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THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

Jeffrey L. Heard
Publisher

Stephen T. Meadows
Managing Editor

Heard and Meadows join Juana Jordan, Brian Lawson, Edith Smith, Mae Stokes and Lou Ziegler of *The Valdosta Daily Times* and Greg Lofton of Valdosta on the newspaper's editorial board. "Our Opinions" are formed by that board.

▶ OTHER OPINIONS

More efforts needed to combat racism

With more than 150 people in attendance for Wednesday's forum on race, our neighbors and friends began the heavy lifting required to identify and address the problems generated by racism.

The meeting highlighted the wide range of perspectives at work on the subject and it illustrated that people of good will have much work to do to improve things.

Several truths emerged during the forum:

■ It will take more than one evening's discussion to make a dent in this centuries-old problem.

■ Tremendous pain has been caused by racism and it has been overlooked for too long.

■ We must face a number of complex problems, from economic disenfranchisement to political representation, in order to make lasting improvements.

■ There are many people committed to making things better for all of us in this community.

The meeting featured anger and laughter, pained admissions and surprises starkly illustrated that many of our assumptions about race relations are overly optimistic. Not talking about racism, or not having it talked about in our presence, does not signal that everything is all right. Indeed, as featured speaker Dr. Ray Winbush noted, much of the meaningful change will come only when white people start telling black people what they talk about when black people are not around.

The request reveals the basic truth that communication often changes, and more particularly suffers, when we move outside our own racial groups. The reasons for that will require much more discussion, but improving that situation can begin today. Too often, in the name of trying to avoid giving offense, we fail to talk to one another. We want to avoid discomfort. But, as was shown Wednesday night, the discomfort already exists.

We are going to have reconsider our approach if we want to improve things.

The Rev. George Bennett, who has spent his adult life trying to make the world a better place for all people, conceded Wednesday that despite his many good efforts, there is racism that exists even in his heart. Bennett's message is that each of us must look deeper than our set assumptions and past our laundry list of good works. He said he is fighting for his soul. So are we; so is this community.

Things aren't fine just because we haven't heard any bad news lately. Indeed, as several people pointed out Wednesday, the silence many white residents interpret as contentment, is viewed by other people as profound indifference to suffering.

There was much we learned, but the lasting truth is that our efforts to hold a meaningful dialogue on race are only in the infancy stage. It will take commitment from our residents, our institutions and our leaders. Those who hold back, hold us all back. The status quo isn't working as it should and it's time to change it.

The sponsors of the forum, Valdosta Project Change, Valdosta State University and this newspaper are all committed to continuing this discussion. Our pledge is that there will be more forums, more dialogue and hopefully, increased understanding and resolve to make things better.

The test, as we all know, will come in our behavior. Are we fair in our dealings, decent in our considerations and honest with ourselves?

When we can say "yes" to all of those, our community will then be as it should.

That is the truth.

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

www.sgaonline.com

Monday, April 26, 1999

Continued from Page 1A

Houseal

talk about himself without coming across as conceited.

"I'm not trying to build myself up. I'm trying to offer myself up," he said. The Valdosta native was recently honored by church members at River Street Church of Christ, where he serves as an elder.

He points to plaques from Valdosta Mayor Jimmy Rainwater and U.S. Congressman Sanford Bishop, congratulating him on the message of his recently-published book, entitled "The Power of Self-Esteem."

"It's been a pleasant surprise in these negative conditions these days," he said.

Weary of seeing violence, drug abuse and bad decisions landing young black men in

prison, Houseal said positive role models are sorely needed to instill confidence in young blacks. He compared that combination of negative pressures to "a holding pond for bad blood."

Those forces that get people imprisoned are only amplified when the prisoners emerge, Houseal said.

"You're pushing them over into this society where they're not being productive, and when they come out, they're not nice guys," he said.

Positive role models are around, Houseal said, they just have to be modeled more.

Houseal maintains that becoming a productive taxpayer, something he makes sound

more honorable than the usual context the term is found in, does not have to be an overwhelming process.

It can be done, he said, "By saying 'I think I can. I'll try.'"

"Young folks, they got to get some options. Fast," Houseal said. "They're not dreaming, and you got to dream."

His impact on young lives is something Houseal takes gravely.

"It's going to speak for itself one day, when one of my students is going to be my surgeon, or my attorney, or my architect," he said. "Life is that fast."

To contact reporter Joe Dunlop, please call 244-3400, ext. 255.



