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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Rawlinson zips through hearings

Clark County Assistant DA confirmed in record time

By Deborah Kohen
Sentinel-Voice

Johnnie Rawlinson made history in more ways than one with her recent confirmation as a federal judge in U.S. District Court.

Not only did the Clark County Assistant District Attorney buck the molasses-paced trend of Democratic judicial confirmations that have marked hearings in the Republican-controlled Congress, Rawlinson's victory made her the state's first woman, first black and first black woman to sit on a federal court bench.

She got the good news on Thursday evening in a phone call from Sen. Harry Reid, Nevada's senior Democrat, who nominated her for the post last year after U.S. District

Attorney Kathym Landreth bowed out of the running. The judgeship was made available when Judge Lloyd George announced he was taking senior status.

Rawlinson's hearings began two weeks ago. She was stunned by her speedy confirmation — the fastest this year for the appointment of a district court judge.

"I'm elated," she said.

Reid said Rawlinson will make a great federal judge.

"Her academic record is outstanding and she's noted for her hard work," he said Monday. "She's experienced in both the civil and criminal fields and is perfect for the job."

Rawlinson will be a trial judge in



JOHNNIE RAWLINSON

a court of unlimited jurisdiction. "On a trial level," Reid said, "this is the most important judicial job in the country."

Federal courts settle cases involving the Constitution or federal laws, disputes between citizens and the federal government or between individuals or groups from different states, and cases involving other countries or their citizens.

Like all federal judges, Rawlinson will have the power of judicial review: she can overturn a law passed by Congress or declare that a public official's conduct is illegal if she judges the law or the conduct to be unconstitutional.

There are 94 district courts in the United States and its territories; each state has at least one, and most federal cases begin in a district court.

All federal judges are appointed by the President with the approval of

the Senate. The appointment is for life so that judges are protected from political agendas and conflicts and can act independently of officials in the other branches of government.

District courts handle both criminal and civil cases. Examples of criminal behaviors that involve federal penalties are narcotics trafficking and bank robbery. Civil matters that are handled in federal court include tobacco litigation, anti-trust issues and the activities of the Federal Communications Commission.

Active in Toastmasters and the National Bar Association, Rawlinson served on the State Bar of Nevada Board of Governors in 1990 and was director of the Clark County Bar (See Rawlinson, Page 4)

Black cops want apology from mayor

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK — Black police officers and the father of the boy whose death touched off the 1991 rioting in the Crown Heights neighborhood say an apology from the city is due to them, too.

Officers of One Hundred Blacks in Law Enforcement said Sunday that Mayor Rudolph Giuliani owes them an apology for suggesting they held back from making arrests during the eruption that followed the car accident in which 7-year-old Gavin Cato was killed and his cousin severely injured.

