

# SONG OF SORROW

WSSU students express frustration about Katrina in original tune

BY T. KEVIN WALKER  
THE CHRONICLE

People have expressed their personal frustrations with the lackadaisical response to the call for help from Hurricane Katrina victims.

Some have taken to radio airways or written letters to the editor to get some of the emotions off of their chests; others have turned their anger into action by supporting local and national relief efforts. LaShonda Davis and Shameia Gardin used their love of music to vent.

"I was pissed. I was very pissed," Davis, a sophomore at Winston-Salem State University, said, describing her feelings as she watched thousands of people - most of them black like her - stranded, tired and hungry at various sites in New Orleans. Gardin, a WSSU junior, was equally frustrated.

Over the Labor Day weekend - when many of their classmates were away from campus - Davis and Gardin poured their frustrations into the "Cries of Katrina," a haunting song that asks why and how could Americans abandon their own. The song was debuted Monday afternoon during the campus rush hour. The well-traveled Burke Singers, of which Davis and Gardin are members, performed the song to a crowd of



Photo by Kevin Walker

LaShonda Davis (left) and Shameia Gardin wrote "Cries of Katrina" to express their disappointment with the delayed relief effort.

dozens in front of the school's clock tower. The popular female singing group is led by D'Walla Burke, a professor of music at the school.

Portions of the songs are spoken to the a cappella rhythm of the singers; the women sing in unison for the song's melody. But not even the ladies' pretty voices can disguise the ugly picture painted by the lyrics.

"How could the wealthiest country in the world leave its own citizens to die?" the song asks. "When the towers came down, you were there that day and the days thereafter."

The song also criticizes the use of the term "refugee," which some media outlets and federal

officials adopted to describe those displaced by Katrina, and likens the aftermath of the storm to genocide and the Holocaust.

Gardin says she knows the song is blunt. She hopes it is bold enough to make people think.

"My intentions aren't to make people angry," she said. "But this is what people were thinking about while this was happening."

Davis doesn't mince words. She believes that had the majority of the people begging for help in New Orleans been white, the help would have come swiftly. It hurts her, she said, because she thought America had changed.

"Racism is still very much alive," she said. "We can send a man to the moon but we can't send food to New Orleans. That is very odd."

A number of Katrina relief efforts have been staged at WSSU over the last month. On the day of the Burke Singers' performance, the school's Delta Sigma Theta chapter collected food and other items. WSSU has also taken in four students whose universities were devastated by Katrina.

"Cries of Katrina" will be included on an upcoming Burke Singers CD. Some of the proceeds from the sale of the disc will go to the Katrina relief effort.



Dr. Dorothy Height is a living legend.

## Bennett to induct Height and other women into 'wise' society

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Bennett College for Women is scheduled to hold its fourth annual induction in the Society of Our Wise Women today (Oct. 6) at 4 p.m., in the Annie Meier Pfeiffer Chapel. The ceremony is part of the annual Family and Friends Weekend (Oct. 6-9). The weekend gives the college the opportunity to welcome family, friends and supporters to the college and is open to the public.

The 2005 inductees are former United Methodist Church executive Rose Mae Catchings, '33; civil rights advocate Dr. Dorothy Height; retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Consuelo Kickbusch; Greensboro's retired Postmaster Enola Mixon; and N.C.

Secretary of Administration Gwynn Swinson.

The society, which recognizes "women of color" who have made significant contributions to their profession and/or community, was established by Bennett President Dr. Johnnetta Cole.

"I wanted an opportunity to not only lift up our sisters who have paved the way for so many of the young women today, but also to inspire young women to take advantage of opportunities that have not always been so prevalent," said Cole in her answer as to why the society was launched. "These women have done incredible things in the face of much adversity, and yet they were determined to make it easier for the generations that followed."

## Building

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broadcasts from a large window.

The architectural firm Walter Robbs Callahan & Pierce, which designed the building, and the engineering consulting firm Cavanaugh also plan to move into the building.

Sixteen condos, ranging in price from \$225,000 to \$500,000, will be on the upper floors. Chris Chapman, president of The Chapman Group and the development's managing partner, said that 12 of the condos have already been sold.

The new building will be a far cry from the row of small retail shops that once called the space home. Three black-owned shops and an African-American church were operating out of the existing building as recently as August. They left reluctantly after the city sold the building to The Chapman Group earlier this year. Some of the businesses were on Trade Street 10 years ago, when the street was not the vibrant arts mecca that it is today.

The City Council tried to appease the business owners and church by offering financial packages to help them with relocation. Assistant City Manager Derwick Paige said at last week's ceremony that the three businesses have each received \$7,500 from the city. The city is still working to provide the church with a financial package, Paige said.

The Chapman Group paid \$235,000 for the building. But the city has made an investment of the same amount into the project. Some displaced tenants argued that the city was giving the building away. Paige disagrees.

"We are not giving it to them," he said. "This will be a \$12 to \$15 million investment in downtown."

Joines said the investment



Photo by Kevin Walker

The building is slated to be demolished any day now.

will pay off for the city in the long run. The city eventually plans to sell all of the downtown commercial and business property it owns downtown. City-owned property does not generate tax revenue.

"The city should not have been in the real-estate business in the first place," Joines said.

East Ward City Council Member Joycelyn Johnson said she believes the city did right by the displaced tenants, especially since the city was not legally obligated to give them a dime.

"There was nothing that said that we had to do that," she said.

Johnson added that the city-owned building was in such bad shape that demolition was the right thing to do.

Paige says that at least one of the displaced businesses, Tele-Ad Used Electronics, has found a new home outside of the downtown core in the Hewitt Business Center. The business owners had expressed frustration that they would not be able to find affordable space in the heart of downtown. At the city-owned building, they paid no more than \$350 a month. Similar space downtown is more than three times

that price.

Chapman said he did have conversations with some of the displaced owners about space but that the price range was out of their budgets. There will only be two retail spaces in the new building, Chapman said.

Business owners still on Trade Street have high aspirations for Trader's Row. Bendetta Davis, who sells African art, soaps and jewelry at My Sister's Place, hopes the new building will increase Trade Street's visibility.

"I think it will bring more traffic down here, and more traffic will bring more business to me," she said. Davis also hopes that city officials will take more of an interest in Trade Street. The city has focused much of its energy developing a so-called "restaurant row" on Fourth Street. Davis said Trade Street is often treated like a stepchild. She points to the city's Rock the Block outdoor music festival, which takes place each fall on Fourth Street.

"Spread it out so that we can get some of those people over here," Davis said.

Trader's Row is slated to be completed by January of 2007, Chapman said.

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Lecture title:  
"Wade in the Water: A Meditation on Race, Class and Katrina"

### A New Direction for a New Day.

It's time for a change.

We need a new direction for a new day. My name is Mac Weatherman. I am a life long resident of Winston-Salem, NC. I am running for the City Council to represent you in the East Ward. I understand and intend to address the needs of the entire East Ward. You need and deserve someone to represent you.

As a long-time member of the community, I have seen the neglect that has continued for years due to the stagnant philosophy of our current administration. We must strive to curtail and eliminate unnecessary spending. We can no longer reach into the pockets of our residents by continuing to raise property taxes year after year. Why not increase our city revenues by creating more business ventures?

Well, it's time to make that change and I'm ready to take on the responsibility of helping to make the change a reality. Will you help by voting for me, Mac Weatherman, your new City Council person?

Vote for by committee to elect Mac Weatherman, City Council - East Ward

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