

UPDATE

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UPDATE

Greensboro TRC Announces Speakers for Public Hearing this Friday and Saturday

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC) has released detailed information about the 16 people who will testify at the Commission's second hearing this Friday and Saturday, August 26-27, 2005.

Speakers will include a police officer who was at the scene of the shootings on Nov. 3, 1979, as well as a woman whose husband was among the five who died.

See the GTRC press release attached below for further details.

The hearing will take place at North Carolina A&T State University, in the McNair Hall Auditorium, from 2-9 pm Friday, August 26, and 9 am-4 pm Saturday, August 27.

If you would like transcripts of the hearings, or further information on the Commission, please contact GTRC Communications Director, Joya Wesley, at (336) 275-5953 or joya@greensborotrc.org.

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) has served as an adviser to the organizers of the GTRC. For further information please contact Suzana Grego (contact information above).

GREENSBORO
TRUTH & RECONCILIATION
COMMISSION



workina for reconciliation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRUTH COMMISSION: VICTIMS, POLICE AND OTHERS TO SPEAK AT HEARING

GREENSBORO, N.C. – Speakers at the second Public Hearing this Friday and Saturday of The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission include a police officer who was at the scene of the shootings on Nov. 3, 1979, as well as a woman whose husband was among the five who died.

In all, 16 people will tell their stories relating to the hearing's topical question, "What happened on, and after, Nov. 3, 1979?" Community divisions exploded in violence on that day, ending with Klan and Nazi members killing five labor organizers and wounding ten others at a rally organized by the Communist Workers Party (CWP).

The hearing happens 2-9 p.m. Friday, Aug. 26, and 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 27, in the McNair Hall Auditorium at N.C. A&T State University. The Commission, which is the first of its kind in the United States, invites the entire community to become a part of history by attending the event at some point over the two days.

McNair Hall is located just off the eastern edge of downtown, near the stoplight at Dudley/Bennett Street, on the newly streetscaped East Market Street side of the A&T campus. The United House of Prayer has made convenient, free parking available in the lot of the old postal distribution center located on the southwest corner. Free public parking also is available on the street in front of the building.

Campus police, who are providing security for the hearing, advise that no bags larger than a woman's purse will be allowed into the hearing space.

Directions and other details are available at www.gtrc.blogspot.org.

The much-anticipated hearing comes a little more than a month after a successful first hearing that was featured in hundreds of newspapers and magazines around the world. Speakers at this hearing, who represent many different perspectives, bring personal stories that each paint a portion of the picture the Commission hopes to clarify through its mandated work of examining the "causes, context, sequence and consequences of Nov. 3, 1979."

In addition to the police officer and widow Floris Cauce Weston, speakers include former residents of the Morningside Homes public housing community where the shootings happened and organizers of the CWP rally. Also speaking are the judge who presided over the state murder trial, defense attorneys and the civil rights attorney who served as lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the federal civil trial. (see complete list below).

Prosecutors in the state murder trial, although they have actively cooperated with the Commission and provided extensive interviews and documentary information, decided at the last minute that it was "not in their interest" to speak at the hearing. Their names already had been listed in the hearing program.

Seldom seen footage of the event will be shown at the hearing. Also, viewing stations outside the hearing space will be showing 45 minutes worth of footage of the rally, shootings and aftermath.

Created through a public nomination and selection process, the Greensboro Commission is modeled on truth-seeking efforts in South Africa, Peru and elsewhere, where public hearings have increased understanding of events and surrounding social issues. They offer a rare opportunity to hear diverse voices sharing – uninterrupted and in their own words – personal, human experiences of traumatic events. Hearings have proven healing for groups as well as individuals.

The defendants in the shootings were twice acquitted in state and federal trials. However, a civil trial found that Klansmen, Nazis and members of the Greensboro Police Department were jointly liable for wrongful death for one of the five killed. Given the confusion caused by these verdicts and the volume of rumors and misinformation that surrounded these events and their aftermath, the Greensboro community has been deeply divided in its collective understanding of what actually happened and why.

The Commission's three planned hearings – as well as its final report and a community forum planned for November – will give voice to the community's collective experience. The report, due by early 2006, also will include specific recommendations for the Greensboro community and its institutions for concrete healing, reconciliation and restorative justice.

So far absent from this process are the voices of the city's current and former city and police officials. The Commission will continue its ongoing conversations with leaders, including former Mayor Jim Melvin, it hopes they will give statements and speak at the final hearing, Sept. 30-Oct. 1 at UNCG, on the topic, "What does the past have to do with the present and future?"

HEARING SPEAKER INFORMATION

These people, who each were asked to give the Commission wording for their own bios, are scheduled to speak in the following order:

FRIDAY, AUG. 26

Judge James Long

Graduate of UNC-CH as a Morehead Scholar in 1959 and a graduate of UNC-CH School of Law in 1963, Long served as a Caswell County Recorders Court Judge from 1964-1970 and a Superior Court Judge in District 17B from 1970-1994. Judge Long was the presiding judge in the state murder trial of the Klan-Nazi defendants in 1980. He has been a professional mediator and arbitrator since 1994.

