

# Fast-food mogul La-Van Hawkins convicted

By Zenitha Prince  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) - Society will never admit it, but it loves to see a success story turned sour and will, in fact, purchase front-seat tickets to witness that person's demise. La-Van Hawkins has provided that latest thrill. In past months, the African-American gang leader and cocaine addict-turned-multimillionaire capitalist has been embroiled in a legal maelstrom that involved several bankers, Philadelphia government officials, lawyers and a former presidential candidate. Hawkins' legal troubles began with his indictment on June 29, 2004, and ended with a May 10 conviction on multiple charges of fraud and perjury.

Hawkins was convicted on an honest services charge for funneling \$5,000 to former

Philadelphia city treasurer Corey Kemp, financing Kemp's trip to the 2003 Super Bowl and other perks so that more government contracts would come his way and for lying to the grand jury during the investigation. Hawkins, CEO of Michigan-based Hawkins Food Group, has owned and operated Pizza Hut, Checkers, Burger King and Blockbuster franchises throughout the U.S. and has averaged about \$300 million in annual revenues.

The mogul was one of 12 people swept up in a federal probe into municipal corruption in Philadelphia, which became public when an FBI listening device was discovered in the office of Mayor John F. Street in the fall of 2003.

Though Street was never charged nor implicated, Kemp was convicted on 27 charges, including mail fraud, extortion, honest ser-

vices fraud and filing false tax returns. Kemp's conviction was based on wiretap recordings, in which he and fundraiser and power lawyer Ronald White discussed ways to extort campaign donations and other payments from city businesses. White was also going to be charged, but died of cancer. The jury also convicted Commerce Bank executives Glenn Holck and Stephen Umbrell on charges of conspiracy and wire fraud for arranging to receive inside information in its business dealings with the city, and White's mistress, Janice Knight, a printing business owner, was convicted for lying to the FBI.

Even former presidential candidate Al Sharpton was drawn into the melee after his name surfaced during a taped conversation between Hawkins and White, sparking a separate federal investigation into his Fed-

eral Campaign Commission filings. According to reports, Hawkins and White, two of the Sharpton's major fundraisers, were recorded saying that Sharpton had failed to report all of the contributions given to his campaign, an allegation that Sharpton has denied.

Even with this conviction, Hawkins will likely survive. A seasoned scrapper, Hawkins survived a hardscrabble upbringing in the grim environs of the Cabrini-Green housing projects in Chicago to become one of the nation's premier restaurant magnates.

He and the others convicted in this case are expected to be sentenced in July and will likely face jail time. But U.S. Attorney spokesman Richard Manieri said, "We're hesitant to give out any ballpark maximum sentences because it is so difficult to calculate at this point."

## Health group: HIV/AIDS to boom with baby boomers

By Makebra M. Anderson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - While much of the public's attention is focused on young people contracting almost half of all new HIV and AIDS cases, there's a growing HIV/AIDS problem developing among the elderly, a problem that will only grow worse as baby boomers reach retirement.

"I don't think older people think of HIV at all except as something affecting young people, and few places are trying to build up an information base to let them know

that this affects everybody. We have to understand that everybody is liable to become infected," said Bill Rydwels, a 73-year-old man that has been living with HIV for 20 years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 1,039,987 reported AIDS cases in 2003 of which, 315,509 (30 percent) were in people over 45. In 1999, the CDC reports that there were 11,056 reported AIDS cases in people 45 and older. In 2001, an estimated 12,176 people over 45 were living

with AIDS and in 2003, approximately 13,825.

People of color are still disproportionately affected. Fifty-two percent of older Americans living with HIV/AIDS are either African-American or Hispanic, reports the CDC. Among men over 50 living with HIV and AIDS, 49 percent are of color. Among women, 70 percent are of color.

The continued increase in HIV among those over 50 can also be attributed to their living longer, thanks to advanced HIV therapy.

According to Rydwels,

who works with the Chicago Forum on HIV and Aging, the perception that people over 50 aren't sexually active is one of the leading causes of high rates of HIV and AIDS among this group.

"People over 50 come from a generation where the discussion of sex was an under the table thing. You may have discussed it with your mate, or you may have discussed it very lightly with a close friend. It's something that professionals didn't discuss and still aren't comfortable discussing with older people," he said.

"Nobody wants to discuss the sexual habits of older people. It's the concept that older people stop having sex and it's just not a reality. We all need that approval that sex gives us — that we're wanted and loved," Rydwels said.

According to a study by the University of Chicago, 60 percent of men and 37 percent of women 50-years-old and above report engaging in sexual intercourse a few times per month.

