

THERE'S SOMETHING ROTTEN IN "~~DENMARK~~" (COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA NAACP)

Returning to South Carolina after a nearly twenty-year hiatus helping underrepresented students (including Veterans) in Atlanta and Minneapolis obtain college degrees, Mr. Robert Reese was asked to help lead his rural community's local branch of the NAACP.

Suffering from low membership, anemic administrations and an apathetic community; the Lower Richland County, South Carolina Branch of the NAACP (LRNAACP) had been suspended by both the State and National NAACP for several years.

Even though Mr. Reese had never joined the NAACP, he brought to bear his incredible leadership skills at the Lower Richland County Branch. He grew membership by over 400%, significantly increasing the branch's fundraising coffers, and improving the organization's advocacy and visibility in the community.

Under Reese's remarkable leadership, the LRNAACP (Lower Richland NAACP) tackled formidable environmental injustices affecting his "fence-line" community. There were multiple polluters and pollutants. This included toxic nuclear compounds, paper, coal-burning, and fiberglass plants scattered across Lower Richland County, South Carolina.

History tells us that polluters are much more concerned about profits than preserving the environment and protecting people from the dangerous health effects of polluting the air, water and soil. Erin Brockovich, for example, was instrumental in building a case against the Pacific Gas and Electric Company whose pollutants were destroying the environment and killing people.

To understand the massive problems Reese faced, you must first understand Richland county is a key regional, "economic driver" of South Carolina and home to the state's capital – Columbia; the flagship campus of the University of South Carolina; and important military installations, like Fort Jackson (the largest military training installation in the United States) and McEntire Joint National Guard Base.

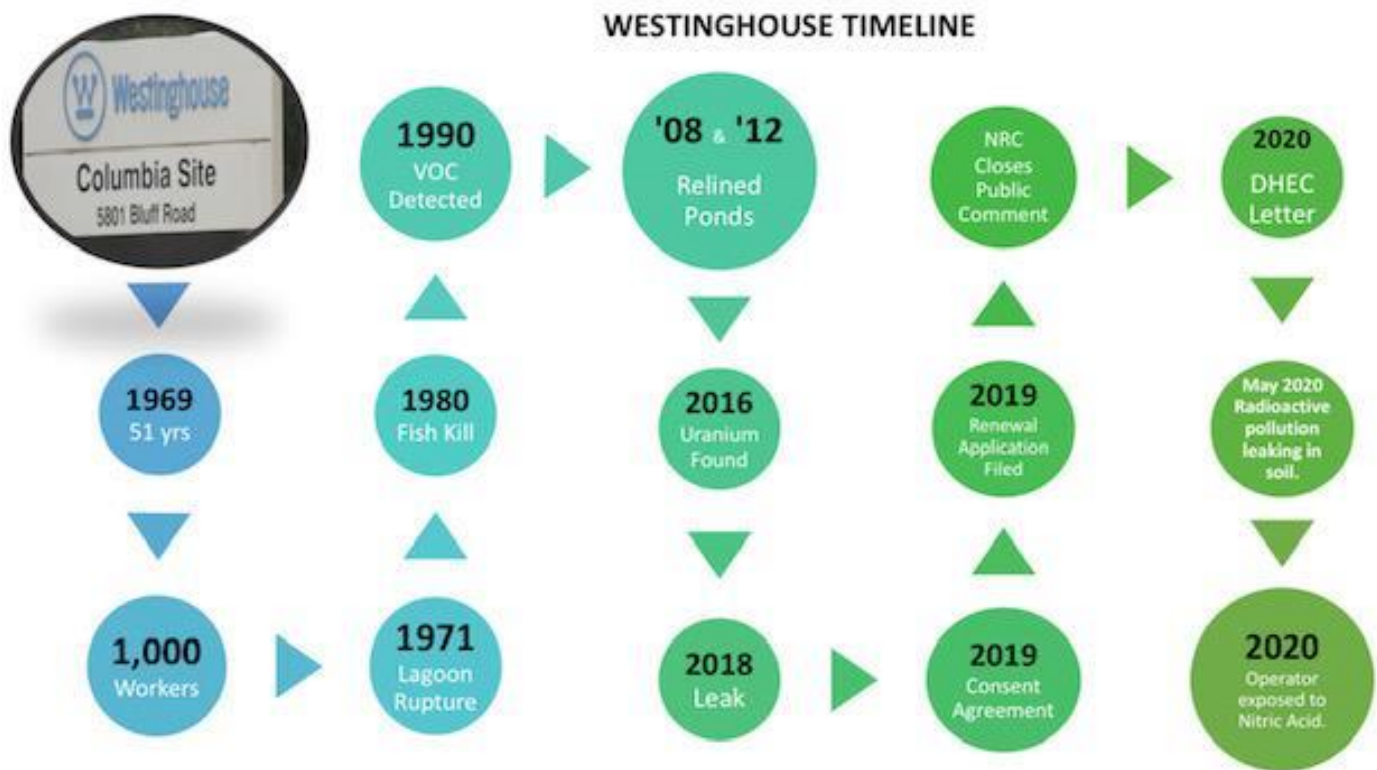
Richland County is an example of the South's resilient renaissance. Sadly, not all residents of Richland County reaped the benefits of its economic prosperity and growth. In some portions of the county, specifically Lower Richland, time (and wages) practically stood still. Many live in poverty.