Joe Dunlop/The Valdosta Daily Times

Willie Houseal wants more visibility of the accomplishments of African Americans. It's not that hard, he says; ordinary citizens like himself have plenty to offer as role models for young blacks.

Houseal says role models are desperately needed

By Joe Dunlop
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

MORVEN — Willie Houseal is bothered by the stream of African-Americans he sees getting in trouble and displayed on newspaper pages and television screens. He wants to see more people like himself on those pages and screens.

"People need to read something positive sometimes, and I don't mind exposing myself for that," said the school principal, from his office at North Brooks Elementary. "I don't know how long I'm going to be in this world, and I'm going to leave out of here setting some examples."

There isn't much from the 47-

year-old man's appearance to hint at the life he's led — ten years in the military, including a tour in Vietnam with a ground reconnaissance unit, Valdosta city council, a brief stint as a Valdosta municipal court judge, and most recently, author. If he gives up the education career he's currently enjoying, he can fall back on his training as a dental hygienist. He was invited to President George Bush's inaugural ball, and has shared a stage with civil rights leader Jesse Jackson. He married his childhood sweetheart, and has three children with her.

Houseal has that rare ability to

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THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

www.sgaonline.com

Tuesday, April 27, 1999

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Ethnicity



Mike Tanner/The Valdosta Daily Times

A portion of the diverse student population at Lowndes High walks to the buses and parking lot Monday after school.

Ethnicity not high on kids' agendas

By Weenam Chua
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — Friends who had entered the beauty contest urged Kimberly Council to do the same. She took their advice.

"I just did it for fun," said the LHS senior, who didn't think she would actually place in the pageant.

But she did, besting 39 other young women in the interview to be crowned Miss Lowndes High School. What makes Council's glittering crown even more eye-catching is that she is the first black LHS student to wear it.

Although students say they don't think much about race, the milestone gave rise to discussion about the role of ethnicity in the schools.

The Miss Lowndes High School contest has been held most years since 1967 after the

salutatorian has a choice of scholarships at the University of Georgia or Florida A & M.

But the significance of her win has not escaped Council or her friends.

"It does strike me as odd," Council said. "I didn't think about it immediately. Someone brought it up, 'Hey, I bet you are the first black Miss Lowndes High,' and everyone started talking about it."

But for the most part, students said they don't think about ethnicity.

"It's not a big deal to us," Valdosta High School junior Cari Clyatt said. "I think our school has handled it well. It is an individual decision whether you handle it well."

That sentiment is echoed by Valdosta City Schools Superintendent Sam Allen.

integration of schools. Lowndes merged with Westside to form the present high school on St. Augustine Road.

"This being our first black Miss LHS simply reflects well on Kim ...," said Peggy Wilkes, a coordinator for the contest and school counselor.

No one has suggested anything political about her selection. The Miss LHS contest is judged by out-of-town judges. Also, there have been black runner-ups in past years, Wilkes said.

"I believe I won on merit," said Council, who can back it up with a string of accolades.

Among her activities, Council has been president of Beta Club, class cabinet president and a student council representative. With a perfect grade point average, the 1999

"One thing extremely important about this generation, they don't think about race as much as the previous generations," Allen said.

There are times when a natural "division" occurs and the cafeteria at lunchtime is the good example. At LHS, many of the students end up sitting, for most part, with children of the same ethnicity, Council said.

Justin Smith, a junior at VHS, explains a similar phenomenon at his school cafeteria as a comfort zone.

Ethnicity, Council explains, is a common building ground for friendships. At LHS, the majority of students of different races interact and mix. There is no problem, she said.

But, today's questions about diversity outside the schools don't just deal with ethnicity. Of-

ten, the questions dwell on the economics of the haves and the have-nots.

That holds true for one club that actively addresses issues of diversity at LHS. Diversity In Action was created "because we have a population of students that are not involved," said Patricia Iverson, counselor for seniors.

Apart from issues of ethnicity, the club formed by input from students also deals with economics and transportation. Students bring up topics for discussion at regular meetings.

"It is a safe environment for ventilation," Iverson said. They also try to raise awareness about different cultures that exist in the school, she said.

To contact reporter Weenam Chua, please call 244-3400, ext. 237.

See ETHNICITY on Page 3A

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

www.sgaonline.com

Wednesday, April 28, 1999

Habitat proposal would eliminate substandard housing

By Jodi Scott

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — Lowndes County could become the first community in Georgia to eliminate substandard housing under a Habitat for Humanity initiative.

