

## Saks-owned stores boycotted in the South

By Adrienne Donnell  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

**BIRMINGHAM** (NNPA) — For the first time since the Civil Rights Movement, another boycott has begun here, led by Jefferson County Commission President, Larry Langford and Commissioner Shelia Smoot. Two weeks ago, Saks Incorporated announced that they would close two of their Parisian stores in Birmingham, at the Eastwood location and Western Hills Mall. In comparison to the sit-ins and bus boycotts in the 60s, many consumers are split over the idea of not shopping in any of the department stores.

However, the closing of the store at the Western Hills location is what has Langford and Smoot fuming. Although Langford and Smoot don't call their reaction a boycott, they are asking consumers to stop shopping at Saks-owned department stores which include Parisian, Proffitt's, McRae's, Younkers, Herberger's, Carson Pirie Scott,

Bergner's, and Boston Store and 31 Club Libby Lu specialty stores. "You spend your money with these folks, and at the drop of a hat, they just walk in and say they're going to shut the store down and pack up and move it," said County Commission President Larry Langford. "The minute they close this store, I'm going to ask anybody in my family and everybody else I know, 'Don't shop with them any more.' Enough of this garbage is enough," he continued. At the Jefferson County Commission meeting on Tuesday, November 30, Commissioner Langford said that he will pay out his account and discontinue shopping in "any" store under the Saks Incorporated umbrella upon their departure from Western Hills Mall.

Perhaps the closing of the Parisian at the Eastwood location is not an issue because the mall's interior corridors are already emptied of stores. There was once talk of moving the store across the street to Century Plaza. Instead, they decided to relocate their

Eastwood location to Trussville. With the company relocating to Trussville (whose population trend has increased 48 percent since 1990 in comparison to Eastwood's seven percent decline since 1990) it is assumed to be a better move for the company as far as retail development. George Jones, President and Chief Executive Officer of Saks Department Store Group said in a statement, "The planned closing of the Eastwood and Western Hills locations is consistent with our strategy of rationalizing our real estate portfolio to focus our resources on our most productive units. We remain very committed to Parisian's hometown market of Birmingham with our successful Riverchase, Summit, Brookwood, and Downtown locations and look forward to continuing to serve our loyal Eastwood Mall and Western Hills customers in our four other convenient locations."

One resident of Brighton says she will miss the convenience of shopping at the

Western Hills Malls location. "The store is convenient to stop and buy my favorite cosmetics that I can't get anywhere else but Parisian. I don't want to drive all the way to the Galleria or the Summit," she expressed.

Commissioner Langford agrees that it is unfair for the people of West Jefferson County to have to go east or south to shop at a Parisian.

Smoot advised every citizen in her district who shops at Parisian not to spend a dime this Christmas in an effort to prove their economic effects on their business.

Some suggest that the lack of merchandise at the Parisian in Western Hills is what drives the customers to have to shop elsewhere consequently hurting their business.

"You can't force businesses to locate in areas where there's no margin of profit, and to me it would be far better to approach this from a different method," commissioner Betty Fine Collins said.

Adrienne Donnell writes for the Birmingham Times.



George Foreman shown here with his so-named grills.

## Foreman to group: Cease using name

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Former boxer-turned-businessman George Foreman wants his name off an Omaha meat company. The former heavyweight champion, whose name also graces a line of popular grills, testified Friday his former associates in George Foreman Foods Inc. "broke every piece of the contract" with him.

"They didn't do any of the things (they were supposed to do). They continued to go around and use my name improperly and put my name on products I didn't approve," Foreman said at a Bankruptcy Court hearing.

The company filed for bankruptcy in November, and Foreman has asked to be added as a creditor and for the company to stop using his name. He has not specified how much money he is owed.

He has also sued the president of the company, Larry Humberstone, in Omaha and Chicago.

Foreman, 55, said he ended his relationship with the company in November 2003.

The Omaha company owes more than \$200,000 to nine parties, according to court filings.

In exchange for a portion of the profits, Foreman had licensed his name and likeness to the company and promoted the company's steaks as a product that complemented the popular George Foreman grill.