Lower Richland County, is nearly 77% African American, and the area has one of the highest rates of landownership for African American residents in the country. But, like most rural communities, pockets of extreme poverty exist, and portions of the Lower Richland community lie within an Economic Empowerment Zone (EEZ), where nearly 40% of the residents live below the poverty level.

The community is commonly referred to as "Lower" Richland because of its geographical topography. Nestled between two significant rivers, the Congaree and the Wateree Rivers, this "lower" portion of Richland County forms a unique urban-suburban-rural community.

Separating South Carolina's Piedmont (or Midlands area) and low-country (coastal) regions, Lower Richland is home to the Congaree swamp or bottomlands, a unique habitat and ecosystem that includes over 26,000 acres of preserved forest within the Congaree National Park - the only national park in South Carolina and an internationally-recognized United Nations Biosphere Reserve.

Next door to this pristine ecosystem sits the Westinghouse nuclear fuel plant. Need we say more? For 50 years, the plant has operated in this rural, majority-minority community. The plant's operational history is riddled with environmental mishaps, employee incidents and community complaints.



When Robert Reese became President of the LRNAACP, he learned that Westinghouse had filed for a 40-year license renewal - 8 years before its current license expires! License renewal was NEVER supported by county councilwomen who represented the citizens of Lower Richland County.

Likewise, the SCNAACP nor the EECJ were supportive of the Westinghouse license renewal, because they were NOT aware of these issues. Reese spearheaded an injunction to stop the nuclear plant's license renewal. The objective of the injunction was to...

1. Halt the license process,
2. Force the corporate polluter to the negotiation table, and
3. Strengthen the company's employee and environmental inspection protocol.

Although many environmental groups wanted to halt the plant's operations completely, Mr. Reese was more pragmatic. As President of the LRNAACP, Reese did not seek to close the plant, because the economic stability and viability of the community was linked to the plant's safe and environmentally-friendly operations.

To the surprise of many advocates and residents, the injunction to halt license renewal was stalled by none other than **Brenda Murphy** who is the President of South Carolina's NAACP (AKA: SCNAACP).

Murphy intentionally delayed the "unanimously" passed petition by the SCNAACP EECJ committee. Instead, she instructed the State NAACP Freedom Fund Committee to solicit funds from the Westinghouse plant management team.

The Westinghouse management team, eager to curry favor with the local community, realized the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) had accomplished what the SCNAACP had failed to achieve... a halt for their 40-year license renewal request while simultaneously mandating that the nuclear company complete an extensive Environmental Impact Statement before moving forward with the license renewal application.