"You'll be doing what you are already doing," said Clive Rainey, a representative from Habitat's International Office. "You'll just be doing more of it and doing it better."

About 100 community leaders gathered Tuesday to hear Rainey talk about the proposal to eliminate substandard housing. The local Habitat chapter was asked by Habitat International to take part. Rainey described substandard houses as those that "are in gross disrepair."

Americus, which includes the headquarters of Habitat, is already carrying out such an initiative. It plans to build its last hous-

es next September. If Valdosta decides to take part, it would become the sixth county in the nation to do so.

Local director Ralph Jackson said there are some 1,500 to 2,000 substandard houses in Lowndes County, according to the Regional Development Center. He proposes setting a date of 2015 to eliminate them, meaning at least 100 houses built or renovated yearly.

Jackson hopes to see further discussion in the community about the proposal and another meeting date set. The initiative would involve local governments, civic groups, churches and volunteers working to build and renovate homes, which could include public housing, safe houses and independent living facilities.

Jackson said the local chapter likely would not have considered the plan had it not been approached by Habitat International. He said the construction cost

of a Habitat house is \$30,000. He then multiplied that figure by the projected 100 homes annually, in outlining the fund-raising work ahead. He said the international chapter would assist in raising funds.

Valdosta Councilman Bunnis Williams said the city is committed to eliminating such housing. Valdosta, through the Weed and Seed program, already has condemned many substandard houses in the city, according to Rainey.

Williams said the need for decent affordable housing crosses demographic lines. He said many non-black residents are looking for such housing on the south side of town in traditionally black neighborhoods.

The Tuesday meeting was hosted by United Way, Habitat and Weed and Seed.



Paul Leavy/The Valdosta Daily Times

Clive Rainey, with Habitat for Humanity International, shares Tuesday how Lowndes County could eliminate substandard housing within 20 years.

To contact reporter Jodi Scott, call 244-3400, ext. 247.



Associated Press

Rev. Al Sharpton, center, enters State Supreme Court in the Bronx with the family of Amadou Diallo, Wednesday, in New York, for the arraignment of the four officers accused in the death of the unarmed street vendor from Guinea. All four police officers were charged with two counts of second degree murder, including a count of intentional murder and one of depraved indifference, and one count of reckless endangerment. At the far right is Diallo's father, Saikou Diallo, and mother, Kadiadou Diallo. Others are unidentified.

Four NYPD officers indicted on murder charges

Killing immigrant could get officers 25 years to life

NEW YORK (AP) — Four white police officers were charged with murder Wednesday for killing an unarmed African immigrant in a hail of 41 bullets — a shooting that has led to months of protests and a painful examination of police tactics and race relations.

Officers Kenneth Boss, Sean Carroll, Edward McMellon and Richard Murphy pleaded innocent in a Bronx courtroom to second-degree murder. They could get 25 years to life in prison on the murder charges.

Amadou Diallo, a 22-year-old street vendor from Guinea with no criminal record, was shot 19 times Feb. 4 in his vestibule by members of an elite street-

crime unit looking for a rape suspect. Through their lawyers, the officers have said they thought Diallo had a gun.

The slaying has frayed Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's already strained relationship with the black community, and many have accused him of failing to understand the depth of New Yorkers' anger.

Giuliani said Wednesday: "We should allow the criminal justice system to now operate."

Judge John P. Collins set bail at \$100,000 for each officer, even though District Attorney Robert Johnson had asked that they be held without bail. The officers left the courthouse together shortly after the arraign-

ment. Johnson told the judge: "On Feb. 4 in the vestibule in his own building, Amadou Diallo stood blameless, unarmed and defenseless when 19 of 41 shots were fired at him, struck him and killed him. ... These four defendants intended to take his life." After leaving court, one of the officers, Carroll, shook hands with supporters and said in a quivering voice, "I want to thank the New York City police officers and the Street Crime Unit for their undaunted support." The officers were immediately suspended from their jobs. Marvyn Kornberg, Carroll's lawyer, called the intentional murder count "ludicrous." "What's the district at-

torney saying? That they had nothing to do that night but roll up on an individual and attempt to kill him because he's black?" the lawyer asked.

Steven Brounstein, Boss's attorney, said in court that Johnson had "succumbed to a political agenda. My client is innocent of all charges. There was no crime on February 4."

In the two months since Diallo was killed, 1,203 people have been arrested in demonstrations over Diallo's death, the alleged police torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997 and the perception that law-abiding minorities are routinely humiliated by police stop-and-search tactics.