Winston Cavin

A Durham native, he was a 26-year-old reporter for the Greensboro Daily News (now the News & Record) on November 3, 1979. He was given the "Death to the Klan" assignment a couple of days in advance and covered a CWP press conference to learn more about the event.

Captain R. D. Ball

Head of the Vice Narcotics Division of the Greensboro Police Department. He has been a member of the GPD since 1976 and was on the scene after the shootings on November 3, 1979.

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Candy Clapp

Former resident of Morningside Homes, she was twelve years old on November 3, 1979, and lived on Jennifer Street. Currently raising her daughter, who is a senior at Dudley High School.

Floris Weston, Ph.D.

Floris Caton Cauce Weston was born in Panama City, Panama, and immigrated to the United States in 1958 with her parents and siblings. As a student at George Washington University, she joined the February First Movement, a group of students named after the historic date of the first Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins. She met Cesar Cauce while both were helping to organize a 1977 African Liberation Day demonstration. They married in June 1979 and were newlyweds at the time of Cesar's death.

BREAK

Sally Bermanzohn, Ph.D.

Professor of political science and department chair at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, Berhmanzohn wrote *Through Survivors' Eyes: From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*, and edited the book *Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox*. Currently is writing a book on domestic terrorism and the Ku Klux Klan. Survivor of the November 3, 1979, tragedy.

Reverend Nelson Johnson

Born in Littleton, N.C. on the family farm, Johnson currently is pastor of Faith Community Church. Prior to attending N.C. A&T, he spent four years in the Air Force. He has an extensive history as a visionary and community organizer for racial and economic justice both locally and nationally. Among other roles he serves as executive director of the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro, as the national chair of Interfaith Worker Justice as a member of the National Policy Review Board for the labor union UNITE-HERE. Wounded on November 3, 1979, Johnson and his wife, Joyce, have two adult daughters and three granddaughters.

SATURDAY AUGUST 27, 2005

Virginia Turner

Born and raised in Greensboro, Turner worked in White Oak Mill from 1979 to 1990. She remembers the unionizing efforts and conditions in the mills prior to and following November 3, 1979. She is currently working for the packing department at Pace Communications.

Reverend Cardes Brown

Born in Rocky Mount, Brown graduated from Greensboro Bible College with a Graduate of Theology degree and a Bachelor of Arts degree. He also received a Master of Divinity from Shaw Divinity School. He has been the pastor of New Light Baptist Church since 1975. In 1979, he was president of the Pulpit Forum, a group of area ministers concerned with community issues. At that time, New Light was located in the vicinity of Morningside, where the shootings occurred. Brown was involved in several groups organized after Nov. 3 to try to understand the violence and help the community toward reconciliation.

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Leah Wise

A lead organizer of the National Anti-Klan Network, a coalition made up of civil rights and church organizations formed in response to November 3, 1979, Wise was also director of the Durham-based Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network, which advocates on economic and social justice issues, and later formed North Carolinians Against Religious and Racist Violence, which helped organize community response and monitored hate violence across North Carolina as well as government response to it.

Larry Morse, Ph.D.

An economics professor at N.C. A&T State University since 1976, he was out of town on November 3, 1979, but was friends with initiators of the march. He was a member of Citizens for Justice and Unity, subsequently a moderator at a community gathering in December 1979, and a co-chair of the march and vigil in the early 1980s against Klan demonstrations. He was a Human Relations Commissioner two years ago and worked to support the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project.

Michael Curtis

Judge Donald Smith Professor of Constitutional Law and Legal and Constitutional History at Wake Forest School of Law, Curtis was on the Human Relations Citizens Review Commission after November 3, 1979.

Robert Cahoon

Cahoon was born in Plymouth, N.C., and graduated from Wake Forest School of Law in 1940. He started private general practice in Wilmington in 1942 and in 1946 moved to Greensboro after he returned from service in the U.S. Army in World War II. He practiced criminal and civil trial law in Greensboro until he retired in 2002. He was the court-appointed defense attorney for Roland Wayne Wood in the state murder trial in 1980.

Harold Greeson

Greeson, who graduated law school in 1966, was the court appointed defense attorney for Coleman (Johnny) Pridmore in the 1980 state criminal trial.

Percy Wall

Wall has lived in Greensboro practicing criminal law for the past 55 years. He represented David Mathews, a Klansman who was a defendant in the 1980 state criminal trial.

BREAK

Lewis Pitts

A public interest attorney since 1973 focusing on civil rights, environmental justice, children's rights and participatory democracy, he served as lead counsel for the plaintiffs in the 1985 federal civil trial from which the jury found eight defendants, including a Greensboro Police lieutenant, a police detective, a police informant and several Klan and Nazis liable for the wrongful death of Dr. Michael Nathan.