With the covert SCNAACP funding solicitation floating under the radar, Westinghouse Corporation agreed to the support request put forward by President **Brenda Murphy** on behalf of South Carolina's NAACP, provided the LRNAACP Branch was a major recipient of those "ill-gotten" gains.

To ensure the plan moved along without opposition, **Brenda Murphy** requested Mr. Reese meet with the Westinghouse managers. Fortunate for the Lower Richland community, the funding appeal from the SCNAACP was included in the email invitation forwarded to their Branch President.

Robert Reese was incensed that the SCNAACP EECJ committee's injunction had been ignored, yet he had been invited to sit at the table with the corporate behemoth to discuss a measly ransom to sell out his community.

Understanding the vital importance of transparency, Mr. Reese balked at the meeting request and demanded to know why President Murphy intentionally stalled the injunction request by her own environmental justice committee.



SNEAKY BRENDA MURPHY

Robert Reese also wanted to know why, less than three (3) weeks later, SCNAACP solicited funds from the same nuclear plant management team with two recent incidents of polluting the Lower Richland community.

Three days after Reese's inquiry about the financial request, **Brenda Murphy** filed an Article X petition to have Reese removed from office as President of the LRNAACP and to have his NAACP membership permanently revoked.

The Article X petition, based on Reese's report about voting intimidation during the June 9th SC Primary, was riddled with lies and misrepresentations. Despite exculpatory proof of the Article X assertions, the National NAACP conducted a pathetic investigation, allowing accusations against Mr. Reese to permeate through the Lower Richland community for nearly six months. That's bare-knuckle politics; start first with personal attacks to ruin a person's good name.

The Article X petition was orchestrated to cause irreparable damage to the reputation and credibility of Mr. Robert Reese. Hesitations to resolve the complaint, cost Reese the opportunity to clear his name, re-established his presidency, and seek re-election. It's suspected, this was the ultimate goal of President **Brenda Murphy** and her masterful slew of puppeteers supporting her maniacal mishaps.

The specific charges levied against Mr. Reese in the Article X complaint stemmed from a call that he received at 4:57 PM on Tuesday, June 9, 2020 - the day of the South Carolina Primary Election. The call concerned potential voter intimidation at the Webber Elementary polling location, in the heart of Congressman Jim Clyburn's district, Reese responded to the call from a member of the LRNAACP Executive Committee.

The caller complained about voter intimidation at the polling site. Answering the call of a concerned resident who served as a member of the NAACP Executive Committee, Reese responded immediately to the complaint.

Reese called Trav Robertson, Chair of the South Carolina Democratic Party, because there were NO Republican candidates on the Primary ballot in that area, Reese asked Robertson, ***"what should a voter do if he or she felt intimidated at the poll?"***

To Reese's surprise, Robertson confirmed that he had received several complaints about that polling site regarding the SC Primary election. Stunned by the admission of the Chair of the SC Democratic Party, Reese asked Robertson, ***"so what is a voter to do if they feel intimidated at the polls?"***

Robertson explained that a voter should tell the poll clerk at the polling location, and the clerk would handle the complaint. The details of what happened next are chronicled a newspaper article by THE STATE, ***"Former longtime Richland Councilwoman accused of intimidating Lower Richland voters."***

In the last sentence of that article, President **Brenda Murphy** is quoted as saying, ***"...members of the NAACP plan to monitor the polls"*** at the runoff election two weeks later. Unbeknownst to Reese, this would be his last service to the Lower Richland community as the LRNAACP President.

As irony would have it, the SC run-off election and the infamous call with the Westinghouse management team about the financial support to the SCNAACP occurred on the same day – Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

While monitoring activity at the Webber Elementary School precinct during the SC Run-off election, Reese was harassed by community members.

Jalisa Washington Price, the former South Carolina State Director of the Kamala Harris Presidential Campaign yelled at Reese that she knew both Derrick Johnson, the NAACP National President, and **Brenda Murphy**, the SCNAACP President and that she had called both to complain about Reese's presence at the polling precinct.