Associated Press

Che Syles of Washington marches Saturday down Pennsylvania Ave. during a demonstration against police brutality. The march was sponsored by the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights.

Demonstrators protest against police brutality

WASHINGTON (AP) — Protesters against police brutality turned their attention from New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to President Clinton on Saturday as some 2,500 demonstrators marched in Washington calling for the president and Congress to help combat police abuses.

Demonstrators gathered outside the Martin Luther King Jr. Library and walked about one mile to the steps of the Capitol chanting “no justice no peace, no more racist police” and “let’s stop the Klan in blue.”

Although the rally was intended to call for changes to abusive police practices nationwide it was spurred by the shooting of Amadou Diallo, which has riveted national attention on the troubled New York City Police Department. Buttons, T-shirts, fliers and posters with Diallo’s picture or name were everywhere in the sea of demonstrators.

The crowd frequently erupted into simple cries of “Amadou.”

Four New York City police officers were arraigned on second-degree murder charges in Diallo’s death last week. The officers fired 41 shots at the unarmed West African immigrant, hitting him 19 times. The shooting set off a wave of protests in New York City at which some 1,200 people were arrested on civil disobedience charges for blocking access to police headquarters.

A spokeswoman for the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office said Saturday those protesters would likely not be prosecuted.

The organizer of those protests, the Rev. Al Sharpton, received a rousing welcome at the sun-drenched Washington rally as he arrived in the late afternoon with members of the Diallo family.

Following from the Capitol steps, Sharpton announced a national tour against police brutality and called for a national day of civil disobedience outside police headquarters where abuses

had been documented

Sharpton also said Clinton’s March 12 radio address, in which the president talked about police integrity, was not enough. And he spoke of widespread black support for the president during the Monica Lewinsky scandal.

“Don’t you turn deaf ears Mr. President. You’re there ‘cause we stood for you. Now it’s time that you stood for us,” Sharpton said.

Sharpton said he wants the president to meet with the families of people killed by police and called on Clinton to appoint a special prosecutor to investigate police brutality.

The rally came as the highest ranking member of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani’s administration told the mayor he had been harassed by the police for racial reasons.

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

Jeffrey L. Heard
Publisher

Stephen T. Meadows
Managing Editor

Heard and Meadows join Juana Jordan, Brian Lawson, Edith Smith, Mae Stokes and Lou Ziegler of *The Valdosta Daily Times* and Greg Lofton of Valdosta on the newspaper's editorial board. "Our Opinions" are formed by that board.

▶ ANOTHER OPINION

Blacks make progress, but racism still exists

The paperback edition of Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom's book, "America in Black and White," has been issued, and the hope has to be that critics from both left and right will acknowledge its basic good sense, its affirmation that black Americans have experienced extraordinary progress in the past half century, but that racism still persists.

Some conservatives — those who think racial prejudice has fled the land — refused their approbation when the hardback edition was released in 1997, and any number of liberals were apoplectic at the evidence of enormous strides in so many measurable categories. There are those, it seems, who would like to rest forever in certain preconceived, adamantly held ideological convictions. For them, truth can be like a tack in a chair.

But truth is what the Thernstroms deal with, and the truth is mixed. It is the case, for instance, that the jobless rate for black men is twice that of white men, but it is also the case that as many blacks as whites are graduating from high school now and that the gap is narrowing in the incomes of black and white married couples.

It is important to get a handle on the facts if legislators are to avoid stumbling into public policies that might make things worse, not better. Or, as the Thernstroms put it in their introduction, "Elusive definitions of racism that fail to pinpoint actual harms invite remedies that provide no genuine relief."

The authors take note in this edition of the book that President Clinton had set up a commission to provoke more debate of racial issues. But as they also note, there is plenty of debate. That's not what was needed. What is needed is discussion that is factual, that is accurate, that is not sloppy in its analysis, and that's what the authors provide.

— *Scripps Howard News Service*

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

Wednesday, April 14, 1999

50 cents

'Do we really want to talk about race?'

Race issues forum aims to begin community dialogue

Valdosta Project Change, The Valdosta Daily Times and Valdosta State University will sponsor "Do We Really Want to Talk About Race?," a race issues forum at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 21, in the auditorium of the VSU Continuing Education building (old Georgia Power building).

Opening speaker for the forum is Dr. Ray Winbush, director of the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn.

A nationally known and respected

speaker and author on race issues, Winbush earned both his master's and doctorate in psychology from the University of Chicago. He is a routine consultant with organizations ranging from the National Research Council, the Ford Foundation and numerous American universities.

