

Roberts vs. Texaco: Book Texaco didn't want written

By Dorothy R. Leavell
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Just when Texaco is perhaps feeling secure that it has weathered the storm associated with the revelation of tapes filled with racist statements — the tapes resulted in a \$176 million settlement for black employees — the company faces another debacle: a book airing more of the oil giant's dirty laundry.

Bari-Ellen Roberts tells it all in the just released book, "Roberts vs. Texaco."

Roberts said she did not sue Texaco for name-calling, she sued them for employment discrimination. She concluded, however, that the real motivation for Texaco's settlement of the case was the billions of dollars it lost on the stock market and other investments as a result of the suit.

She said that her need to tell the story — one with a backdrop of debate on the need for affirmative action — was based on her hopes of assisting others in similar circumstances and perhaps it can help provide a level playing field for others suffering from the same type of discrimination.

Texaco was secure because in a first six-month assessment of its "plan" for improvement in company policy and actions, it allegedly improved. Roberts thinks that six months was too premature to measure a difference.

In the book, she notes that Rev. Jesse Jackson of Rainbow/PUSH and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People were not initially interested in the case, but she said she gives Jackson credit that once the tapes were revealed, he was able to attach an agenda having to do with minority outreach community concerns and cultural events that their suit did not address. She describes a breakfast meeting that those of us who have worked with PUSH and Rev. Jackson know too well.

I had a personal interest in the book since I met with Peter Bijur, CEO of Texaco, along with the Rev. Joe Lowery, then President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, representing the Black Leadership Forum, which he chaired. I expressed my doubts to Lowery, Jackson and NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume when they accepted a "plan" from Texaco that those of us who represented the Black Leadership Forum were not privy to the plan's details.

However, my unreadiness did not hinder the above named parties from making a big announcement of the acceptance of Texaco's plan in Washington, D.C. at the National Press Club. The reading of the book was "deja vu" for me and the business encounters I experienced in dealing with advertising for the African-American press following the revelation of the tapes and the meeting I attended with the BLF.

The book, published by Avon Books in New York City, reveals as they described it in press information "New NEWS." Items highlighted are:

- How Texaco tried to stop Bari-Ellen Roberts from writing this book.
- How Texaco could have made the lawsuit go away for as little as \$30 million instead of \$176 million.
- The existence of a "deep throat" inside Texaco who aided in the case against the company and the lengths Texaco went to in order to find out who it is. (They still don't know).
- Jackson, Mfume and other black leaders attempted to take center stage with the nationwide boycott, although their organization had ignored Roberts, her associate Sil Chambers, and others involved in the case until it began to make headlines.
- Why did Richard Lundwall, who was scheduled to go on trial on April 20, make the tapes? Why did he share them? Why did he choose to give them to the law firm behind Roberts versus Texaco?

More personal stories from witnesses and others in the suit are also broached: the near physical assault by a co-worker during a heated argument; comments by Robert Ulrich, Texaco's treasurer, not previously brought to light saying Bari-Ellen Roberts cast herself as a "f...ing liar" and how he thought about punching her in the face and playing psychological games with her.

In addition, a Texaco lawyer commented that the company was not prepared to "throw a bunch of money at a bunch of Blacks."

When asked what advice would she give to someone suffering from similar circumstances, Roberts replied: "I would not tell everyone to sue. Try to work within the company. A suit is a horrendous task.

Evidence unearths group's aim: 'Whites Only' U.S.

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — A federal prosecutor said last week that new evidence she unearthed could lead to additional charges against white supremacists here accused of conspiring to set up a new whites-only country.

U.S. Attorney Paula Casey said in court last Thursday that the evidence would be presented to a grand jury next month and a new set of indictments could be expected by the end of June.

Casey mentioned the evidence at a pretrial hearing for Chevie Kehoe, Danny Graham and Faron Lovelace, but would not be specific.

U.S. District Judge G. Thomas Eisele turned down her offer to share the information in private.

Kehoe and Graham, also known as

Daniel Lee, each face seven charges, including racketeering and three counts of murder in aid of racketeering in the 1996 deaths of William Mueller, Nancy Mueller and her 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Powell. Lovelace is charged with a single count of racketeering.

Prosecutors say the three wanted to create the Aryan Peoples Republic through a campaign of murder, robberies and kidnappings.

Eisele pressed Casey on whether scheduling the trial for the three defendants should await the new indictment.

"It's certainly more than correcting clerical errors," Casey said. "But for the defendants here, it is certainly not a matter of starting over."

Her comments prompted the judge to suggest that the new developments meant

additional defendants would be added to the case, but Casey wouldn't comment.

Eisele last month said the three defendants would be tried together, but said last week he might hold a separate trial for Lovelace because Lovelace plans to be his own attorney.

He directed the lawyers to submit arguments on whether separate trials were warranted.

Prosecutors said Kehoe directed the group and that Graham carried out his orders. Lovelace was Kehoe's assistant, they said.

The defendants claimed their new country would grow quickly "by recruiting certain white people into the Republic and by engaging in polygamy so that the number of these white persons would greatly increase," the indictment said.

Libertarians: Uncle Sam as racist as KKK

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Uncle Sam should wear a white sheet because he can be as racist as the Ku Klux Klan, the Libertarian Party charged last week.

"The government cheats African-Americans out of their Social Security payments, routinely harasses them for DWB (Driving While Black), and disproportionately arrests them as part of the War On Drugs," charged Steve Dasbach, the party's national chairman. "Government policies keep black Americans poor, afraid, and in jail."

Sound like hyperbole? It's not, said Dasbach, citing some statistics.

• Dasbach contends Social Security is a "sucker's game" for African-Americans. According to a new study by the Heritage Foundation, the average black man earns a negative rate of return on his lifetime of Social Security payments — getting back less than he paid in.

Why? Because African-Americans have a lower life expectancy than whites.

"By dying at such a young age, the average black man essentially transfers \$10,000 of wealth to white women [who live much longer]," USA Today reported

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recently.

The average black male pays into the system for his entire life, collects eight months, and dies," added Congressman Mark Sanford, R-S.C.

• Black skin and driving is a dangerous mix, Dasbach said.

It's a "crime" called Driving While Black, he said, and it results in African-Americans being stopped by police for alleged traffic violations more frequently than white drivers.

For example, between Baltimore and Delaware, 73 percent of the police traffic

stops involved African-Americans. In one town in Pennsylvania, 96 percent of the drivers stopped by police were black or Hispanic. And in Florida, black drivers were stopped 650 percent as often as white drivers.

• Black Americans bear the brunt of the War on Drugs: More blacks are being arrested at a faster rate on drug charges, according to the Center for Substance Research.

Since the early 1980s, the arrest rate for blacks on drug charges has jumped 156 percent, compared to only 49 percent for whites. As a result, 36.9 percent of Americans now arrested on drug charges are black — a percentage that's three times higher than their proportion of the general population.

Dasbach said reversing the inequity would be simple: reduce the power of government.

"Freedom would be a better friend for African-Americans than government," he said. "Government likes to masquerade as the friend of minorities. But the more power government gets, the more damage it can do to America's minority communities."

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