Gore's wife, Tipper, made an appearance in Greensboro yesterday afternoon. First she attended a private luncheon, then she made an appearance at the Evangel Christian Center.

Gore arrived in Winston-Salem at 2:30 p.m. He landed at the Smith Reynolds airport.

The first debate between Gore and Bush was judged pretty evenly. According to a poll released after the Oct. 3 debate, the candidates were in a dead heat. Now, the Texas governor leads the vice president by eight points in the latest CNN/USA Today poll.

According to Gore spokesperson Ellen Mellody, the vice president plans to stick to the issues in the last debate as he did in the first two.

"Every time Al Gore talks about the issues people like him more," she said.

The main issues the Gore camp has identified as important to the American

people are health care, education and targeted tax cuts.

"The issues are what is important," Mellody said. Gore plans to stay away from character attacks in his run for the White House.

However, Bush has opened talks about the vice president's credibility. Gore came under fire after the first debate for what some in the press call embellishing. The Bush camp said in statements and on their web site that Gore will say anything to get elected.

At press time, a spokesperson for the Bush campaign could not be reached for further comment.

After the debate at Wait Chapel was over, both parties held rallies in the city. Hundreds of Gore supporters headed out to the Coliseum Annex. Gore arrived at the event at 11:45 p.m.

The GOP and Bush supporters held a separate rally in the cattle barn at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds. Bush arrived at the

See Debate on A3

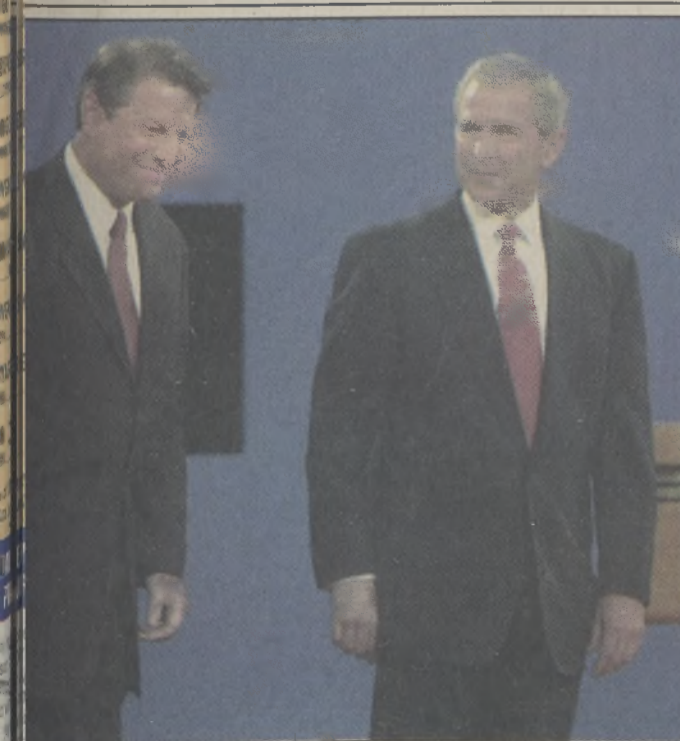


Photo by Black Star Photos

Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush pose after the Boston.

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