A local four-member panel will also answer questions during the forum. Readers are encouraged to call The Valdosta Daily Times at 244-3400, ext. 460, and suggest questions for the panelists, who include:

● LaRonnia Williams — A retired educator, Williams is a member of the Valdosta Project Change Board of Directors and is chair for the Community Empowerment Committee. She travels nationwide conducting diversity workshops.

● Rev. George Bennett — Also a member of the Valdosta Project Change Board of Directors, Bennett is pastor of First

What Are Your Questions?

We want to know the questions to which readers seek answers on the matter of race. We'll forward these questions to the four panelists scheduled to speak at the April 21 race issues forum.

To share your questions, please call The Valdosta Daily Times at 244-3400, ext. 460.

Please see FORUM, on page 3A

Forum

Christian Church of Valdosta and a strong advocate for social justice. In October, Bennett attended the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond "Undoing Racism" workshop.

● **Rev. Floyd Rose — Pastor of Church of Christ at Pine Hill, Rose is also president of The People's Tribunal, a organization whose stated goal is to combat racism locally.**

● **Dr. Michael Rogers — An associate professor in the Albany State University School of Business, Rogers also serves as chairman of the Albany Coalition for Diversity, Inc.**

While many Valdostans might question the need for such a forum, Valdosta Project Change Director Frank Morman sees the gathering as a wonderful opportunity for the community to make progress on race issues.

"I am concerned that in 1999 people worldwide are still being

denied equal opportunities and treated unfairly because of the color of their skin," Morman said.

"Leaders, however, are in a state of denial about the discriminatory practices and conditions that exist in their communities," Morman said. "Hopefully, this forum will provide the catalyst for local dialogue to take place to address the issues that are pertinent to our own community."

Steve Meadows, managing editor of *The Daily Times*, believes the local climate is right for that kind of constructive dialogue.

"The long-term vitality of our community demands that we talk candidly and seriously about matters of race. Our goal is that this forum begins that process," Meadows said.

The forum is open to the public.

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

online.com

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

50 ce

Forum tonight aimed at beginning local dialogue on race

Valdosta Project Change, The Valdosta Daily Times and Valdosta State University will sponsor "Do We Really Want To Talk About Race?," a race issues forum at 7 p.m. today in the auditorium of the VSU Continuing Education building (old Georgia Power building).

Opening speaker for the forum is Dr. Ray Winbush, director of the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University in Nashville, Tenn.

A nationally known and respected speaker and author on race issues, Winbush earned

both his master's and doctorate in psychology from the University of Chicago. He is a routine consultant with organizations ranging from the National Research Council, the Ford Foundation and numerous American universities.

Dr. Shirley H. Hardin, director of African American Studies at VSU, will serve as moderator for the program.

A local four-member panel will also answer questions during the forum that were submitted by readers of The Valdosta Daily Times.

The panelists include:

● **LaRonia Williams** — A retired educator, Williams is a member of the Valdosta Project Change Board of Directors and is chair for the Community Empowerment Committee. She travels nationwide conducting diversity workshops.

● **The Rev. George Bennett** — Also a member of the Valdosta Project Change Board of Directors, Bennett is pastor of First Christian Church of Valdosta and a strong advocate for social justice. In October, Bennett attended the People's Institute for

Survival and Beyond "Undoing Racism" workshop.

● **The Rev. Floyd Rose** — Pastor of Church of Christ at Pine Hill, Rose is also president of The People's Tribunal, a organization whose stated goal is to combat racism locally.

● **Dr. Michael Rogers** — An associate professor in the Albany State University School of Business, Rogers also serves as chairman of the Albany Coalition for Diversity, Inc.

The forum is open to the public.

"Do We Really Want To Talk About Race?"

■ **WHAT:** Race issues forum

■ **WHEN:** 7 p.m. today

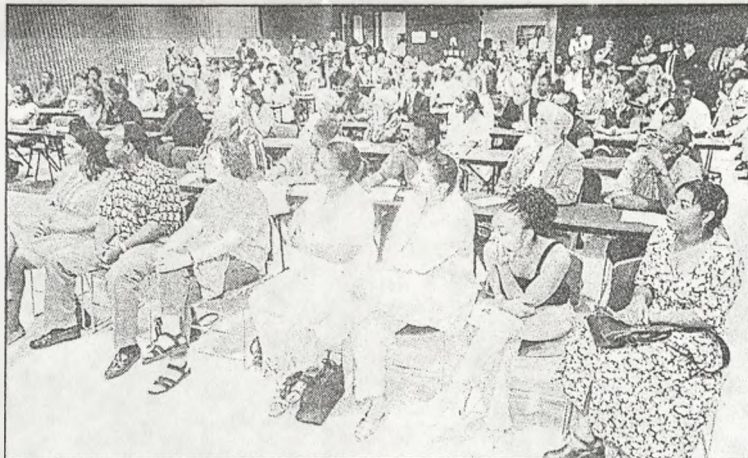
■ **WHERE:** Auditorium of the Valdosta State University Continuing Education building (old Georgia Power building), South Patterson Street

