

EXPOSING RACISM

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in my continuing efforts to document and expose racism in America, I submit the following articles into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

IN THEIR OWN VOICES, AFRICAN AMERICANS
TELL THE HISTORY OF BIGOTRY
(By Ovetta Sampson)

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.—History books paint Colorado Springs as a haven of goodness—a beautiful resort town for the healthy and wealthy tucked at the bottom of Pikes Peak.

In its early years, the city seemed almost ambivalent about race compared with other places around the country. The city didn't have segregated schools or neighborhoods. Its first police force, formed in 1887, included black officer Horace Shelby. By 1898, Colorado Springs had two weekly newspapers for blacks: The Colorado Springs Sun and The Enterprise.

A closer look reveals a piece of Colorado Springs' past that's rarely talked about. It's a piece of history locked in the hearts and minds of many longtime black residents. It shows a Colorado Springs that sanctioned separatism in the city's finest hotels, restaurants and shops.

It tells of a Jim Crow existence ushered in by the Ku Klux Klan. To find such history, you have to look beyond the usual books about the city and into the lives of its ordinary black residents. To get the truest sense of the triumphs and tragedies black people endured here, you have to let them have their say, in their own words.

* * * Kelly Dolphus Stroud was born in 1907, the third of 11 children in one of Colorado Springs' pioneering families.

While the children were still young, their father, Kimbal Stroud, would fill the home with music, playing the French harp or singing. He also told them stories about slavery, biblical adventures and happenings around the world.

In an unpublished book, Dolphus recounts how his dad's after-supper musings gave them the head start they needed for school.

"The Stroud children learned a great deal at the feet of their parents and were well advanced beyond their grade levels upon entering Bristol elementary school. This placed them in the enigmatic position of being the brains of their classes because of their knowledge and the butt of all jokes and embarrassments because of the color-phobia of White America."

Dolphus realized, even in his youth, that being smart didn't exempt blacks from the racist attitudes of others.

"It hurts when one approaches his high school Latin teacher as I did after the first semester of my first year of Latin class to ask why I have been graded 'B' when I had passed every test with 100 percent grade, had done every translation without error and had not been absent or tardy to any class," Dolphus wrote in a letter to his biographer, Inez Hunt, years after he'd left Colorado Springs.

"Thus, I received this curt answer 'I don't give A's to colored kids.'"

Dolphus transferred to another Latin class and "received an A-plus on every Latin semester report thereafter for the next three years."

He was good at masking his pain but angry at the way he was treated: "To be forced to

carry a pocket full of rocks at all times for a measure of self-defense against unprovoked attacks," he wrote in another letter to Hunt. The letter can be found in John Holley's book "Invisible People of the Pikes Peak Region."

"To be unable to eat food inside any of the numerous restaurants in Colorado Springs and Manitou, to be unable to enter any of the city theaters, and to be harassed by Chief Hugh D. Harper and his police to the point where Negro youngsters were constantly under the threat of being kidnapped from the streets and taken to City Hall and forced to dance and clown for the entertainment of the police, were among the minor irritations one faced daily."

Still, Dolphus excelled in college, becoming the first black man at Colorado College to earn membership in the prestigious honor society Phi Beta Kappa.

After graduation, however, he couldn't get a job teaching at his alma mater where he had done so well.

Dolphus thought it was a cruel joke. Although black students here received an equal education long before the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision desegregating schools, they ran up against the same wall as in Southern cities that separated them from professional jobs. Dolphus ended up working for his father's company hauling everything from ash to trash because he couldn't find a better job.

"Naturally, the experience at Bristol School, Colorado Springs High School and the general atmosphere of the town left emotional * * * scars upon the Negroes of my generation," he wrote.

Dolphus, like most of his siblings, eventually left Colorado Springs. He taught political science at a black school in Georgia, coached a baseball team and owned his own trucking and storage business in Portland, Ore. He died in 1975 at 68.

