

NEWS CLIPS



Photo special to Sentinel-Voice by Bevins Bennett
General Colin Powell (left) and National Urban League President, Hugh B. Price

LEADERS UNITE IN CAMPAIGN TO BOOST ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

General Colin Powell joined ranks with the Congress of National Black Churches (CNBC) and the National Urban League at the Black Church Leadership Conference, "The Crisis in Collective Educational Achievement: Destiny or Disaster?" The three-day event was a part of the Campaign for African-American Achievement, a nationwide effort, under the leadership of the National Urban League, to combat the forces that undermine the academic success of African-American children. Hugh Price, president of the National Urban League, insisted that the African-American community must stop making or accepting excuses for the failure of Black children to achieve. "It is time for churches and community organizations to create a climate of support and opportunity that steers young people clear of destructive temptation and toward lifelong success," he said. "We must acknowledge that even the most ideal school requires the support and structure of homes and communities that reinforce and revere education," said Powell, chairman of "American's Promise-The Alliance for Youth."

NAACP PRESIDENT/CEO IMMORTALIZED IN BALTIMORE WAX MUSEUM

A life-size, life-like wax figure of NAACP president Kweisi Mfume was unveiled on Oct. 24 at the Great Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, Md. Government officials, members of the clergy, civic and business leaders and other invited guests joined the former congressman and his family for the official induction into the museum. The unveiling was part of the celebration of Mfume's 49th birthday. The waxen Mfume joins a celebrated company that includes Frederick Douglass, Shirley Chisholm, Dr. Ben Carson, Billie Holiday, Rosa Parks and Gen. Colin Powell. The museum's centerpiece is a replica of a slave ship. For information about the Great Blacks in Wax Museum please call (410) 522-9547.

FORMER URBAN LEAGUE, NAACP COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR DIES

James D. Williams, a widely known and respected public relations professional who had the distinction of heading the communications effort for the National Urban League and the NAACP, died on Friday, Oct. 25, after a long illness. He was 73. Williams served as national director of public relations of the national NAACP from 1986-1993. In that capacity he was responsible for developing and implementing strategies for the 500,000-member organization. Prior to joining the NAACP, he served as director of communications for the National Urban League under three of its leaders, Whitney Young, Vernon Jordan and John E. Jacob. Williams' career also included reporting/editorial positions at NNPA member papers — *The Philadelphia Tribune*, the *Carolinian* and the *Baltimore and Washington Afro*. Funeral services were held on Thursday, Oct. 30.

KWANZAA CREATOR, POSTAL SERVICE ASSAILED FOR COMMERCIALIZATION

Dr. Maulana Karenga, the founder of Kwanzaa, and the United States Postal Service (USPS), have become the targets of a boycott by the National Leadership Council of Elders (NLCE) after the Oct. 22 unveiling of a stamp honoring Kwanzaa. The non-religious, non-heroic celebration, held annually from Dec. 26 - Jan. 1, began in 1966. The NLCE rejects the USPS honor because they say Kwanzaa practitioners hold the celebration sacred. "We have decided that the commercialization and the economic exploitation of Kwanzaa by the USPS under the sole authorization of Dr. Maulana Karenga is an affront to the African-American community, an assault on the preservation of (the) cultural integrity of Kwanzaa," said Baba Hannibal Afrik, NLCE spokesman.

Judge convicts 3 in racial church burning

Special to Sentinel-Voice

MOBILE, Ala. — A jury on Monday convicted three white youths of conspiring to burn a rural black church.

Alan Odom, Brandy Boone and John Kenneth Cumbie were convicted Monday on a conspiracy count in the June 30 torching that destroyed St. Joe Baptist Church, a 21-member church in the Little River community. The three were acquitted in the first trial involving a new federal racial hatred law.

Prosecutors said they filed the racial hatred counts because Boone attended a Ku Klux Klan rally two days earlier. The other two were not at the rally, but went to a party attended by rally-goers on the night of the fire.

The new federal charge imposes harsher penalties — a mandatory 10-year sentence — for arson in a religious structure when race is the motive. It was passed after a rash of fires at black churches in the South in 1995 and 1996.

Odom, 18, who was accused of setting curtains afire to start the blaze, also was convicted of one count of arson and one count of arson with racial motivation, a separate charge from the racial

hatred count. He faces up to 18 years in prison.

Prosecutors accused the 19-year-old Boone of shouting "Let's go burn the nigger church."

Cumbie, 21, allegedly did nothing to stop it. He and Boone were found innocent of arson and could receive between four and five years in prison for conspiracy.

A fourth defendant pleaded guilty to arson before the trial began.

Although none was convicted on the new hate crime charge, Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Bordenkircher said he was convinced the Klan rally inspired the arson.

Klan members in the rural area had been "planting seeds that grew into a bitter harvest," he said.

Defense attorneys contended Odom thought the building was abandoned and that the three, who drove to the site after a beer-drinking party, got into youthful mischief — nothing to the degree claimed by prosecutors.

James Harper, an attorney for Odom, said the verdict will be appealed.

Klan costumes net teen suspensions

Special to Sentinel-Voice

CLIFTON FORGE, Va. — Three white students were suspended from Alleghany High School for wearing Ku Klux Klan costumes to school for Halloween.

Principal Phil Douglas said he saw the two brothers and a female friend, ages 13 and 14, shortly after they got off their bus Friday.

"I assumed they were ghosts when I first saw them," Douglas said. "Then I saw the crosses they were wearing."

Students are allowed to wear costumes for Halloween, but

they were told Thursday not to wear anything offensive, Douglas said. "I was offended, the school was offended and a large majority of our students have been offended," he said.

About 17 percent of the school's 870 students are black, Douglas said.

"This is the first time that something like this has happened. We usually have fairly good racial relations at the school," said Martin Loughlin, superintendent of the Alleghany school system.

Commonwealth's Attorney Chris Alderson said the students can't be prosecuted because they are underage.

Ethics

(Continued from Page 1)

Convention USA Inc., is being investigated for allegedly mishandling church funds as well as for alleged marital infidelity. Lyons has denied the allegations.

Bobby Bivens, a board member from California, was arrested in early October and accused of owing \$20,000 in child support.

Bivens did not return a call seeking comment.

The board members' legal problems are an embarrassment for Evers-Williams, who swept into office as a reformer promising to end the questionable fiscal dealings that has plagued the organization recently.

The board adopted a code of ethics in 1995 after an audit found that former board Chairman William Gibson identified \$112,000 in questionable spending. Subsequently, then-executive Director Benjamin Chavis was ousted for running up \$32,000 in personal charges on his NAACP credit card.

The code, which Evers-Williams said was signed by all board members, centers on fiscal improprieties involving NAACP funds.

Evers-Williams said that might change after a new ethics committee meets to revamp the code.


"The code needs to have some teeth put into it," she said. "Hazel and Ghee and the others haven't taken any money from the association. Please understand, I'm not defending what they did but just saying it's a very different situation."

The review of the ethic code could lead to a needed overhaul of the NAACP board, said Ronald Walters, a University of Maryland political scientist. For years, observers have

suggested trimming the number of board members from 64 to streamline operations and curtail cliques and infighting.

"This gives her a golden

opportunity to do what chapters have been asking for for years," Walters said. "It would cast the organization in the reform mode, and the public would like that."



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