

Jefferson's corruption issues began in Africa

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — During President Clinton's trip to Africa in 1998, Rep. William Jefferson joined the cadre of politicians, press advisers, trade experts and foreign diplomats aboard Air Force One.

For the next 12 days, Jefferson was never far behind as the president strolled arm-in-arm with Nelson Mandela, mourned the human cost of the slave trade and bounced across the savannah in a safari car.

A decade later, the trip looks increasingly like the starting point for a pattern of corruption Jefferson alleg-

edly established during the expansion of African trade that followed Clinton's visit.

"He was perceived as someone who had the ear of and access to the president of the United States. When you add a congressman's position to his relationship with President Clinton, that's a powerful combination," said Shaun Clark, a prominent New Orleans lawyer familiar with the case against Jefferson.

An Associated Press analysis of Jefferson's travel records, campaign donors and court papers reveals a shrewd opportunist who used the Clinton trip to capitalize



WILLIAM JEFFERSON

on his power in Congress and experience in Africa.

Jefferson, a nine-term congressman, is accused of acting as the dealmaker for obscure American companies as they sought inroads into the lucrative African telecommunications and oil drilling markets. In return, he allegedly received bribes and company stock.

Jefferson, 61, denies any wrongdoing.

The Clinton trip was fo-

cused on promoting the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which was approved by Congress in 2000. The bill, which Jefferson helped craft, lowered duties for sub-Saharan African goods such as chemicals and agricultural products.

African countries participating in the program were required to adopt market-based economics, embrace democratic institutions and eliminate child labor and intellectual piracy.

Jefferson's interest in Africa started years earlier.

Elected to Congress in 1990, he established himself by 1994 as a top adviser to Clinton on Africa policy. He attended White House ceremonies for Mandela and went to Nigeria to demand release of political leaders jailed by a military junta.

All the while, he honed his financial acumen at Georgetown University, earning a master's degree in

tax laws while working on the African trade bill.

To research the bill, Jefferson barnstormed Africa in 1997, stopping in the Ivory Coast, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Nigeria. He proclaimed that U.S. investment would "open a new world" for a continent troubled by genocide, disease and corruption.

On the Clinton trip, Jefferson kept a fairly low profile. But he soon became better known — both at home and in Africa.

Jefferson ran unsuccessfully for governor and gained seniority on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. He was toasted by good-government groups and rose within the Democrat Party and the Congressional Black Caucus.

After 1998, he made at least 13 trips to Africa, speaking to business groups and meeting the continent's top leaders.

As his influence grew, businessmen eyeing African opportunities gravitated into his sphere. In exchange for bribes, Jefferson allegedly introduced businessmen to African leaders, lobbied for federal money and went on trips to Africa to tout his clients.

According to prosecutors, those deals resulted in the most notorious aspect of Jefferson's case: the \$90,000 in alleged bribe money found by the FBI in his freezer.

In early 2001, prosecutors allege, Jefferson began promoting the technology of a Kentucky telecommunications company called iGate Inc. both in Congress and Africa.

All the while, he asked iGate to pay monthly consulting fees of \$7,500 to a company run by his wife. He also demanded a slice of profits and stock shares.

By mid-2004, Jefferson and the iGate CEO had to
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UN rejects federal New Orleans plan

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Two human rights experts for the United Nations recently criticized a federal plan to raze public housing projects in New Orleans, saying it will force the predominantly Black residents into homelessness.

New Orleans advocates clamoring to save 4,500 public housing units claimed a victory. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which wants to replace the decades-old housing projects with mixed-income, mixed-use development, called the UN experts "misinformed."

The statement issued out of Geneva was not a UN finding, but only the individual views of Miloon Kothari, a special investigator on housing matters for the UN Human Rights Council, and Gay McDougall, a lawyer who is an expert on minority and rights issues.

They charged that demolition would harm thousands of people by denying them a place to live in a city where housing already is scarce since Hurricane Katrina hit in August 2005.

"The authorities claim that the demolition of public housing is not intentionally discriminatory," Kothari and McDougall said, but the "predominantly African-American residents" will be denied their "internationally recognized human rights" to a home.

They commented a day before a UN racism panel planned to discuss Katrina recovery efforts and public housing in New Orleans and also was expected to comment on allegations of racial discrimination in the United States. Neither expert was involved with that committee's hearings.

Local officials said the U.N. experts were too detached from the complexities of the post-Katrina city to claim razing of the buildings was racist.

"The past model of public housing in New Orleans has been a failed one — years of neglect and mismanagement left our public housing developments in ruin," the city council said in a recent statement. "These are critical times in our city's history — we can choose to continue on the path of progress and positive change or we can choose to maintain the status quo."

Council members unanimously supported the demolition plan in December, in a meeting marred by violence when some protesters tried to force their way into the packed chambers. The protesters have said they were denied their legal right to enter.

The demolition of the housing projects appears all but assured. Early stages have begun at some developments, while others are waiting only for demolition permits.

Monique Harden, co-director of the public interest law firm Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, said
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Gwynetta "Gwen" Brown Haynes

Entrepreneur made lasting Vegas mark

Gwynetta "Gwen" Brown Haynes, of Las Vegas, passed away Fri., Feb. 29, at 7:20 p.m. at Nathan Adelson Hospice.

She was born September 10, 1940, in Chicago, Ill.

Gwen was a 30 year resident of Las Vegas who owned and operated Brown and Associates, a local business consulting firm.

She was an 18 year member of the I.B.P.O. Elks of the World, Alpha Temple #1180.

She leaves three sons Manuel Gaston, Darrel Gaston and Mark Brown; two daughters-in-law Brenda Gaston and Shanna Brown; one grandson, Jordon Brown, and one granddaughter, Myra Brown.

Visitation will be Fri., March 14, 1:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m., and services will be held Sat., March 15, at 1:00 p.m. at Palm Mortuary, 1325 N. Main St., north of downtown.

Historic property set to get new life

Epic Gaming tabbed to manage Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino

Special to Sentinel-Voice

On the heels of last week's unanimous approval by the Las Vegas Planning Commission, the Moulin Rouge Development Corporation and its partner Republic Urban Properties announced its partnership with Las Vegas-based casino operator Epic Gaming. Epic Gaming has been retained by MRDC and RUP as a strategic partner in the programmatic design of the project during its design phase. Upon completion, Epic Gaming will become the exclusive gaming operator for the new Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino.

"Partnering with Epic Gaming is a significant step in turning the dream of rebuilding the Moulin Rouge into a reality," said Dale Scott, president and CEO of the Moulin Rouge Development Corporation. "Epic's commitment to hire and train a diverse workforce from the surrounding community was an extremely important factor in making this decision. We look forward to working with Epic to build a team that is truly representative of the demographic makeup of Las Vegas."

Last week, the Las Vegas Planning Commission unanimously approved the rezoning of the Moulin Rouge site plan. The application will now be forwarded to the City Council for final approval consideration on April 2. Once approved, the project will break ground in early 2009 with completion slated for the fourth quarter of 2010.

Christ Mission International Church

1018 E. Sahara Ave. #C

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Thursday Service: 7:30 pm

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