Rita Strombeck, a physician with Healthcare Education Associates, a group that has recently developed a con-

tinuing medical education program for doctors and nurses to recognize HIV/AIDS as a problem among older people, agrees.

"It has to do with the fact that they [older people] don't consider themselves at risk, and they are. One of the problems with doctors and primary care providers is they don't recognize it's a problem with older adults, either," Strombeck said.

According to Patricia Hawkins, associate executive director of the D.C.-based Whitman-Walker Clinic, the  
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## Tulsa

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were heartened by a decision by Black members of Congress to hold hearings last week.

"The fact that the Congressional Black Caucus was able to hold hearings on the Tulsa race riots of 1921, although there have not been floor hearings on HR-40 (a 16-year-old reparations bill sponsored by Rep. John Conyers of Detroit), gives the sense that we're not forgetting survivors of the tragedies of the 20th Century," explains Ogletree.

The city of Tulsa has refused to honor claims, asserting that the statute of limitation for filing claims has expired. Furthermore, officials add, insurance does not cover damage caused by riots.

Last year, a federal district judge sided with the city and dismissed Alexander's lawsuit. The Tenth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court ruling. In March, Ogletree asked the Supreme Court to review whether the survivors have the right to file claims with the city and state. On Tuesday, the court

said no.

Earlier, a state-ordered commission concluded that Oklahoma and the city of Tulsa participated in the death and destruction and, therefore, both should be forced to compensate surviving victims. Ogletree argues that victims were reluctant to file claims in a timely fashion because of fear and intimidation.

"The Tulsa police chief deputized between 250 and 500 men, commandeering local gun shops and pawnshops in order to arm the new deputies," the suit states. "The police department ordered members of the mob to 'go home, get a gun, and get a nigger'... When the State National Guard arrived to assist the police, the guardsmen joined in the destruction and fired at will at African-American Greenwood residents."

Ogletree and other attorneys working on the case recognized that the Supreme Court's decision would turn on narrow legal issues. They were hoping for a trial so that victims could share their

powerful personal testimony. Otis Clark, now 102, told the Black Caucus in the House Judiciary Room that he witnessed a funeral home employee getting shot in the hand as he tried to open the door of an ambulance. Clark, then 18, says he arrived home later only to find it burned to the ground.

Families not only lost their homes, but also their land, Clark said. "They never did do anything about our property. One of the railroads, they just ran over my grandmother's garden spot."

Olivia Hooker, 6-years-old at the time of the riot, told the Black Caucus that she heard what she thought was hail on the roof of her mother's house that day.

"My mother told me to come here. Then she said, 'Look up through there. There's a machine gun with an American flag on top of it.'"

In a telephone interview with the NNPA News Service, Hazel Franklin Hackett, now 93 and living in Valley Springs, Calif., says she will never forget the degradation

of coming back home after staying nearly a week in a tent on the fair grounds.

"It was really heart-breaking. There was nothing there but just ashes where there had been homes — beautiful homes. — Black people, we were doing so well. We had businesses, even our own drug stores," she said.

Retired Oklahoma State Sen. Don Ross, who sponsored the bill that established the special commission, says: "Until 9/11, that was the worst civil disturbance in the U. S. since the Civil War. Blacks, who were placed in concentration camps, were ordered by state government, without pay, to clean up the debris," he says. "So that says to me that they were put in servitude. So, it suggests to me that there were issues that neither courts nor political figures dealt with at the time. In my view, those issues are still outstanding. They went through the entire remedy that they could and there was no justice there."

The local White-owned newspaper, the *Tulsa Tribune*, had another name for

Black Wall Street: "Niggertown." It published an editorial on June 4, 1921, saying, "...Such a district as old 'Niggertown' must never be allowed in Tulsa again. It was a cesspool of iniquity and corruption... In the old 'Niggertown' were a lot of bad niggers and a bad nigger is about the lowest thing that walks on two feet. Give a bad nigger his booze and his dope and a gun and he thinks he can shoot up the world. All of these four things were to be found in 'Niggertown'..." The case against the Black teen, Dick Rowland, was dismissed after the elevator operator said she did not want to press charges. However, Police Chief John Gustafson was convicted for failure to

control the situation. Former Senator Ross says there was a reason to be suspicious of law enforcement officials.

"Part of the credentials of becoming a policeman was that you had to be a member of the Klan," he stated. "Everybody was a member of the Klan... People were just scared to death. The Klan didn't wear sheets. They wore pin stripe suits."

And Hackett believes they should be made to pay.

"I feel that justice will have been done when they pay us for all that we had to endure and for burning our homes," she says. "We had no place to go. No banks would even lend us any money. We had to start from scratch."



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