

Bank of America targeted for reparations

By Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In a press conference held outside Bank of America in Princeton, N.J., Monday morning, public interest attorneys Carl Mayer and Bruce Afran introduced plaintiff Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, a Jersey City lawyer and executive director of the Restitution Study Group that has pioneered the corporate restitution movement.

The trio called for a boycott of Bank of America for its admitted role in enslaving tens of thousands of African-Americans during the 19th century.

They stated that Bank of

America, a corporation operating in New Jersey, a state with one of the largest African-American communities in the country, has a duty to own up to their participation in American slavery.

Mayer and Afran will argue this historic class action suit in federal court in Chicago on Wednesday when they plan to demand that New Jersey and the nation's largest banks and insurers disgorge themselves of profits reaped from the slave trade.

The lawyers will argue before the U.S. Court of Appeals that Bank of America, Aetna and JPMorgan Chase

must surrender millions made at the expense of the free labor of African-Americans.

As for the defendants, all three companies have acknowledged playing a role in enslaving Africans, yet they refuse to share a penny of profits from this most shameful chapter of American history.

Both JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America even admit that they owned thousands of slaves, but remain adamant in their stand.

"My great-grandparents lost their life's wages to slavery in the South Carolina rice farms," the plaintiff said.

"Meanwhile, these banks still hold the profits they earned financing my ancestors' enslavement."

Farmer-Paellmann sparked the nationwide class action three years ago after exposing the role several major corporations played in slavery.

She also made a poignant discovery about her great-grandfather, Abel Hines, when she uncovered evidence that Aetna had held an insurance policy on a slave his age in South Carolina with the same name.

"Finding that insurance policy with my great-grandfather's name on it

brought to my mind the magnitude of the profits this company earned by way of the suffering of the enslaved," she said.

"This is not ancient history," Mayer remarked, "but a living case involving corporations still in existence that have been holding slave profits for 150 years without giving anything back to the people they took it from."

The attorneys added that they were shocked to learn that banks and insurance companies still doing business today, like JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America and Aetna, once took mortgages and issued life insurance

policies to slave owners on their slaves.

"Despite my legal training, I never imagined that a bank would lend money and take a lien on human beings as if they were selling car loans," Afran continued. "Basic human decency demands that such profits be given back to the aggrieved community."

"No plaintiff will personally receive any money from this case," Mayer said. Instead, the suit demands that the banks create a slave-era profits trust fund for the benefit of the descendants of enslaved Africans.

Owens

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The police document, first reported by WFAA-TV, said Owens was asked by rescue workers "if he was attempting to harm himself, at which time (he) stated: 'Yes.'"

"I was kind of out of it," Owens said. "I can barely even remember the doctors, much less the police officers asking me questions."

Owens also said that he's "not depressed about anything."

Owens broke the bone leading to his right ring finger during a game a week ago Sunday. The next day, doctors screwed in a plate so the bone could heal without fear of further damage — leaving a 2-inch scar on top of his hand.

If he doesn't play this Sunday, Owens might still return for the following game — Oct. 8, in Philadelphia, against the team that dumped him midway through last season only months after he helped them reach the Super Bowl.

Etheredge also appeared at Owens' news conference,

saying she "did not take anything out of his mouth" and that it was unfair for anyone to think Owens would kill himself.

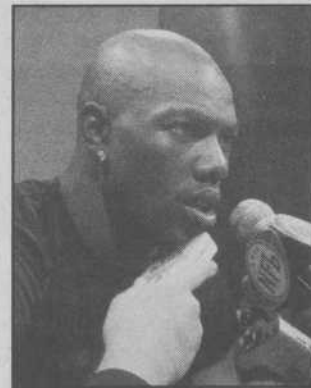
"Terrell has 25 million reasons why he should be alive," she said, referring to the \$25 million, three-year contract he signed in March with the Cowboys.

"I'm just upset," Etheredge added. "I feel they take advantage of Terrell. Had this been someone else, this may not have happened."

