-Farrakhan

(Continued from Page A1)

another tactic to try and stop the appearance of Louis Farrakhan and thus did not take the threat seriously.

It is mandated by law that a threat of this type be publicly announced and the choice of whether to stay or leave be given to all of those present. No one left the packed arena.

Immediately thereafter, the four Fruit of Islam soldiers who accompany the Minister to each speaking engagement appeared on stage signifying Farrakhan's arrival, as the audience broke out in a vociferous applause.

Farrakhan began his dialogue by questioning the reasoning behind the scare tactics employed by those wishing to prevent his appearance at the University, saying "What creates the fear tactics and highhanded methods used to prevent the students from hearing what I have to say?"

The minister was interrupted by a lone white heckler who began to shout obscenities, but who was quickly silenced by a flood of Fruit of Islam and Prince George's County police who rushed to confront him to prevent the disturbance to escalate.

Minister Farrakhan spoke of the university's need to prepare students for the world by teaching the truth. He quickly followed that thought by issuing a challenge to the university, saying "If the university does its job well, what harm can come from the students listening to me? Listen to what I say then determine who and what I am.

"If I am a hater, bigot or anti-semite let the students hear me and assign me to the rubbish heap of history where those kind of people belong. They fear that I might say something to wake you up."

Minister Farrakhan continued to speak for two hours making references to those who would label him a racist, labeling the United States as being driven by the almighty dollar.

"If the dollar falls you (USA) will go down right behind it ... don't make Farrakhan your scapegoat, don't cover me with your blanket of hate because I dare to impart truth to you regardless of the consequences to me."

Minister Farrakhan interjected words of support throughout his speech for the Black Student Union and other campus groups who sponsored the event, at one point speaking of the lessons that could be learned by the instructors as well as the students.

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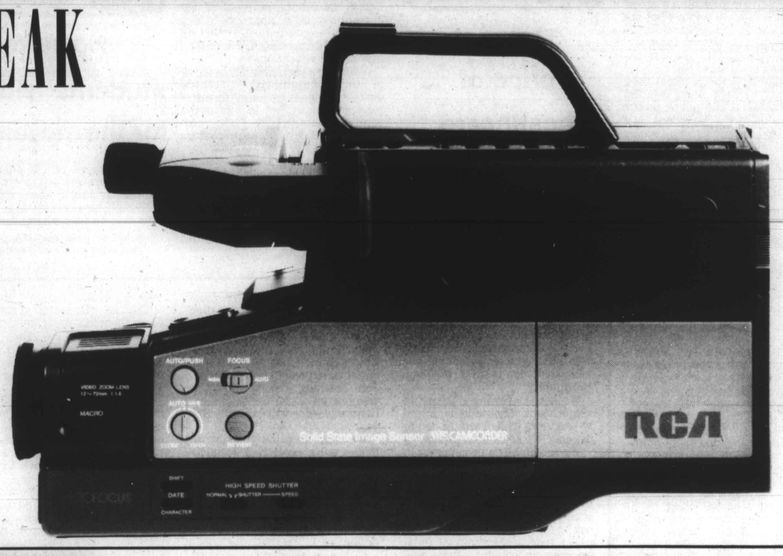

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The Afro-American Section B

■ Lifestyle B4
■ Kids Talk B6

Saturday, April 1, 1989

METRO PROFILE

A place to settle in

University of Maryland's Ellisse Wright

By Charles H. Brown
AFRO Staff Writer

It was a long road to the University of Maryland College Park Campus for then Baltimore resident Ellisse Yvette Wright — in more ways than one.

Last September, when she opted to become the assistant dean for student affairs in the University's School for Public Affairs, Wright was a resident in Reservoir Hill's Emersonian Apartments in Baltimore City. With her prized kitchen view of the reservoir and her bookshelf lined livingroom as a consolation, Wright didn't mind the hour long commute to the Prince George's County campus.

But time took its toll on the 28 year old rush-hour veteran.

"It was hard," Wright groused. "I usually put in ten hour days and then the commute on top of that. I had a very old car and the commute certainly shortened its life."

So Wright traded her beloved hardwood floors, the charming old worldliness of the turn of the century building and her kitchen view of the reservoir, for a sterile sheetrock box in Riverdale, MD.

"It was a mistake," Wright said. "I moved and the car died anyway." Wright plans to return to Baltimore shortly and is already making the necessary plans. "A new car with a stereo cassette player, and I think I could handle the commute."

