



Woman: County fire department rife with bias

By Nancy Watson
Sentinel-Voice

A black female rookie firefighter was nearly killed during a training drill at the Clark County Fire Department, then she was fired.

Lorraine Russell-Williams' nightmare lasted 16 weeks, but she "hung in there." She wanted to be a firefighter. In spite of her excellent grades, she was "terminated" May 22, just two days before she would have graduated.

She is in the graduation video. Her photo is included in the graduation program. It was her dream - to become a firefighter.

That heartache wasn't the end of her troubles. On graduation day, her husband, Firefighter Johnnie Will-

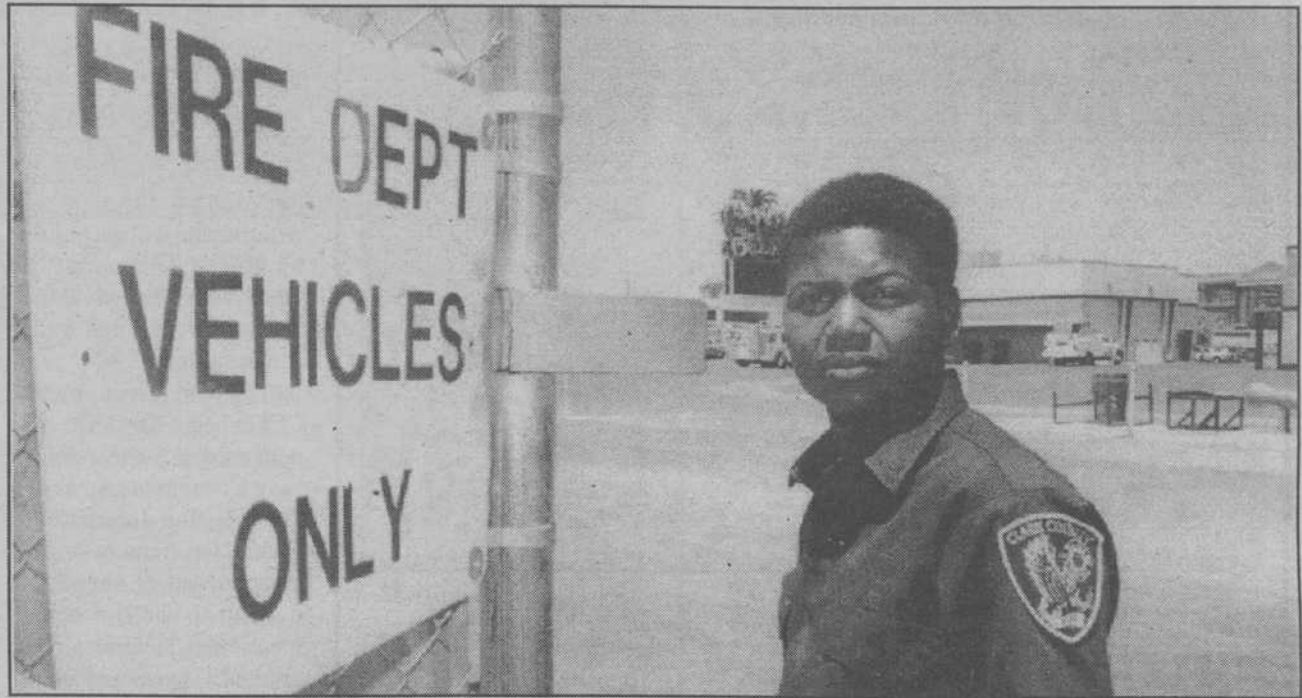
iams, who had worked for CCFD for three years was also axed.

Her dream was gone, her job was gone and so was Johnnie's, but that is not all.

When he was asked to hand over his identification and his badge, he took the news badly, his body reacted. He was rushed to Sunrise Hospital where he was treated for angina. His painful chest condition has been blamed on the stress he endured knowing his wife was suffering during her training and then losing his job.

Williams has no other explanation for the pain. He is an athlete and is in excellent physical shape. He spent five days in the hospital and remains under a doctor's care.

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Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Lorraine Russell-Williams claims she endured racist and sexist taunts during her 16-week training course to become a firefighter in the Clark County Fire Department. She has filed a bias claim with the county's Equal Opportunity Division.

Staffer: Personnel changes at middle school unfair

Al Triche
Sentinel-Voice

Seven local schools are preparing to submit to management next year by a private firm, in an unprecedented move taken by the school district to improve their performance, but the effect of transition is already being felt by those who work there. Some being sent to

other schools complain that their reassignments have been arbitrary and improper.

Their union agrees. On Monday, one union official said, "We have filed a grievance against Edison Schools," while another pointed out, "We have filed a lawsuit."