The heavy cloud of discrimination that floated throughout the city during Dolphus' youth soon became a whirlwind of prejudice, racism and downright terrorism for blacks.

In Colorado Springs, old-timers say, the Ku Klux Klan reigned with the backing of the city government. A 1921 Gazette clipping tells how the Klan, formed in July of that year, couldn't be shut down or touched by order of the police chief and district attorney. Other clippings tell of the Klan burning crosses on front lawns and even on Pikes Peak.

"The brutality was horrible," said 75-year-old Eula Andrews, who vividly remembers the Klan uprisings from when she was a little girl. "It was so unpleasant. I was frightened, my mother was frightened. The Klan was so strong here."

Andrews may have felt the sting of hatred more than most. She was the daughter of Charles Banks, one of the city's most vocal crusaders against racism.

Bank's suffering was more of a conscious choice. He was born in 1880 to an American Indian mother and English father. With his caramel-colored skin, Banks didn't have to identify himself as black, but because he was raised in a black household, he did.

When he signed up with the military, he joined black men who were forced to fight segregated troops. After contracting malaria in the Philippines, the Spanish-American War veteran retired to Colorado Springs, where he used the city as the battleground to fight a civil rights war.

Andrews said her father's activism could be traced to a face-to-face meeting Banks had with abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who encouraged him.

In Colorado Springs, Banks didn't hesitate to threaten, coerce or cajole the folks of Colorado Springs to go his way.

"I am sending you this communication on behalf of the National Colored Democratic Club of El Paso County protesting against the appointment of Judge Little for assistant district attorney," Banks wrote to another El Paso County judge in July 1932. "There was a time when the colored people of this county put their unmost confidence in him and would have supported him in almost anything he would have asked for. But his attitude toward us during the reign of the Ku Klu (Klan) shattered all confidence beyond a reasonable doubt that he was not our friend. We did everything in our power to ensure your election, and we still have undying confidence in you and believe when you look into this matter further that you will decline to make the appointment of Judge Little."

Bank's activism generated enemies, including the Klan, which burned a cross in his neighbor's yard thinking it was Banks' yard. His activism also helped him get elected as president of the NAACP, a post he held for five years.

As part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, he was a pistol, packing political clout and a penchant for filing lawsuits against businesses that violated civil rights laws. He sent his children and other relatives to stores, theaters and cafes around town to document the discrimination.

Andrews remembers being sent one time by her father to Walgreens. She sat down in a booth and ordered coffee. When the waitress served her, she poured salt instead of sugar into her cup. "I got so angry," Andrews said.

Her father, through, had given her strict orders not to fight—just pay, leave and document the event.

In an undated speech titled "Will Democracy or Fascism Reign in Colorado?" Banks took the city's government to task.

A five-man committee was appointed by the City Council; they investigated very thoroughly and cleared the police of the brutality charge. Of course, it couldn't be expected that anyone would be appointed to that committee who would make a fair investigation. The committee stated it was not brutality but self-defense when a policeman cruelly beat up a man Well, if self-defense means going into a cell when a man is already behind bars and beating him unconscious, then we will call it self-defense. Of course I realize that sometimes it is necessary for a policeman to use his black jack. But the way they have beaten some of these boys, you would think they had just caught a desperate criminal. . . . The committee also stated the police were sincere and devoted and above average in intelligence. What I want to know (is) who and what are they devoted to besides the chief and the taxpayers' money? Yes, maybe they are above average in intelligence, they have the intelligence to arrest a man, drunk or sober, fine him \$25 to \$250 for drunkenness, disturbing the peace or whatever else they can think of to get the money. . . . They have the intelligence to order Negroes out of theaters and to uphold other public facilities and breaking the civil rights law."

Banks' fervor didn't sit well with some of the other civil rights leaders in town, and he was called a Communist. Eventually he was ostracized and ousted as NAACP head, but residents say his legacy will be as a freedom fighter in Colorado Springs. He died in 1976.