Dallas police officials declined to comment on Etheredge's denials. "We can't discuss the police report because of privacy laws," said a spokesman, Sgt. Gil Cerda.

Teammates and friends throughout the league rallied to support Owens even before he spoke, with many saying they thought the suicide report might be wrong.

"As soon as I got the news this morning, I had to make my call to make sure everything was OK. You know what? It was," said Cincinnati receiver Chad Johnson,



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— Terrell Owens
Dallas Cowboy Receiver

a close friend through their rivalry over the best end-zone celebrations.

Former Cowboys star Deion Sanders was with Owens at his home before he went to team headquarters.

"From my understanding, looking at him in the eye as a man and as a big brother, I said 'Be straight up with me.' He seems to be OK," Sanders told the NFL Network, where he works as an analyst.

After getting almost strictly Owens-related questions, coach Bill Parcells cut off his usual 25-30 minute session after only nine minutes.

He ended it by getting up

from his chair and saying, "When I find out what the hell is going on, you will know. Until then, I'm not getting interrogated for no reason."

Police Lt. Rick Watson said during his brief news conference that he could only confirm paramedics called police to say they were taking Owens to the hospital. He said no more details would come from the police because no laws were broken.

"We looked into it, and we determined it is not a criminal offense," Watson said. "This a medical type of situation that occurred."

Watson released the ver-

sion of the police narrative with certain sections blacked out. The full report was obtained by several news outlets and reported first by WFAA. The Associated Press received the full version from WFAA.

The tape of the 911 call could help clear things up. The AP filed a request under the Texas Public Information Act to get its contents, but fire department officials said it would not be available before late Wednesday.

Owens, one of the league's top receivers during his 11-year NFL career, is best known for wild stunts on the field and other publicity-seeking antics off it.

When the Cowboys signed him, they said their background checks indicated no red flags. In fact, team consultant Calvin Hill — who mostly deals with troubled players — said during training camp that his department was not involved with Owens because he didn't have a history of those kinds of problems.

He missed most of training camp, and three of four preseason games, because of a hamstring injury. He was late for work during his recovery and was fined for it, but Owens laughed it off, saying he overslept. He said it had happened before, though not with Dallas, and would probably happen again.

Owens has played two games for the Cowboys, catching nine passes for 99 yards and a touchdown.

Owens was heavily praised while with the Eagles for playing well in the February 2005 Super Bowl, seven weeks after ankle surgery. However, his relationship with quarterback Donovan McNabb deteriorated soon after and the organization suspended him in midseason and later got rid of him amid contract complaints and other personality squabbles. Team owner Jeffrey Lurie said later that, even with the Super Bowl trip, he regretted having ever signed Owens.

Farrakhan

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"On my trip to Cuba to learn disaster management preparedness, I spent most of my time there being examined and tested by some of the finest doctors in Cuba," Farrakhan said. "They discovered an ulcer in the anal area, similar to the ulcer that I had in 1998-1999 that almost caused the loss of my life."

"The doctors in Cuba felt that my health at that time was near perfect, except for that ulcer; but from that time, March 2006, I have been steadily fighting serious pain and infection. In the last month, I had lost nearly 15 lbs. And over the last six weeks, I have lost over 20 lbs."

Upon being examined at Howard University Hospital, Farrakhan said it was discovered that he was dehydrated, anemic, low in protein, albumen and iron.

"Although I have some of the finest cooks who always prepare the finest meals for me, I was in a seriously nutritionally depleted state, because the pain that I was in took away my appetite," Farrakhan said.

"The Howard University doctors discovered serious infection and inflammation, which is presently being treated, and now I am forced to do what is necessary to restore myself nutritionally. Otherwise, my present condition could be life threatening."

Farrakhan made it clear that he is not stepping down for good. "I do not believe that my earthly work is done," he said. "I know that you (the Believers) will accept the challenge to move our Nation forward, being ever watchful for any smart, crooked deceiver and hypocrite who would create confusion over my present condition."

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