The Clark County School District's contract with

Edison Schools—the nation's largest private manager of public schools—to operate seven of its worst performers is being challenged in court. In late April, unions representing teachers and support staff filed suit in district court to void the contract, charging that it violates the state constitution.

Critics have warned that

the process of selecting faculty and staff for Edison-operated schools would be less than objective. Just last week, Dr. Augustin Orci, currently CCSD's point man for the Edison project, said of Edison: "They are still considered a part of the Clark County School District," while noting that CCSD is "still very much involved in

the selection of faculty and staff."

But a 15-year veteran of the CCSD support staff, who for several years worked happily at a school that has now been designated for takeover, lost her position there and believes transition to the Edison era is being conducted unfairly.

Alicia South, office spe-

cialist II at C. I. West Middle School for the past four years, said that in late February, "We were told if we wanted to keep our jobs, we could, but would have to interview." This assurance, she said, came not only from Edison officials, but also from school principal Karen Williams.

But South believes one (See Edison, Page 2)

Local NAACP members: national office hiding from court action

Al Triche
Sentinel-Voice

A spokesman for the NAACP says representatives will meet here in about two weeks, even as ousted officials of its suspended local branch seek a court order to overturn its disciplinary actions and continue to meet weekly in what was the branch's office suite.

On April 3 the NAACP sent a "hearing panel" here to investigate numerous complaints against its Las Vegas Branch. Five weeks ago it suspended Branch 1111 and its officers, saying bylaws had been violated and the branch had been ineffectively managed, and indicating an

administrator would be sent to reorganize the chapter.

But Gene Collins, branch president at the time, has argued the April 29 "faxed press release" sent to branch members was not the official notification required. NAACP Director of National Field Operations Nelson Rivers III, however, says notice was sent via certified mail.

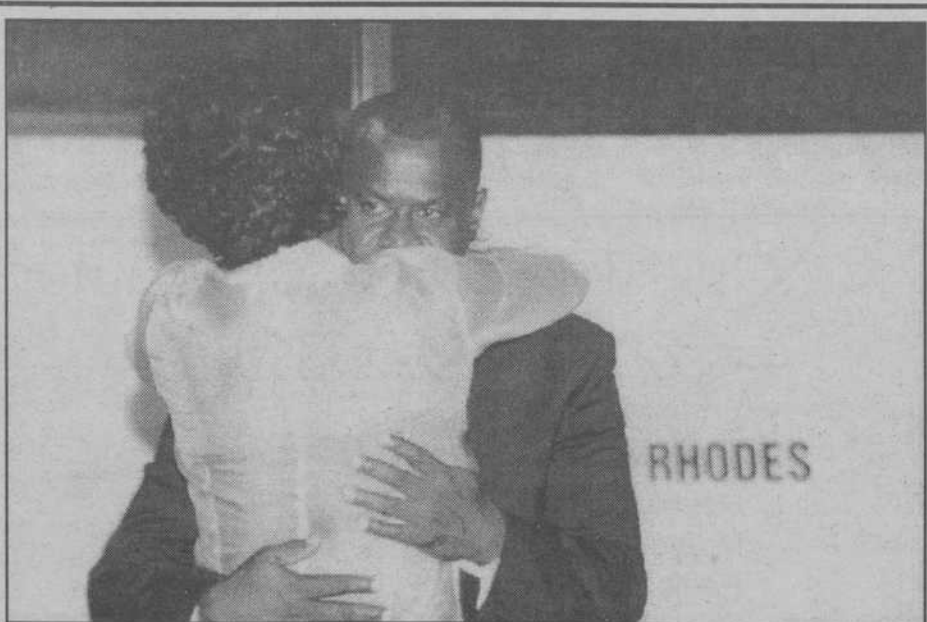
Collins and others claim the suspensions were unwarranted and that national officials ignored due process in ordering them. Three weeks ago they asked the Clark County District Court for an injunction to halt the suspensions.

Their petition claims the

hearing panel was convened improperly, "a full hearing" was never held and that the press release is unauthenticated. Defendants named include NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume, Board of Directors Chairman Julian Bond, Rivers, Western Region Director Frank Berry, and Tri-State President Ed Lewis.

"It's open season on African-Americans in Las Vegas," said longtime branch member and close Collins advisor Chester Richardson. "Right now, nobody can get any help from the national office to address issues that are happening in Las Vegas.

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Sentinel-Voice Photo by Ramon Savoy

ELECTION DEFEAT

North Las Vegas City Councilman John Rhodes receives a conciliatory hug Tuesday night at his campaign headquarters after learning that his reelection bid failed. Rhodes was defeated by former North Las Vegas Planning Commission member Robert Eliason, who harped on Rhodes legal woes despite initially promising clean campaigning.