But the deal soured over disputes regarding what products could be marketed and who would make them.

Foreman said the initial agreement was to sell meats produced by ConAgra Inc. that he had approved and would promote on QVC, a shopping television channel.

In court filings, both Humberstone and George Foreman Foods have said they acted within their contract with Foreman. Company lawyer Richard Berkshire has said Foreman broke their agreement by refusing to do promotional appearances and TV commercials while negotiating with competitors.

Foreman, who lost to Muhammad Ali in a huge upset in 1974 and 20 years later became the oldest heavyweight champion ever at age 45, has 10 children — including five sons named George.

## More Blacks give entrepreneurship a shot

By Kenneth Mallory  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

**WASHINGTON** (NNPA) — A new study, "Self-Employed Business Ownership Rates in the United States: 1979-2003," finds that self-employment rates among minorities have dramatically increased. "This study provides definitive evidence for the growth trend we've seen in entrepreneurship over the years," said Robert Hughes, president of the National Association for the Self-Employed.

"Particularly strong among women, Blacks and Latinos, these numbers help to better quantify the appeal of self-employment and the impact this segment of the

small business population has on the economy."

Based on data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the study, conducted by the national Small Business Administration's (SBA) Office of Advocacy, finds that from 1979-2003, incorporated and unincorporated business ownership rates rose by 37 percent for African-Americans, while 33 percent for women and 17 percent for Latino Americans.

Self employment among Black men rose 59.9 percent from 1984-2003.

Robert W. Fairlie, associate professor of economics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, conducted the study under contract with the

SBA. "What I'm hoping is that it [the study] will generate research to figure out what's going on [and] what's driving these trends," said Fairlie in a telephone interview.

Fairlie is unsure of what has led to the increase in self-employment among minorities. Although entrepreneurial trends are rising, African-Americans still face challenges becoming business owners.

"I've done a lot of work on the overall question of why business ownership rates are low among African-Americans. What the literature finds is that there are a few explanations that come out pretty strong. One is that African-Americans have lower levels

of initial capital. That's one thing that is definitely a barrier into business ownership," said Fairlie. "Another is that they're [African-Americans] less likely to have family businesses, so they're less likely to grow up in a family business, less likely to have parents that are business owners. Those things tend to be very important — sort of informal ways of getting human capital to start your own business.

"Lower levels of education on average, hold African-American business owners back a little bit. But that doesn't seem to be that important, being a more minor factor."

Kenneth Mallory writes for Afro Newspapers.

## Fraud

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have the same equal protection rights with equipment that works in the same way," said Congresswoman Jackson-Lee. "A system like this would require full funding, every state must have the same equipment, every state must have a paper trail or audit if called for, every state must document provisional votes were counted, every military vote must be counted, and the elections must be run by non-partisan officials."

Among those testifying were Congressman Melvin Watt, the next CBC chair, and Jesse Jackson. "I am here today to make a moral appeal for a thorough investigation — including forensic computer analysis of the machines — in Ohio. To recount the vote [is necessary due to] so many irregularities and inconsistencies," Jackson said. "And for those in charge to recuse themselves inasmuch as the judge or the referee in a battle must have a detached objectivity with the appearance of fairness. We must further change the law."

Jackson charges that votes were suppressed or altered, and

that there were substantial irregularities in vote tallies, a lack of voting machines in urban, minority and Democratic areas and uncounted ballots in many jurisdictions. Shelton has received many of the same complaints in his Washington office and feels a unified system is only part of the solution.

"There is ineptness in the system and a unified system is one approach, but there are other issues," he said. "When voter fraud occurs, it doesn't just defraud those running for office; it affects everyone from having fair, elected representation. Even with unified systems you have to have trained poll workers that know what the law is and implement that law in a way that is most helpful."

According to Shelton, the current voting process has to be fundamentally changed.

"No election should be certified until every vote is cast. Our process is a democratic process, which is about the American people," he said. "We want to make sure the system serves the people. If the system is faulty, then the outcome is going to be faulty as well."

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For more Information

Contact: Tanya at 265-4601