■ **WHO:** Public is invited

THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

Thursday, April 22, 1999

An audience of about 150 filled the Valdosta State University Continuing Education auditorium Wednesday night for the public forum, 'Do We Really Want To Talk About Race?'



Mike Tanner/The Valdosta Daily Times

"But, in my heart of hearts, when I look there, I know there is a racist living there. Part of redeeming and gaining my soul is to deal with that."

— Rev. George Bennett
Panel member

Dealing with our demons

Local residents come together for exchange on race relations

By Brian Lawson
THE VALDOSTA DAILY TIMES

VALDOSTA — In a room stretched at the seams from the size of the crowd and the weight of the ideas, Valdostans expressed their sorrow, anger and hope in opening a public dialogue on race Wednesday night.

The two-hour forum held at Valdosta State University's Continuing Education Center drew an estimated crowd in excess of 150 and featured an expert panel, audience questions and more topics than one forum could handle.

The discussion included America's color line and an ovation-producing admission of racism. There was talk of the wide appeal of Miles Davis' music and America's rejection of two epic films about slavery. Laughter resounded when a panelist repeated Rodney King's lament wondering why we all



Mike Tanner/The Valdosta Daily Times

Dr. Ray Winbush, guest speaker at Wednesday night's race issues forum at Valdosta State University, attempts to engage the audience during his opening presentation.

couldn't just get along and there were flashes of anger and frustration as audience members sought to describe the pain created by white America's "culture of violence."

As featured speaker Dr.

Please see RACE, page 3A

Coca-Cola Co. sued for race discrimination

Plaintiffs claim soft drink firm has 'glass ceiling'

ATLANTA (AP) — Four past and current black employees of Coca-Cola Co. are suing the soft-drink giant for discrimination, claiming blacks are paid less and have fewer opportunities to advance than white employees.

"Not only do barriers exist for African-American employees seeking upward advancement within the company, but similar barriers virtually segregate the company into divisions where African-American leadership is acceptable and divisions where it is not," said the class-action complaint.

It was filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Atlanta by Washington attorneys Cyrus Mehri and Pamela Coukos. Mehri, a veteran of corporate discrimination cases, represented black employees who sued Texaco in a case that resulted in a landmark \$176 million settlement in 1996.

"This is probably the next major glass ceiling case," Mehri said Friday. "We expect this to be an epic struggle going on over a period of years."

Coke spokesman Rob Baskin said he couldn't comment on specific details of the lawsuit before seeing it. But he said the company doesn't believe the case has merit.

"Coca-Cola doesn't tolerate discrimination, and if any discrimination is found, we take action to stop it and prevent it from occurring," Baskin said.

The suit seeks to include about 1,500 past and current salaried black employees at Coke.

Three of the plaintiffs still work at Coke, although the complaint says Linda Ingram, a senior information analyst, is on long-term disability because of depression it blames on her treatment at Coke.

The suit says another plaintiff, Kimberly Gray Orton, is a former supervisor who worked 13 years at Coke. It says she was underpaid for years, at times supervising white employees who made as much as \$7,000 more

than she did.

The complaint has scattered anecdotal examples of racial insensitivity, from alleged workplace insults to Coke marketers relying on racial stereotypes such as blacks living in ghetto areas.

"We are just at the beginning of this case," said Mehri, who said the complaint is buttressed by statistical evidence. It says the average black Coke employee at corporate headquarters earned \$45,215 in 1998, compared with \$72,045 for the average white employee.

Baskin said an estimated 27 percent of Coke's U.S. workers are minorities, including 15 percent of U.S. managers.

The complaint says few of the black managers reach the highest salary levels and tend to be confined to divisions like human resources and corporate affairs, which lack the advancement potential of white-dominated divisions such as global marketing or finance.

It also says blacks tend to receive worse performance appraisals and are terminated at higher rates than whites.