

Firefighters

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ground. Her turn-out gear had been removed. Two of the cadre members were taking her blood pressure.

She begins to talk

She talked to her husband and to her husband's superior, Captain John Holmes.

"I was afraid something very bad was going to happen to me," she said.

She filed a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Division of Clark County. An investigation is still underway. The harassment by the cadre did not stop.

But she did get an apology from the one who had hung the noose over the television.

April 30, Chan Kendrick of EOD, told her that everyone, her cadre and their superior officers agreed she should graduate.

However, he wanted to know if there was any part of her complaint she wanted to drop. She said there wasn't.

In May, she and Williams attended at family fun day sponsored by CCFD. Things went well until someone accused her husband of throwing something at him and harassing him. He had thrown nothing.

Uneasy with all that had happened to her, Russell-Williams began to worry. She spoke with CCFD personnel and told them that she had been with her husband all day and he had not thrown anything at anyone and had not harassed anyone.

She was told to "forget it."

Tuesday at 10 a.m. she

was called out of the class. Deputy Chief William Kourim, Asst. Chief William Keating, Grana and a union representative were waiting for her.

"They told me they had bad news for me. That I did not pass my probation. That there was nothing specific but that I was terminated. They offered to pay for my counseling. They told me to return all my turn-out gear and books," she said.

She had already passed the Nevada State Fire Marshall's Firefighter 1 Certification Test.

She had passed the CPAT, she had passed everything but one daily exam. She missed it by two points. Instead of an 80 she got a 78.

She asked if that exam was the reason, she was told it wasn't.

"I got 100 percent on the physical agility test, I got 100 percent on the Clark County Practical," she said.

Two days later, she attended the graduation ceremony then called her husband and learned he was on his way to the hospital that he, too, had been terminated.

CCFD denies that he was terminated. Technically, Williams was suspended with pay for five violations.

The violations include, hazing, disruption of department performance, general conduct, neglect of duty and workplace violence.

He is suspended until he has hearing with Chief Earl Greene. His hearing was

scheduled for Tuesday but his doctor did not want him to attend. Williams, however has union representation. His wife, who paid union dues does not. Rookies are not entitled to representation for a year although they pay union dues.

"It's taxation without representation," said Benny Scott now retired from CCFD and a member of the Professional Black Firefighter's Association.

Just the tip of the iceberg

"Lorraine was the victim of a hate crime and every black person in the valley was affected," Scott said.

"She was hypoxic and they did nothing. We are trained to save people. We even save dogs from fires. We bring them outside and give them mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. They did nothing for her. They went against their training and their duty," he said.

Russell-Williams' problems with the fire department are just the tip of the iceberg.

Scott, who won a lawsuit against CCFD in 1996, has filed another for the exact same reasons, discrimination. This time, again, the fire department failed to promote Blacks to key positions even though the chief is a Black man.

Scott is also suing for retaliation and harassment.

Chief Greene was a plaintiff in the 1997 lawsuit with Scott and Porter Burgess. His position with the fire depart-

ment is the result of that lawsuit. But the same players remained beneath him and they have too much control, Scott said.

Deputy Chief William Kolar was listed as a defendant in Scott's original lawsuit. He and Assistant Chief William Kourim were in charge of the cadre that was supposed to be training Russell-Williams.

Greene approved the termination of Russell-Williams. She was terminated because she did not pass her probation, he said.

He could not comment further on her case because it is under investigation.

"Williams wasn't fired. I don't know where or why that (rumor) started. He was suspended with pay prior to a hearing," he said.

Several complaints alleging discrimination by employees of the CCFD are currently under investigation.

Russell-Williams is awaiting the results of a Monday meeting that will determine whether she gets her job back.

Litigation may be her only solution. Several agencies including the U.S. Department of Justice are watching the situation closely.

Man pardoned

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) - Gov. Parris Glendening granted a posthumous pardon Thursday to a black man hanged in 1919, saying the execution "may well have been a miscarriage of justice."

"While it is impossible at this late date to establish with certainty his guilt or innocence, there is substantial doubt that justice was served by his hanging," the governor said.

John Snowden was convicted of the bludgeoning death of 20-year-old Lottie May Brandon, who was white, in her Annapolis home in the summer of 1917. He was convicted based on testimony from two neighbors who said they saw a man resembling Snowden leave the house, and on the fact that black skin was found under her fingernails.

Snowden, who protested his innocence until he was hanged, is buried under a weathered gravestone just blocks from the State House. He has remained a symbol of Maryland's troubled racial past as the story of his hanging was handed down from generation to generation among black residents of Annapolis.

Growing doubts about Snowden's guilt led Gov. Emerson Harrington to hold a hearing before the hanging. But Harrington said he had reread the trial transcript three times and declared it the most complete case founded on circumstantial evidence that he had ever seen.

Former Gov. William Donald Schaefer rejected a request for a pardon in 1990, but residents brought up the issue again before Glendening.

"There were enough troubling questions raised at the time that the state should not have imposed the death penalty without further investigation," the governor said in a statement explaining his decision to accept a recommendation from the Maryland Parole Commission that a posthumous pardon be granted.

Victims

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Dlamini-Zuma said that in South Africa it is easier today to confront the past "because both (victims and perpetrators) know that our destiny is very linked."

Despite the discrepancies in Geneva about compensation for racial injustices, the South African official is confident that the delegates will "close that chapter in a way that is acceptable to all of us... and will be a product of negotiations between all of us."

Consensus will be reached "only when we all agree that the past was a serious injustice and that it needs to be dealt with" in order to definitively end this chapter, she said.

The South African experience demonstrates that the compensation aspired by the victims include symbolic measures, such as providing wheelchairs for the disabled, school scholarships for the children of poor families, or a monument in a village to remember those who died in the battle against apartheid, pointed out Dlamini-Zuma.

It is impossible to put a price on reparations, but efforts should include elements that improve the victims' lives today, their self-esteem and dignity, the minister said.

The essential aspects are to recognize the injustices of the past and that compensation must be the result of negotiations, she added.

Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, also acknowledged the difficulties the preparatory process for the Durban conference faces in reaching consensus on matters related to slavery and colonialism.

"Colonialism is particularly difficult because, for a number of colonial countries, there is a great sense of pride in their history," Robinson said.

The negotiations will therefore require a considerable capacity for true compromise in order to engage in this painful process, added the U.N. official.

Robinson provided an analysis of the most recent racist violence in Europe, which occurred over the weekend in the English city of Oldham, where white "skinheads" attacked descendants of Asian immigrants.

The High Commissioner pointed out that "second and third generation British citizens are characterized even by the media as being 'Asian' in a way that doesn't necessarily reinforce the fact that they are indeed citizens of the country."

Robinson stated that it must be "recognized that in many European countries there are rising problems of xenophobia, rising problems of tensions — and political exploitation of these issues."



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