In 1942, Camp Carson came to town, and in one day, the city's black population increased 10 percent. By the time Camp Carson turned into a permanent Army base and became Fort Carson in 1954, the military installation was regularly drawing new residents to the city.

Joyce Gilmer came to Colorado Springs by way of a military husband. Her first impressions were outlined in an extensive interview she did in 1994 for the Pioneers Museum's Voices and Visions Oral History project.

"When I first came here, I didn't know any black who worked at a newspaper," she said. "I don't think they had a lot of black professors at Colorado College for sure, and they had a lot fewer black teachers than they have now. They didn't have any black doctor. . . . Now they have several doctors and lawyers and things like that, but not nearly as many as they should have for a town this size."

It certainly wasn't a climate that looked friendly for Gilmer, who soon became an unemployed, divorced mother of three. Yet, she was driven to survive. She went back to school and became the city's first black woman real estate agent.

She was so good she convinced her landlord to put the house she was renting on the market, and it was the first one she sold. She was homeless but successful.

The clouds of Colorado Springs' past were there as Gilmer began her ascension into the realm of selling real estate.

"When I first started in real estate working with men, (I was) the only woman and (the only) black woman," she said in the oral history interview. "They don't even expect you to say anything. When I used to do a closing . . . I would sit through the whole closing, I'd make sure I found a mistake at the beginning, and then I would call their attention to the mistake so we'd all have to start over."

Though Gilmer was never exposed to it personally, she talked about the existence of red-lining, the practice of showing houses only in certain neighborhoods to people of color while steering white people to other neighborhoods.

"You were not allowed to point out a neighborhood that you couldn't go into," she said. "I guess white people knew more about that than I did because they're not going to tell a black person these areas they don't want you to live in or sell in. . . . But it was beginning to be the topic of conversation at meetings and things like that, that this was not legal and you had better not be caught doing it."

Her personal triumphs—earning a degree, starting her own business, becoming one of the most successful real estate agents in the city—shows just how much the city has changed.

While many old-timers say racism in Colorado Springs is still just below the surface, stories such as Gilmer's point toward fairness.

Last year, signs were erected to identify the newly named Martin Luther King Jr. bypass. The NAACP also celebrated its 10th annual Juneteenth festival—a community party celebrating freedom—on the grounds of Colorado College. Also, the city is in its second round of talks as part of a Community Conversation on Race.

The transformation is by no means complete, but residents who know this city's history say there have been changes.

"I think this city has made a 180-degree turn," said Franklin Macon, grandson of Charles Banks and a Springs native. "No matter what people say, it's gotten so much better."

TWIN BROTHERS CHARGED WITH CONSPIRING TO INCITE RACE WAR

RICHMOND, VA. (AP).—A grand jury has indicted twin brothers on charges of conspiring to incite a race war between black's and whites.

Kevin and Calvin Hill, who allegedly belong to a white supremacist group, were in-

dicted Monday in the Richmond suburb of Henrico County on charges of "conspiracy to incite one race to insurrection against the other race." They were released on bond pending a March 25 hearing in Circuit Court.

The brothers, 28, were indicted twice earlier this year—on Feb. 4 and Feb. 25—on various drug distribution and conspiracy charges. They also face an abduction charge.

The brothers "prominently displayed Nazi paraphernalia" and "read passages from their white supremacy 'Bible'" to people who came to them to buy marijuana, according to a search warrant affidavit filed in the case.

Court papers indicated the brothers possessed a document that "described and espoused the burning of synagogues and violence against people based upon race or religion."

Police found numerous items related to the white supremacy movement in searches of the brothers' residences in Henrico County and Bluefield, W.Va., court records indicate.

The items included Nazi flags, posters of Adolf Hitler, clothing with Nazi slogans, World War II Nazi paraphernalia, applications to join the Ku Klux Klan and pamphlets containing racist slogans, the records indicate.

Police believe the Hill brothers moved to the Richmond area from West Virginia shortly before 1995.