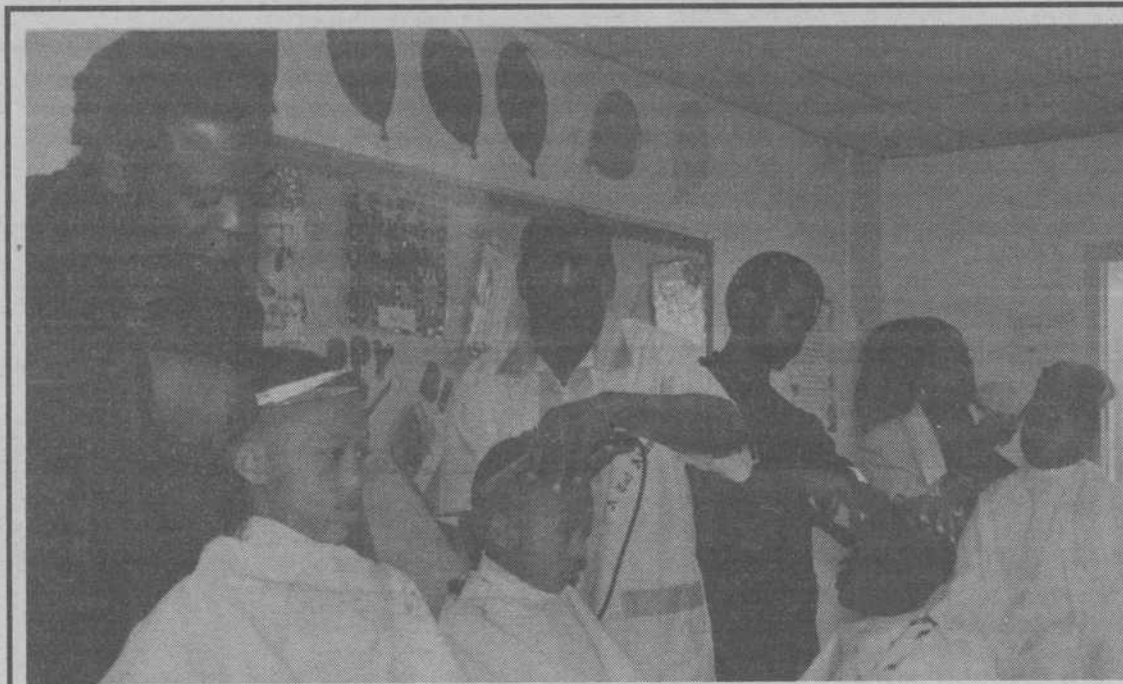
Gavin's father, Carmel Cato, said Giuliani put salt in his family's wounds in apologizing to the family of the slain Yankel Rosenbaum and other Jews of Crown Heights for what the mayor called the city's failure to protect them during the riot.

"What about the Catos?" Cato said to reporters Sunday. "The mayor should have contacted us. Are we nonexistent?"

Last Thursday, Giuliani apologized to area residents as part of the city's \$1.2 million settlement of a civil suit by Jewish leaders and Rosenbaum's family.

Gavin, who was black, was fatally injured on Aug. 19, 1991, by a Jewish man's car, setting off unrest in the Brooklyn neighborhood. Hours later, Rosenbaum, a visiting Hasidic scholar from Australia who had nothing to do with the accident, was fatally stabbed by a roving band of blacks. Lemrick Nelson Jr., 22, was sentenced in federal court last week to 19-1/2 years in prison for violating Rosenbaum's civil rights.

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Clip... Buzz... Clip... Clip

Barbers Mike Jones, Curtis Anderson, Maurice Taylor and Betty Kinciad from A Cut Above The Rest I, II & III barber shops, visited second graders at Kermit Booker Elementary School last week to display their skills and groom students for the Easter vacation.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Ex-Ku Klux Klan leader could face murder trial soon

Special to Sentinel-Voice

JACKSON, Miss. — Prosecutors likely have new fodder for their case against an ex-KKK leader who was accused of but never convicted of masterminding the 1966 firebomb death of a voting rights activist.

Prosecutors can sift through the transcript of a 1983 sealed interview between Sam Bowers and state historians.

A state court this month ordered the 200-page transcript of a conversation between Bowers, and the historians turned over to prosecutors trying to resurrect a case in the

slaying of Vernon Dahmer, a grocer targeted for helping blacks register to vote.

Bowers, an imperial wizard with the KKK, had been promised that all information he revealed in the interview would remain secret until after his death.

Dahmer, a 58-year-old official of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was killed in January 1966 when his house and country store were firebombed in Hattiesburg, about 120 miles southeast of Jackson.

His wife and children escaped through a

back window.

Four people were convicted and another pleaded guilty. Bowers was accused of masterminding the firebombing, but three juries could not reach a verdict.

The transcripts—including records recently made public from the defunct Mississippi Sovereignty Commission—could include new powerful ammunition for prosecutors.

Bowers, believing his 1983 comments to historians from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History would be kept secret until his death, may have felt he "could speak without

fear of repercussions," University of Mississippi Law School professor Ronald Rychlak said.

Bowers' attorney, Travis Buckley, has said he expects little new information to come out from the unsealed interviews.

Dahmer's family is cautiously optimistic that the interview's contents could lead to a conviction.

"Emotionally, we feel we are in the best position that we've been in since my father was murdered in 1966," Vernon Dahmer Jr. said Monday. "It's a unique position to be in because

(See Klan, Page 2)