

Judge slaps down Bush wiretaps

By Valencia Mohammed
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The recent axing of President George W. Bush's wire-tapping policy has focused international attention on another strong African-American female, U.S. District Judge Anna Diggs Taylor, 73, of the Eastern District of Michigan.

"I applaud Judge Taylor for her hard work and efforts for persevering civil liberties and unjust profiling," said the Rev. Al Sharpton, political activist and commentator.

Appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, Taylor was the first African-American woman appointed to a federal judgeship in Michigan. She later became the first African-American woman to be named chief federal judge in the Eastern District of Michigan. But who is Anna Diggs Taylor?

Born Anna Katherine Johnston in 1932, in Washington, D.C., she was groomed to become a vanguard for civil and human rights years ago by her parents. She attended



U.S. District Judge Anna Diggs Taylor, 73, of the Eastern District of Michigan.

Lucretia Mott Elementary School and the former Benjamin Banneker Junior High School. Her parents sent her to Northfield School for Girls in East Northfield, Miss., for her high school education and she graduated in 1950.

Her post-secondary education began at Barnard College, Columbia University in New York City, where she earned a B.A. in economics. She attended Yale University Law School before civil rights laws were passed and earned her law degree in 1957. In 1960, Taylor married U. S. Representative Charles Diggs Jr. and moved to Detroit where they had two children. They were divorced in 1971.

"I met her long ago. She is a good solid woman," said Barbara Lett Simmons, former president of the D.C. Democratic Committee. In 1964, Taylor worked to provide legal services to civil rights activists in Mississippi. In 1966, she became assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michi-

gan. She later married S. Martin Taylor, former director of the Michigan Department of Labor and former vice president of Detroit Edison.

Taylor was recently honored by the National Bar Association for outstanding work in civil rights. According to the association, Taylor has been quite involved in many civic affairs and organizations. She has received a multitude of awards, including the 1984 Alpha Phi Alpha, Epsilon Chapter Award, Detroit Urban League Achievement Award for 1991, induction into the 1998 International Hall of Fame and the Detroit Urban League's Distinguished Warrior's Award in 2005.

"I've always known her to be competent, credible but not haughty," said Simmons.

While the discussions continue and both sides debate the constitutionality of wiretapping versus an individual's privacy, Taylor is being widely hailed as a hero.

Valencia Mohammed writes for Afro Newspapers.

Florida voter registration law ruled unlawful

MIAMI (AP) - A federal judge on Monday declared a new Florida voter registration law unconstitutional, ruling that its stiff penalties for violations threaten free speech rights and that political parties were exempted improperly.

The 48-page ruling by

U.S. District Judge Patricia Seitz means that state authorities cannot enforce the provisions of the law.

It took effect Jan. 1 and has been blamed by several labor unions and nonprofit groups for effectively blocking voter registration drives across the state because of

the financial risk.

"If third-party voter registration organizations permanently cease their voter registration efforts, Florida citizens will be stripped of an important means and choice of registering to vote and of associating with one another," Seitz wrote.

The law also "unconstitutionally discriminates" against third-party registration groups because it does not apply to political parties, Seitz added.

The law imposes fines of \$250 for each form that is submitted to election officials more than 10 days after it is collected from an indi-

vidual and can reach \$5,000 for each form that is collected but never submitted.

State officials said the decision would be appealed to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"At this point, we respectfully disagree with the ruling and plan to take the issue up on appeal," said Sterling

Ivey, spokesperson for Florida Secretary of State Sue Cobb, whose office oversees elections.

The measure quietly passed the Legislature in the aftermath of the 2004 presidential election that saw national attention focused on Florida as a key battleground (See Registration, Page 15)

Storm

(Continued from Page 1)

acted scenes are true stories of real people who make up the tapestry of New Orleans. A boy struggles to save his father, asking about where the "music" has gone. A Spanish woman watches helplessly as her business and home are gone. She thunders, "I am not Mexican or Puerto Rican. I am Spanish, and we were here long before the French, Creole and Whites."

A middle-aged woman caring for her grandchildren manages to climb to the roof of her home, begging God for her life and screaming as the water level engulfs her home and laps at their feet on the roof. There is the aristocratic White woman, whose mansion is built high on a hill well above sea level, expressing quiet "Southern lady" concern for her maid, who lives below. Jim Crow, personified as a good-ole-White-boy, rages at all of the people of color for bringing the curse of God.

The most disturbing stage enactments are the voices in the background barking orders, like "shoot to kill" looters, as shots ring out. The audience watched in horror while people beg to take rotting food to eat and are shot while those who see their chance to own big screen televisions and designer clothing manage to walk away. A "mom and pop" store owner, armed with a shotgun, falls to his knees in despair knowing he will never be the same.

Class is revealed as a bi-racial girl keeps telling everyone that her father is White and she shouldn't be here. Ex-felons and Creoles add to the voices, as well as a 10-year-old boy separated from his mother. Something as simple as a shower brings tears to a tired woman who doesn't care who is looking — "including Lesbians" — as long as she can get clean and continue to search for her family. A Canadian tourist, whose family died while on vacation in New Orleans, is lost and

alone in a foreign country. Politicians, such as President Bush, are shown on the screen as voices question the lack of leadership and authority shown by him and others in power.

However, there is hope as a young man is relocated to California and sees the promised land and a mother is reunited with her son. The play ends with the words of BJ Mason, who was writing emails, outlines and handwritten notes about the events in Louisiana when he died, alone, his body bloated from the water and humidity and a ringing telephone in the background.

The play was directed by Lanyard Williams. The cast included Blusoul, Chris Butler, Helen Corda, Nikki Corda, Sherida Divine, Patrease Echevarria, Walter Edwards, John Hanson, Alexander Mervin, Avree Walker, Ronn L. Williams Jr., Tammie Williams. Each actor portrayed several people by using accents, tone and range.

Williams wanted to get the message out that "we sit and we forget. It's just like the Holocaust; it's all of these horrible things that are happening in Rwanda: After the news media stops talking about them, we forget. We all have our own issues and crosses to bear, but we can't forget about the commonality, the humanity or the tragedy — or we will do it again."

About Hurricane Katrina, Williams stated, "We need to hold the people in power, and I am not pointing fingers [at the] responsible. They knew this could happen 40 years ago. It's insane."

Williams wanted to bring the play to Las Vegas because "theater is an incredible teaching tool and we need to use it."

The play was performed off-Broadway at the Billie Holliday Theater in New York City, and it is scheduled to be presented as a full production in six months. Williams believes it will have a run at the West Las Vegas Library and Clark County Library.


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



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