Rev Dante Murphy speaks out about Injustice and Federal Lawsuits in Cleveland County!! Comments by Rev Dante Murphy, published in agreement by Robert A. Williams

Rev. Dante Murphy speaks out:
The federal lawsuit filed by Willie Green, the former NFL player against the City of Shelby for discrimination and City Manager Rick Howell for libel per se/deformation of character has the Cleveland County community and government once again at the crossroads integrity and corruption. Based on my conversations and people posting on social media, the vast majority of the people support Willie Green in his efforts to build a sports complex to improve the lives of the student-athletes in the county and to host weekend travel ball events. Those opposition to Mr. Green's lawsuit against the City of Shelby and City Manager, are missing the overall point of corruption often camouflaged as racism.

The basis of the lawsuits filed by Mr. Green are based on: (1) a process flawed when Mr. Green was denied the opportunity to make a public presentation before the City Council as is the common practice for those seeking partnership with the city, (2) the defaming of Mr. Green's character by the City Manager Rick Howell, and (3) the hope that this lawsuit will deter future discriminatory acts against citizens genuinely wanting to make a difference in the lives of youth.

In the past several years, Mr. Green has not been the only person(s) with a legitimate claim who have challenged the local government and government agencies. The difference is one group of people when they express their concerns, their situation is resolved quickly and quietly. While another group of people with similar claims have to rely on the legal system for fair justice. Here are different cases relating to myself and the irony of three key players in the lawsuit filed by Willie Green.

1: In June 2015, former County Attorney Bob Yelton was terminated by County Commissioners from his job as Cleveland County Attorney after serving in that capacity for nearly 15 years. NC Speaker of the House Tim Moore, the cousin of then Chairman of the County Commissioners, Jason Falls, was hired with an increased pay to replace Attorney Bob Yelton. Mr. Yelton sent a letter to the County Commissioners expressing his outrage of his firing by stating in an open letter dated July 28, 2015. “It also disturbs me that you fired me and hired Speaker Moore completely illegally… It also hurts that in the process of firing me, you had to lie to me. That again shows your lack of respect for me.

Although Mr. Yelton’s displeasure was never remedied with the County Commissioners, he was still privileged to serve as the Attorney for the City of Shelby. The irony now is that Mr. Yelton is central in the decision-making process of the Willie Green lawsuits. The integrity of Mr. Yelton is being tested in his support of a legal proceeding that clearly presents improprieties by City Manager Rick Howell and the City Council. The City of Shelby clearly took an illegal vote in opposition to a partnership with Mr. Green when they failed to do so in open meeting or to allow Mr. Green a chance to present his proposal to the city. More egregious is Mr. Yelton having to support County Manager Rick Howell’s “lies” about Mr. Green’s financial situation and criminal intentions.

2: On November 15, 2016, Mayor Stan Anthony and the owner of

an architect company doing business in the name of Boomerang Design, sent a letter to the Cleveland Community College Board of Trustees, Chairman Mr. Ellis Monroe, detailing his opposition that the Cleveland Community College Board of Trustees hired Holland & Hamrick as the architect firm for the new Advanced Manufacturing Center project. Mayor Anthony stated the following, “my greatest concern is due to the fact that one of the college’s Board of Trustee members (Greg Melton) is also an architect with the very small staff of the Holland and Hamrick firm.” This is certainly a case of the “appearance” of unethical conduct, at a minimum, but more importantly possibly in violation of the NC Criminal Self-Dealing Statute (GS 14-234). Please note under this statute it is unlawful for a public officer to “…derive a direct benefit from a contract with the public agency he or she serves”. GS 14-234(a)(1). As you will also note in the enclosed information from the UNC School of Government, the board does not avoid liability just because a member of the board is excused from voting on the contract.”

As of now, we are not sure as to what other projects that were awarded to Mayor Anthony’s architect firm, if any, by the community college and we are not certain if Mayor Anthony himself has not violated the NC Criminal Self-Dealing Statute (GS 14-234), but we will be asking under the NC Freedom of Information Act for any contracts that the City or County government has given to Mayor Anthony’s firm. In addition, attorneys representing Mr. Green will be strongly encouraged to acquire information during depositions regarding any solicited business opportunities from a company(s) who is trying to partner with the City of Shelby.

The irony of Mayor Anthony expressing displeasure with the community college is he was only asking the Cleveland Community Board of Trustees to reconsider their decision and give his firm an equal opportunity to present his company’s proposal. The request is identical to the denied request Mr.

Green asked of the Mayor and the City Council.

3: Rick Howell is proved to have lied to the City Council about whether or not there was a "Deed Restriction" on the land given to the City of Shelby Parks and Recreation by the Royster family for the sole purpose of a public golf course that would be affordable to the community. Mr. Howell told the Council that there were no deed restrictions and thus the City Council voted to close the golf course. It was later discovered that a deed restriction was attached to the property that stated the forfeiture of the land back to the Royster family if the land was not used as a golf course. The City Council was forced to rescind the previous vote and or lose the land.

The irony is that Rick Howell, despite his laziness or intentional lying of not checking to see if there were any restrictions, was still able to keep his job. But there are several other situations where Rick Howell has done things that would justify his firing (i.e. The String Bean Restaurant lawsuit), but time does not permit a rehash of that failed project.

4: Murphy v. Cleveland County that frivolously settled in 2017 was a legitimate employment dispute issue with the Cleveland County DSS. Murphy v. Cleveland County never had to evolve into a lawsuit had the plaintiff been granted the privileges granted to Mr. Yelton, Mr. Howell, and possible Mayor Stan Anthony. I was forced to file a lawsuit, resign from my job, and suffer continued retaliation when Cleveland County foolishly interfered with my employment after leaving Cleveland County. It took the county another year to get rid of former DSS Director Karen Ellis Pritchard.

Mr. Green is now facing a similar situation, in that, the City of Shelby, including but limited to, Mayor Stan Anthony, Attorney Bob Yelton, Rev. Charles Webber, Eric Hendrick, David White, David Causby, Violet Dukes, and Dicky Amaya will have

their integrity tested. A previous article by Robert Williams indicate that the City of Shelby will spend millions of taxpayers' money on defending this lawsuit and the actions of County Manager Rick Howell and City Council members. The caution that I will extend to the City of Shelby is that people in general tend to tell the truth when faced with court ordered depositions. Other improprieties will likely be exposed and the problem will be exacerbated.

Lastly, I challenge all involved parties to protect the integrity of your government and seek ways to do the right thing. Mr. Green is unfairly having to fight for a minority business ownership that will be one of the few to help improve our athletes' chance of success and to host travel ball events that will have an $8-$10 million economic impact to the county. It is also appalling that elected officials continue to get bad advice from attorneys to keep quiet and say nothing. The integrity of once good and honorable men and women will continue to be compromised.

Editor's Note: Rev. Murphy has provided good advice to county officials. I would add that the newly elected Cleveland County Commissioners should remember that their County Manager and staff have deep roots in the corruption surrounding the Eddie Holbrook regime and, therefore, should be watched closely when their advice tends to recommend the continuance of things started under defeated and disgraced Commissioner Chairman Eddie Holbrook. Like defrauding $5 million in county tax money to pay ALWS bills. Carrying the full old DSS Board into the new DSS advisory Board. Making Jane Shooter the Interim DSS Director. Making Jason Falls the LeGrand Center Director. And other such acts of total foolishness.