

**Lynchings**

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feel that racial bias played a role in their trial or sentencing to have their cases reviewed in a court of law. If the court finds race was indeed a factor, the defendant's death penalty sentencing will be amended to life in prison without the possibility of parole. North Carolina is one of only two states in the U.S. that has legislation to address racial bias in capital cases.

"It's really remarkable what North Carolina has done," said Bright, who teaches at Harvard, Yale and Georgetown Universities. "It's incredibly important because ... race and the death penalty have always been connected throughout the history of this country."

Bright says prosecutors are far more likely to seek the death penalty in cases where defendants are people of color or poor, or both, especially if the victim is white. When lynchings in the South began to be frowned upon by

other parts of the country, Southern whites began to use other measures to exact their oppression of African Americans, Bright says.

"Racialized violence was essential to maintain the dominance of the white race over the African race (during slavery)," he related. "...After the Civil War, the criminal justice system was essential to maintaining white supremacy."

African Americans were often arrested on charges such as loitering, and then "leased" out as workers to white business owners once they were imprisoned, Bright said.

"The economic development of the South was dependent upon leased prisoners," he commented. "...The (criminal justice) system prostituted itself completely to the mobs' desires. It had no more integrity than the mobs before them."

Even today, the issue of the death penalty is still a matter of "race and place," he said. A few states have abolished the death penalty altogether, and some states that

still have it on the books refrain from imposing it, Bright added. Yet, a small number of counties in the nation use capital punishment liberally, such as Harris County, Texas, which includes the city of Houston.

"Harris County has executed more people than any other state in the union, except for the state of Texas," Bright revealed.

Bright says America lags behind its counterparts in the developed world when it comes to the use of the death penalty.

"Almost all the industrialized societies in the world do not kill people. Most will not even extradite people who are caught in their country to countries that kill people, because they feel that it is wrong," he related. "...Just a handful of countries carry out all the executions in the world."

Following Bright's talk, students heard from a four-member panel that discussed the Racial Justice Act. Panelist Darryl Hunt was spared from capital punishment by one jury vote. He

spent nearly two decades in prison for a crime he did not commit before being exonerated by the state in 2004. Hunt's former attorney, Mark Rabil, co-director of the Innocence and Justice Clinic, also served on the panel, as did State Reps. Larry Womble and Earline Parmon, who sponsored the RJA in the State House.

It took nearly three years to get the RJA passed, and Parmon says they faced considerable opposition in the state legislature.

"It became a very politically ugly thing for our state," she related. "It became not only partisan, but it also became racial. It wasn't a pretty thing."

Opponents of the bill spread untruths about what impact it would have, falsely reporting that the Act was an attempt to abolish the death penalty, or that it would allow violent offenders to get back on the streets, Parmon said.

The passage of the RJA has already had a profound impact on the lives of many potential death row inmates,

Rabil said. He told the audience that he has heard prosecutors say on several occasions that they elected not to seek the death penalty in a particular case because of the existence of the RJA.

"In the seven months, I would say that a few dozen lives have already been saved as direct result of that (Act),"

Rabil said.

For more information about the WFU Innocence and Justice Clinic, visit <http://law.wfu.edu/clinics/innocence>. For more information on the "Lynching Then, Lynching Now national tour, visit <http://cedptour.blogspot.com>.



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Panelists (from left) Darryl Hunt, State Rep. Larry Womble, State Rep. Earline Parmon and Mark Rabil.

**At-large**

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teacher and as a member of the marketing team for Chick-fil-A on Peace Haven Road. Clark, whose son is a kindergartner this year, says she would bring a "common sense mom voice" to the board. Preserving the arts and languages and the jobs of teachers in the face of a budgeting crisis are among her chief concerns.

"I want to make sure that our kids can get a stellar education here in the school system," she said. "...I think it's up to us to preserve the jobs of teachers and make sure that they have the things they need."

Hill, 56, a native of Kinston, is a co-founder and assistant director of CERTL (Center of Excellence for Research and Learning) and a member of the faculty at Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

An educator for nearly three decades, Hill currently works with underrepresented minority students from across the county who are deemed less likely to excel in high school science courses, based on their previous performance. The program has seen great success, Hill says, as all 42 students in the program are currently excelling in honors level courses at their schools. He believes the stark difference is the result of holding the students to higher standards. It is a model Hill believes could be applied across the county.

