

Cole retires as Bennett College president

By Sandra Isley

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (NNPA) - The void that Johnnetta Cole will leave after retiring as President of Bennett College is already being felt by local alumnae. Cole has announced that she will be vacating the position at the end of the 2006-07 school year, after serving the full five years that she'd originally promised the private, historically Black liberal arts college for women.

"...We knew that her five years were coming up, but we had hopeful thoughts, I guess, that she would stay, only because we loved her so much," said Gloria Wilson, president of Bennett's Winston-Salem Alumnae Chapter.

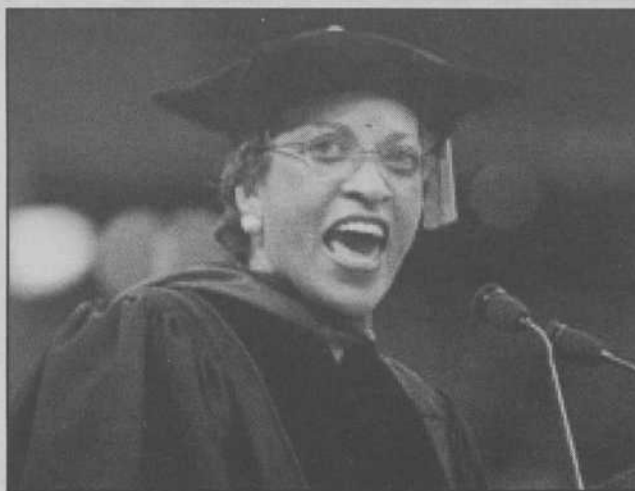
"Then again, we would be selfish if we didn't want her to enjoy her retirement."

This will be Cole's second retirement. She came out of retirement in 2002 to steer Bennett. She had previously led Atlanta's renowned Spelman College.

When she came to Bennett, the school was on academic probation and operating at a more than \$3 million deficit. The college was taken off of probation soon after she took the helm. Since Cole took office, the college has enjoyed financial growth and national attention.

"She came out of retirement to save our school and she has done her part. It's left up to us now to keep it going... we know she'll always be a part of Bennett," said Carolyn Black, a Winston-Salem resident who graduated from Bennett in 1963.

There is work to be done at Bennett before Cole bows out. The capital campaign



Johnnetta Cole improved many facets of Bennett College.

that she set in place has, so far, just raised half of its \$50 million goal. Cole said the Revitalizing Bennett Campaign will be realized before she leaves.

"We must reach our \$50 million campaign goal. And I am confident that under the honorary chairship of Dr. Maya Angelou and (former)

Senator Bob Dole, we will do it. It is essential that we reach this goal so that Bennett College for Women can be positioned to sustain the tremendous gains we have made over these past few years," Cole said while giving remarks at a news conference last week.

Cole's strong leadership

was evident in many areas. Bennett's enrollment has grown to more than 550 students. She's brought many notable people to the school for fundraisers and speaking events, including former President Bill Clinton. Later this year, Oprah Winfrey is slated to headline a Bennett fundraiser in Greensboro.

Campus buildings have also been remodeled and new programs have been established. The Johnnetta B. Cole Global Diversity & Inclusion Institute at Bennett College was established during her tenure.

The institute offers a variety of programs aimed at improving leadership and global competitiveness skills for minority women. Cole plans to continue serving as chair of the board of the Institute even after retiring from Bennett.

"She has brought us into the spotlight where people are well aware of Bennett College and that it is a school for women. She has developed the Institute and the Board and Wise Women. She has done quite a bit to bring us up to the spotlight where we can compete with other first-class schools," said Wilson.

Cole was close to leaving Bennett last year. She announced her resignation after at least one member of the school's administrative leadership staff challenged her authority. But the community, along with students and faculty, rallied around Cole, refusing to accept her resignation. It is unclear whether a similar show of support can persuade Cole to stay beyond her five-year commitment.

Sandra Isley writes for the Winston-Salem Chronicle.

Alabama barbecue restaurants spread in South

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) - Alabama's best export might be slathered with sauce. 'Bama-based barbecue restaurants — known for their variety of styles — are spreading throughout the South and beyond, slowly gaining an out-of-state foothold in a highly regionalized business where diners can be pretty picky about what's on their plate.

Any fan of Southeastern Conference football knows about Tuscaloosa's Dreamland BBQ Ribs, which started in a smoky, dark building in 1958 a few miles from the University of Alabama.

It now has six restaurants, including two in upscale parts of metro Atlanta, and each has the same motto: "Ain't nothing like 'em nowhere."

Golden Rule Bar-B-Q, which opened in 1981 near Birmingham, has 20 locations in Alabama and has expanded to one each in Georgia and Tennessee with plans to move into more states by the end of the year. And Jim N' Nicks Bar-B-Q has grown beyond its Alabama roots into Georgia, Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.

With projected sales of \$79 million this year, Jim N' Nicks has plans to grow to two dozen locally owned restaurants by early next year, with one as far away as Denver.