Minutes later, Murphy called Reese's cell phone to ask if he was a **"monitor,"** or an **"observer"** at the polling location. Reese responded that he did not know the difference. He acknowledged that he was pacing outside the precinct because the allegations of voter intimidation had occurred **"outside"** the precinct, not **"inside"** the facility.

Brenda Murphy told him to go **"inside"** the building to monitor the SC run-off election and to end his observations **"outside"** the polling station. Reese reiterated to President Murphy that the potential voter intimidation was occurring **"OUTSIDE"** the polling precinct, not **"INSIDE."**

Murphy ordered Reese to meet with the polling clerk and Shirley Black-Oliver – an objective observer sent to monitor this polling site because of the allegations filed two-weeks earlier during the SC Primary Election. Shirley Black-Oliver corroborated Reese's observations that the voting irregularities were occurring **"OUTSIDE"** the polling precinct, not **"INSIDE."**

Once again, Murphy demanded that Reese move inside the precinct, but Reese warned that sitting inside the precinct, while potential violations were occurring outside, was a colossal waste of time. As such, Reese informed President Murphy that instead he would pack his things and return to his home.

Before leaving, Black-Oliver indicated that the Richland County Sheriff Department had been summoned, and they should arrive soon. Rather than leaving the polling site, Reese remained in his vehicle until the deputy sheriff arrived.

As he sat in his car, Reese wondered whether law enforcement would respond to the call since no officer had been dispatched during the previous claims of voter intimidation. This time was different! An officer did show up, and Reese knew that a 9-1-1 record must exist.

Weeks later, Reese filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the 9-1-1 calls made that day regarding voter intimidation at that polling site. At least three calls were made by County Election personnel before a Sheriff's Deputy responded. And, Reese has not received a formal response to initial voter intimidation claims forwarded to Richland County Sherriff Leon Lott by Charles Austin, Chair of the Richland County Voter Registration and Elections Commission.

On July 9, 2020, Reese received official notification from Derrick Johnson, National President of the NAACP, that he had been removed as the President of the LRNAACP and that his NAACP membership had been revoked, pending an official hearing.

The next day, Reese requested a formal hearing and a copy of the Article X complaint filed against him. NAACP By-Laws stipulate that the National NAACP office ***"...shall forward a copy of the [Article X] complaint by mail to the officer...address of record within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the complaint."***

After more than twenty calendar days, Reese again requested a copy of the complaint filed against him. Finally, sixty-eight (68) days after the complaint was filed against him, Reese learned that President **Brenda Murphy** had initiated the Article X removal complaint – three days after he inquired about the Westinghouse donation request and four days before that dubious meeting with corporate polluter and the South Carolina run-off election.

Reese submitted over forty (40) exhibits to the three-member panel that refuted the claims. Reese never received any word exonerating him or substantiating all the false claims made by President Murphy.

Lower Richland Branch of the NAACP moved forward with its elections, despite admonitions by esteemed veteran and Lower Richland resident, Lorrie Gregory, who served as Secretary of the LRNAACP Nominating Committee.

In a written report, Gregory outlined several irregularities in the nomination and voting process that tainted the Lower Richland NAACP election. President Murphy was in receipt of the Nomination Committee report and letter urging that the election be postponed or redone.

President Murphy presided over several election-related meetings utilizing questionable parliamentary procedures and failing to adhere to national election mandated timelines. Yet, President **Brenda Murphy** advised the LRNAACP leadership to move forward with the Branch elections. This, even after the president-elect – Melissa Jenkins – reported malfeasance and irregularities to the appropriate election committees, the SCNAACP officers, and regional officers of the NAACP.

For wrongfully supporting the removal of Mr. Robert Reece Reese and numerous other dubious actions, **Brenda Murphy** should immediately resign her position as President of the South Carolina NAACP. But, we won't hold our breath, because Richland County, South Carolina is rife with corruption.