The organization that the man allegedly belong to was identified in the court documents as "Christian Identity."

Among several other suspects who were indicted on drug charges related to the Hills was Sylvester J. Carrington, 27, of Chesterfield County. Police said the brothers recruited Carrington, who is black, as a drug supplier.

"Basically it was just a money thing," said narcotics investigator Michael J. Barron. ". . . They didn't care for him too much, but it was business."

Police seized about 5 pounds of marijuana, 25 to 50 doses of LSD, more than 20 drug pipes, several knives, 15 guns, ammunition and military flak jackets in the Richmond area and West Virginia. The weapons included .30-.30 rifles with scopes, AR-15 assault-style rifles and Tec 9 semiautomatic pistols.

Police said the 2-year investigation is ongoing.

BLACK AG DEPARTMENT MANAGERS PURSUE DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT

WASHINGTON (AP).—Black managers working for the Agriculture Department are moving forward with a complaint that accuses the agency of denying them promotions.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has scheduled an April 12 hearing on the class action complaint, which alleges that more than 300 black managers at the department's Farm Service Agency were discriminated against.

The Farm Service Agency, which administers loans and credit, also had been cited by black farmers in a lawsuit that resulted in a multimillion-dollar settlement—currently under review by a federal judge.

"It's not surprising that the Farm Service Agency was discriminating against the black farmers when they have for years systematically excluded African-Americans from policy-making positions in the upper levels of agency management," said lead attorney Joseph D. Gebhardt.

The complaint, which was filed in February 1997, requests a promotion for each member of the class along with appropriate back pay and benefits.

Tom Amontree, a spokesman for Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, said the

agency has been "aggressively dealing with the backlog of employee civil rights complaints." In the past two years, the agency has resolved three-fourths of such outstanding complaints, he said.

"Secretary Glickman will not tolerate acts of discrimination at this department," Amontree said. "Anyone found doing so will be dealt with appropriately."

The action before the EEOC is just one of two under way by black department employees. Another group is meeting with attorneys to pursue a complaint on behalf of all black employees within the agency, organizers said.

"Obviously the only thing the department is going to respond to is across-the-board action," said Lawrence Lucas, president of the USDA Coalition of Minority Employees and an organizer of the effort. "Employees who have been in the system and seen the discrimination have decided the only way they can get to the systemic nature and the culture of racism is through a class action."

REMEMBERING THE 85TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

HON. STEPHEN HORN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 21, 1999

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, I thank Representatives RADANOVICH and BONIOR for their work to introduce a resolution this week to ensure that this nation continues to play an active role in protecting the memory of the Armenian Genocide that began 85 years ago. As we so unfortunately see again in Kosovo today, documenting the horrors of genocide—or "ethnic cleansing" as it is called in some circles—is vital if we are to ever stop such actions from occurring.

The resolution that is being introduced calls upon the President to collect and house all relevant U.S. records relating to the Armenian Genocide and provide them to Congress, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the Armenian Genocide Museum in Yerevan, Armenia. It is necessary to do this because there are many who live in denial. Sadly, the Government of Turkey continues to deny what occurred at the beginning of this century, just as there are too many people who still deny the Jewish Holocaust where six million people were killed. Two million Cambodians were killed in the 1970s–1980s by Pol Pot and his communist thugs and ideologues. Even now in the Balkans there must be solid evidence of violence against the innocent civilians for no other reason than their ethnic identification.

No one can take for granted the unexplainable ability of some people to look clearly at facts and still deny its very existence. Each year, Members of Congress join the world commemoration of the Armenian Genocide because it must not be forgotten. Time, distance, and current events frequently cloud the past and can reduce horrific events to little more than a footnote in history. The Armenian Genocide is not a footnote. More than 1.5 million Armenians were killed and the Genocide left deep scars upon those who survived. Those survivors carried their memories with them to my home state of California and the many other places they settled. Still, memories cannot fight those who would deny this tragedy.