The trick, according to the company's marketing director Sam Burn, is translating

the tradition, food and fun of a backyard cookout into a restaurant experience that sells across state lines.

"Barbecue is something people are really passionate about," said Burn. "Barbecue is very personal and communal and local."

Other southern barbecue restaurants have spread — the Florida-based Sonny's Bar-B-Q calls itself the nation's largest barbecue chain with more than 150 restaurants in nine southeastern states. But the spread of so many restaurants from a single state is unusual in the barbecue world, according to Scott Jones, executive food editor at *Southern Living* magazine.

Areas like the Carolinas, Memphis, Tenn., Texas or Kansas City are known for certain styles of meat, he said. People who are used to a certain type of barbecue — chopped pork covered with a watery, vinegar-based sauce, for example — may turn up their noses at a spare rib coated in thick, tomato-based sauce.

But, Jones said, Alabama barbecue restaurants are hard to pigeonhole, serving everything from saucy chopped pork to spare ribs rubbed with dry spices to chicken coated in white sauce. Some even serve Texas-style beef. Jones said that variety just doesn't happen in most parts of the Deep South.

That gastronomic diversity might make it easier than normal for Alabama-based

companies to cross geographic boundaries and catch on elsewhere, Jones said.

"The only requirement for them is to turn the rest of the country on to barbecue," said Jones. "They're not locked down to any particular style."

Another food expert, John T. Edge, said the migration of barbecue restaurants has quickened in recent years. He called it a "curious phenomenon," one that goes against generations of tradition of old southern men, Black and White, cooking meat by a pit for neighbors.

"Barbecue was once the most hyper-localized food in the [Deep] South," said Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, part of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. "You built a tradition, you built a style that was honed by an old-line pit master. They didn't move. They stayed in one place."

At Jim N' Nicks, Burn said managers have tried to craft a menu that both attracts everyday diners and recalls the roots of old-fashioned barbecue.

"Authentic southern barbecue is the foundation of our business," he said. "Ribs and white bread are the inspiration, but it's evolved through the years."

The family-owned Jim N' Nicks has grown by finding local owners to open new restaurants. At Golden Rule, vice president Todd Becker said all the growth has been

by franchising.

"We're going to try to grow 30 percent a year for the next five years," he said. "Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and the Carolinas: We've got plans to expand to all those areas, plus Mississippi and Florida." They aren't alone.

Full Moon Bar-B-Q started in metro Birmingham and has expanded to locations including Baltimore, where Baltimore Ravens star linebacker Ray Lewis oper-

Clinton

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cial wizard," Okonjo-Iweala holds one of the most powerful positions in Obasanjo's government.

Like Okonjo-Iweala, Clinton believes that the number one challenge in Africa is building a systematic capacity for people on the ground to make their own progress. He said, "It's not about intelligence or hard work, it's about creating a system that will enable that intelligence to be rewarded."

Clinton could have been referring to Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Uganda or any one of the innumerable African countries whose college educated population have not been able to realize their potential because of economic strangleholds from crippling debt accrued by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF or from government mismanagement of funds.

Clinton said that in order for the Global Sullivan Principles to prosper, a partnership amongst the non-governmental sector, private enterprises and government entities must be formed in order for development to be holistic and effective—not only in Africa, but across the world.

Clinton said that the explosion of the non-governmental organization movement after the fall of Communism is sweeping the world and enveloping the continent of Africa. With

ates a restaurant. And in the Tennessee Valley of northern Alabama, Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q is planning to branch out.

Gibson's, which has won numerous barbecue competitions and claims to have the world's best sauce, already sells its sauces in eight states and more than 2,000 stores. It, too, is planning to fire up the smoker outside of Alabama.

"We're working on a location up in North Carolina

with a franchise there," said Paul Collins, manager of one of the company's two restaurants in Decatur.

Edge said he expects the growth to continue as people all over America look for down-home dining experiences.

"At the same time the country is discovering local foods, companies are learning how to export," he said. "I think it can work. Hell, the South sold the world Coca-Cola."

the proliferation of NGOs comes a need for streamlining the process of their efficacy. And according to Clinton, the organizations cannot function well without collaboration with the private sector and national governments.

Clinton lauded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention initiatives. He advocated for giving Africans infected with HIV access to inexpensive, high quality drugs. To date, civil society groups such as South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign have already been instrumental in inciting governments to ensure affordable anti-retroviral drugs. Yet, with global trade rules favoring large pharmaceutical companies that own patents on drugs, generic medicines are still not reaching those who need it most.

Before coming to Abuja, Clinton had just returned from Lesotho, a small country geographically swallowed by South Africa that has instituted a voluntary testing mechanism for everyone over the age of 12. In addition, the government of Lesotho has made public statements that no one who seeks voluntary testing will be stigmatized.

Masters thanked Clinton for his presence at the summit and his continued commitment to supporting her father's legacy.

Robtel Neajai Pailey writes for the Washington Informer.