

# More companies expected to reveal ties to slavery

By Makebra M. Anderson  
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WASHINGTON (NNPA) — A growing number of companies will have to disclose their past ties to slavery if they want to do business with government units around the nation.

Wachovia Corporation is the latest firm to acknowledge its past links to slavery. To do business with the city of Chicago, under the 2003 Slavery Era Disclosure Ordinance, it has to disclose whether it had directly or indirectly profited from the 19th century slave trade.

"What this proves is that

the ordinance itself is working. It's very important that we have this information, and the ordinance is real," said Chicago City Council member Dorothy Tillman, author of the ordinance.

"We are not playing, and any company that thinks we're playing should understand that we mean business. Now we have to meet and see what we are going to do as a people as these companies unfold and we pass along information. How do we really build and pull together our own team?"

Other cities, including Philadelphia, Los Angeles,



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and Detroit have passed similar legislation while New York, Cleveland, Milwaukee, San Francisco and Richmond are considering passing the law.

According to City Council Deputy Majority Leader Bill Perkins, who introduced the bill in New York, "This is about truth, enlightenment and accountability."

Tillman, who spearheaded the efforts in Chicago, said it was not submitted to ban companies that have links to slavery from doing business with the city. However, some information may end up as part of reparations suits.

One of those lawsuits has already been filed in San Francisco Superior Court. The plaintiffs in the \$1.4 trillion suit are descendants of Andrew Jackson Hurdle, who lived as a slave. The defendants are from the insurance, finance, textile, tobacco, and transportation industries. They include

FleetBoston Financial Corporation, Aetna Inc., Lloyd's of London, New York Life Insurance Company, Westpoint Stevens, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation, Loews Corporation, and Canadian National Railway Company.

According to the lawsuit, \$1.4 trillion is fair restitution for the price of labor.

Wachovia is not the first bank this year to admit its link to slavery. In January, JPMorgan Chase & Co. acknowledged that its roots are linked to slavery and, in fact, (See Slavery, Page 13)

## Senators

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retary of Defense under President Bill Clinton.

Langhart Cohen said her 17-year-old cousin, Jimmy Gillenwaters, was lynched by a mob in 1912 near Bowling Green, Kentucky.

More than 4,700 lynchings took place between 1882 and 1968, most of them African-American men. Many more are believed to have taken place, but those are the ones documented by Tuskegee University, a historically Black institution in Alabama.

According to those records, Mississippi led the nation with 581 documented lynchings during that period, followed by Georgia with 531; Texas and Louisiana, each with 391; and Alabama with 347.

Even though Mississippi led the nation in lynchings and is the state with the highest percentage of African-Americans — 36 percent — neither of its two senators supported the anti-lynching resolution.

Senate Majority Leader Lott has not signed on after resigning from the leadership position three years ago after boasting about his support of the 1948 segregationist presidential platform of the late Sen. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.

In an effort to shore up rapidly declining political standing, Lott agreed to be interviewed by Ed Gordon on Black Entertainment Television. He told Gordon at the time, "The important thing is to recognize the hurt that I caused and ask for forgiveness and find a way to turn this into a positive thing, and try to make amends for what I've said and for what others have said and done over the years. I'm looking forward

[for this to not only] be an opportunity for redemption, but to do something about it."

Apparently, that didn't include apologizing for the Senate's failure to enact anti-lynching legislation.

"He said he was going to



and never approved, nor does it authorize payments to any of the victims.

Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), a former chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and one of the most outspoken proponents for right-wing judicial

*"This resolution has been circulated for months now. Everyone knew about it. So, to me, all of the persons who did not sign it show lack of concern for this important issue."*

— Rep. John Conyers

make up with the Black community. He said we're going to be proud of him. And then, the one opportunity that could have made a very positive statement, he cuts and runs," says U. S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Black Democrat from Mississippi.

"This will continue to be a spot on the state of Mississippi," Thompson said.

Lott refused to return repeated telephone calls to his office for comment.

Thad Cochran, the other Mississippi senator, was adamant. "I don't feel I should apologize for the passage of or the failure to pass any legislation by the U. S. Senate. But I deplore and regret that lynching occurred and that those who committed them were not punished," Cochran said through his spokeswoman, Jenny Manley.

Senate Resolution 39 is mild by most standards. It does not apologize for the lynchings, only for the 200 times anti-lynching bills were proposed in the Senate during the first half of the 20th century — including three passed by the House —

and never approved, nor does it authorize payments to any of the victims.

The resolution was introduced on Feb. 8. Senate staffers from both offices walked the bill to each of the 100 Senate offices, soliciting signatures. A week before the vote, the resolution was posted in the Senate cloakroom, a gathering place where members daily discuss chamber business. The 13 non-signers, all Republicans, routinely receive F's each year on the NAACP's Civil Rights Report Card.

Ironically, Hutchinson holds an annual "African-American Leadership Summit" on Capitol Hill. Like Lott's, her office didn't return repeated phone calls.

U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) says it was courageous for Landrieu and Allen to acknowledge what she called "a history of darkness that occurred in the United States. The resolution

of apology shed light on this tragic era."

She explains, "I take issue with anyone who makes light of or diminishes the impact of this apology. I am disappointed that the Senate did not see fit for all 100 senators to join in this momentous and historic occasion."

Rev. Robert Shanklin, president of the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP, says he did not expect Alabama's Shelby to sign the resolution.

"Shelby doesn't support civil rights. So it's not surprising to me that he didn't sign on. But it was a little surprising that he wouldn't have followed since so many of them did sign on. That was the least he could do," Shanklin says.



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"It would be almost impossible to determine the extent of the damage that was done [by the lynchings]. So to decide to apologize wouldn't have taken a big person."

Shanklin says he will raise the issue again during the NAACP annual state conference in October and come election time next year: "This goes to show we have a long way to go yet. And as we look at our elected politicians, we need to examine them and them reexamine them. We can't endorse anyone, but we certainly can ad-

dress issues."

In addition to the 12 senators that refused to sign the anti-lynching resolution and the eight that signed after the fact, 18 others jumped on the bandwagon either the day of or evening of the voting, after it had become clear that the resolution enjoyed widespread support. They were: Max Caucus (D-Mont.), Christopher Bond (R-Mo.), Jim Bunning (R-Ky.), Conrad Burns (R-Mt.), Lincoln Chafee (R-RI), Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), James Inhofe (R-Okla.), Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.), Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), John D. Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), Jeff Sessions (R-

German President Johannes Rau five years ago for the Holocaust during which 6 million Jews were killed.

"The question is, 'How much does it impact on the survivors, on those who are the children of the victims?' The pain and the loss is there," Foxman explains.

"It humanizes it a little bit. It takes out the loneliness of it. Most victims suffer alone. Their memories are their own — painful. And all of a sudden there is a recognition of their pain. There is a recognition that they are not alone, that people understand," he said.

The other issue is the impact on America itself and future generations, Foxman said.

"Many of these atrocities, many of these painful historical incidents, what society has done — perpetrators or not — many have tried to deny it," Foxman illustrates. "But it's a very, very important message to future generations because they need to understand that while they didn't do it, there is a sense of responsibility that they inherit the past. ... And so, when people are unwilling, whoever the Senators may be, they're still in denial of responsibility."

Derrick Johnson, president of the Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP, agrees.

"This shows how far we have not come as a state when our political leaders still refuse to acknowledge the atrocities that have taken place in Mississippi around lynchings and civil rights," Johnson says. "For senators Lott and Cochran to not do the very basic thing and apologize for the inaction of the United States Senate is very telling."