"How many kids do we have that think they can't do (challenging coursework) ... and then don't, and what if we could change that?" he questioned. "I'm actually working with students now and producing a different result than what we've been getting in the past."

Lambeth, 59, is a Winston-Salem native who serves as president of N.C. Baptist Hospital. The father of four adult daughters, two of whom work in the WS/FCS system, Lambeth is seeking his fifth term on the board.

During his tenure, the board has been able to secure bond funding for technological upgrades and physical upgrades in many schools and even some allowed for new construction, Lambeth said. The board has ensured that local teachers' salaries are competitive and that they receive incentives to further their education and qualifications, said Lambeth, who added that the board is working to address the achievement gap between African Americans and whites.

"In the past few years, we've done a lot to engage the community," Lambeth related. "We've been able to get leaders across the community to do mentorships ... and some of those programs are beginning to show results."

With another tight fiscal year ahead, Lambeth says his financial expertise and business sense will likely be his greatest asset as a board member.

McAdams, 69, is a native of Virginia with two grandchildren in the school system. She currently works in the Reservations Department of US Airways. McAdams says she would like to do away with tenure for teachers.

"I think we have some excellent educators, but we also have some that are not; we need a way to weed those out," she explained. McAdams added that she would also like to see the highly qualified educators distributed more evenly throughout the system.

"There's no equality in the school system here, and that's wrong," she said.

Metcalf, 58, a native of Cherryville, has spent the last 16 years as a member of the School Board. Metcalf has four grown children who are the products of the local school system, one of whom is now a teacher. Metcalf, now a grandmother, says she still approaches issues that the Board faces through the perspective of a parent.

"I think I have a lot of common sense to bring to the board. I work well with people and I enjoy it a lot," she said. "... For the last 16 years, I've given it the best I've got."

Metcalf, who spent most of her married life as a homemaker, says her free time is an asset to the county.

"I do not have a job," she said. "I put hours and hours into visiting schools, talking to parents ... because I do have the time."

Motsinger, 52, is completing her first term on the board.

A physician's assistant at The Salem Center, Motsinger, a New York native, says improving the opportunities that are available to disadvantaged populations has been one of her highest priorities as a board member.

"I've been really interested in equity for all students and addressing the achievement gaps and graduation rates and particularly the disparity between African American and white students," she said. "...I really supported the decision to move the new Career Center. It's going to be rebuilt at

Kennedy Learning Center. Hopefully, that will allow more students at Carver and East and Glenn to take advantage of it."

Roberts, 73, a native of Philadelphia, was director of Forsyth County Public Libraries for 28 years. He now serves as president of WH Roberts & Associates, a company that specializes in library construction design. He has two grandchildren who are currently in the system. He believes his experience as a long time community leader and businessman will serve him well on a board that he says "worries too much about the budget and not enough about the people who are dropping out."

Roberts believes a more personal approach to education is needed.

"Each child is unique; each child has a future," he said. "It's up to those of us in the educational system to discover those futures."

Sherrill, 63, is a native of Birmingham, Ala. She retired from her post as principal of Brunson Elementary after spending more than 25 years as an educator in the local schools. Sherrill says she would like to implement a school assignment plan that would make the schools more diverse. She believes interacting with people of differing backgrounds is an important part of a child's education.

"It's time to think out of the box and do things a little differently so kids get to know each other (across racial lines) and you can tie curriculum into it, so it's not a waste of time," she said. "...I totally understand the curriculum, so I would even be willing to work toward tying curriculum into other things so we can get kids (of different races) together."

Woodbury, 36, is a native of Winston-Salem and a world history teacher at Mt. Tabor. If elected to the board, Woodbury would have to teach outside the system because system employees are not allowed to serve on the board, but Woodbury, says she is willing to make the sacrifice. She believes a current teacher's perspective is sorely needed on the board.

"You bring that insight into decision making," she said. "When you can make policies and goals based on your day to day interaction with children (in the system), then I think that's more relevant than what the adult mind thinks we should do."

Woodbury, an alumna of Carver High School, says she would like to work on rehabbing low performing schools by implementing the best

practices of other school systems that have been successful in that area.

The Primary is May 4. Tomorrow (Friday, April 9) is the deadline to register to vote in order to cast a ballot in the primary. Early voting for the primary starts on April 15. To register, call the Forsyth County Board of Elections at 336-703-2800.

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