But the return to Baltimore is the only backtracking Wright intends to do. The Columbus, Ohio native originally discovered the Baltimore/Washington area while a Congressional intern for Ohio representative, Wylie Chalmers in 1982.

While there Wright made several treks to Baltimore to sample life North of New York Avenue and found it even more to her liking than the District.

"Baltimore is more like Columbus. In Baltimore there are five people whose coattails you either grab onto, or whose toes you stay off of and everybody knows who those five people are."

"In D.C. everybody thinks they hold your future in their hands," Wright said. "It was too complex for this simple little girl from Ohio."

After graduation from Columbus School for Girls, the "simple little girl" attended Yale, where she received her bachelor's degree in English and Latin American Studies. Wright followed that up with the equivalent of an academic one-two punch by obtaining her law degree from Stanford University.

Then she headed to her adopted home: Baltimore.

After returning here in 1986, Wright was employed as a law associate in the firm of Semmes, Bowen and Semmes. The girl from Columbus had it made.

A position in the health care practices group of a prestigious law firm - which counted former School Board Superintendent, Meldon Hollis, among its associates - the road to a partnership in the firm stretched out before her along with new friends, a nice apartment with a "kitchen view of the reservoir," etc., etc... What more could a girl ask for.

"I was a very small cog in a very big machine," Wright said.

"I wanted to interact with lots of people. At Semmes I interacted with two partners who interacted with the clients. When I left I knew there were certain things I needed that I hadn't yet found."

So it was that Wright founded her own company, Left to Wright Productions. Wright provided a living for herself by doing freelance writing and editing tasks for a variety of publications including the AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS, the Baltimore Business Journal, U.S. Black Engineer, U.S. Hispanic Engineer and the Daily Record.

Sharpening her skills as a writer/journalist led Wright to her next position: a full time business writer at the Daily Record. This led to her next position, a relatively lengthy three months later.

"I don't know what was wrong with me. I couldn't seem to keep a job for more than three months."

As a junior speech writer for the Schmoke administration, Wright was in on the ground floor of history. Her adopted city had elected its first black mayor and Wright was in the inner circle.

"That was fun," Wright recalls happily. "I had always had a secret desire to be in politics.

"It was certainly more mundane than I imagined," she added, "especially if you are a junior speechwriter. It was a very political kind of position. You are aware of what you can't say about whom."

But Wright didn't have long to beware of the five pairs of big toes that should not be stepped on, or too long to be part of that history making administration. Wright had her own records to set.

"The very first day I got home from City Hall they called me about this job," Wright said, referring to the University. "I told them I didn't know if I would be interested, then I asked them how much it paid.

The pindrop accuracy of fiber optic long distance lines carried the reply and Wright responded: "I'm interested."

Now Wright sits in her office on the second floor of Morrill Hall, her open door a signal to students that the young assistant dean is ready, willing and eager to meet their needs for counseling, course approval, objective advice giving and interference running.

"I do a kind of cradle to grave counseling," Wright says cheerfully. "I do recruitment strategy, arrange for student organizations and alumni groups to assist in getting students to visit the campus, arrange for hotel and meeting rooms, set up their class schedules and field trips and coordinate their graduations."

"One concern is minority students. We have a dismal number of minorities and my job is to improve that," Wright says. "The quality of the program is excellent, we just have to inform people about what we do here and how we do it."

Wright says the ingredients she has been missing in her other positions have been found at College Park - especially the interaction with a variety of people, such as students, professors and the associate dean.

"He practically made me sign a statement in blood saying that I would stay here for at least five years," Wright laughs. "I had always done what I wanted to but I never considered the field of academia. I wish I had. Here I can build my own future as opposed to hitching my star with someone else's."

The only future movement Wright is considering now is the movement of her pen. Wright said that beginning in May she will be writing a twice monthly column for her hometown newspaper, the Columbus Call and Post (a black weekly serving the Columbus, Ohio area).

"I went home for a visit and I agreed to write it now that I have a real title to go under my name."

Then of course there is the impending move back to Baltimore from her rented townhome in Riverdale.

"This was another experiment that didn't work," Wright groused. "I miss living in a real city."

Wright preparing to call up a student's files.

Wright discussing policy with her staff. (From the left) Carla Romero Michael Puelle (seating), Laura Thomas.

"Baltimore is more like Columbus. In Baltimore there are five people whose coattails you either grab onto, or whose toes you stay off of and everybody knows who those five people are."

All Photos By P. A. Greene

Wright fields questions on the campus lawn from interested students. From the left, Tracey Moody, Tanya Lawson and Terry Taylor.

Wright standing outside of the College Park Public Affairs Building.