

NEWS CLIPS

CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT SEEKS ELIGIBLE BLACK FARMERS

If you are a Black farmer who has plied your trade between 1983 and 1997, you may be eligible to receive money, loan forgiveness and other benefits from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, thanks to the result of *Pigford v. Glickman*, the Black Farmers' Class Action Lawsuit. Last Aug. 28, Black farmers filed the \$2 billion discrimination lawsuit against the USDA, contending that they have been the victims of racial discrimination after repeatedly being denied loans and other management and technical services. The lawsuit also asserted that from 1983 to 1997, the USDA failed to investigate hundreds of discrimination complaints filed by Black farmers. — a request to have Black farmers discriminated against before 1983 included in the suit was denied. According to the farmers, discrimination took the form of "stretching the review process out many years, conducting vacuous or ghost investigations and failing to take action." These practices led to foreclosures, bankruptcies and other serious economic problems for Black farmers, they said. For more information call 800-448-FARM or write to: Pires & Fraas, Lead Counsel, *Pigford v. Glickman*, 1818 N Street, NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20036.

MINORITIES MAY BE KEY TO REDUCING BLOOD SHORTAGES

African-Americans and Hispanic Americans are donating blood more often than they did in the beginning of the decade, according to two blood donation surveys. Accelerating this trend can help prevent seasonal blood shortages, said Byron Buhner, president of American's Blood Centers, the nation's largest network of independent, non-profit community blood centers. "While this news is encouraging, our members are always looking for ways to increase minority participation in their community blood donor programs, especially during the holidays when many blood centers across the country experience shortages," Buhner said. A November 1996 Louis Harris & Associates survey commissioned by American's Blood Centers showed that 37 percent of African-Americans and Hispanic Americans had donated blood in their lifetime. Separately, a survey conducted by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute in 1993 showed that 33 percent of African-Americans had donated blood at least once, while 28 percent of Hispanic Americans have donated blood. African-Americans and Hispanic Americans are the United States' two largest and fastest growing minorities, according to the 1990 U.S. Census. With populations in excess of 30 million and 22 million respectively, African-Americans (12 percent) and Hispanic Americans (nine percent) constitute approximately 21 percent of the population. In contrast, according to the Louis Harris & Associates findings, Caucasians make up about 79 percent of the U.S. population and 53 percent have donated blood in their lifetime.

HEALTH ADVOCATES TAB FEBRUARY HEALTHY HEART MONTH

This February, as celebrations focus on African-American contributions to the history of the United States, health advocates are stressing the need to focus on a healthy body. They point out that Black Americans continue to suffer from heart disease at rates significantly higher than other ethnic groups. Accordingly, WATTS Health Systems, the largest community-based health care system of its kind in the nation serving more than 200,000 residents in greater Los Angeles, has designated February African-American Healthy Heart Month. They suggest African-Americans examine their heart's health and their risk for cardiovascular disease. The death rate from cardiovascular disease among Black men is 47.4 percent and 69.1 percent higher among Black women. African-American men are nearly 94 percent more likely and African-American women are 77 percent more likely to die from stroke. Death from high blood pressure is 36.1 percent higher for Black men and 37 percent higher for Black women.

EX-LAKER MAGIC JOHNSON LOOKING TO BUILD NYC CINEPLEX

NEW YORK — Magic Johnson has his eye on a long-closed Brooklyn movie house as the possible site for his first New York City cineplex. The retired basketball star's company, Magic Johnson Enterprises, is hoping to develop the historic Loews Kings Theater, which was recently put up for bid by the city, said company president Ken Lombard. Some other sites are still under review, Lombard said Monday. The company is still hoping to build a Harlem theater complex. Johnson's company has teamed with Sony and developed movie complexes in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Houston. Johnson's company is among several that have expressed interest in the Brooklyn site, and a decision is expected to take several months.

Sharpton: I had reason to believe Brawley

Special to Sentinel-Voice
POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y.

— During the first week of testimony in his defamation trial, the Rev. Al Sharpton insisted he had no reason not to believe Tawana Brawley's story of abduction and rape.

Sharpton, and two others who advised Brawley after the 1987 attack on the black teenager, face a \$395 million defamation suit filed by former prosecutor Steven Pagonos.

William Stanton, Pagonos' attorney, played TV videotapes of Sharpton pegging his client as a rapist. Pagonos, exonerated in 1988 by a grand jury, is suing Sharpton, Alton Maddox and C. Vernon Mason.

When the three Brawley advisers appeared on Phil Donahue's talk show a decade ago, the videotape showed Sharpton saying there was evidence that Brawley was attacked by Pagonos and others.

Under cross-examination, Sharpton admitted mistakenly identifying the elder Pagonos' position in the Democratic Party, but said, "There's no question he has immense political influence. That's why it took so long to bring a jury."

Sharpton said he got most of the information about the case from Brawley's parents because, "I would not engage in sex talk with a 15-year-old

girl."

"I was not there when she identified the suspects in a photo," he said. "I was around Tawana Brawley when the names were called and she never led me to believe that what her mother told me was untrue."

On Monday, Sharpton repeatedly invoked Martin Luther King Jr. as he cast himself as more of a civil rights agitator than a detective in the case.

Brawley was found smeared with feces and scrawled with racial epithets in the small town of Wappingers Falls. She claimed she was abducted and raped by



REV. AL SHARPTON
several white men. The case sparked racial protests and led to an investigation that ended with a grand jury calling the entire thing a hoax.

Mfume chides Florida state Democratic Party

Special to Sentinel-Voice
BALTIMORE, Md. —

NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume issued a strong criticism of the Florida Democratic Party in response to their decision to deny Rep. Willie Logan the chance to serve as Florida's first African-American Speaker of the House.

"I hope that the Florida Democratic Party did not expect the African-American community to roll over and play dead on this issue," Mfume said. "We have just been slapped in the face by a party that has enjoyed strong support from the black community for many years. This matter serves as another lesson that we have no permanent friends, or permanent enemies, but we do have permanent interests. Right now our interest is in having Rep. Logan serve as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives."

"The Democratic members

of the Florida House of Representatives have not provided the larger community with a credible and substantive rationale for their actions and I hope the National Democratic Party does not turn a blind eye to this matter," Mfume said.

Mfume praised the work of the Florida State Conference of NAACP Branches and their leader Mr. Leon W. Russell.

"I concur with the Florida State NAACP wholeheartedly and commend Mr. Russell and his executive committee for

having the courage to stand up to the Democrats," he said, "Mr. Russell and I will work

together to make sure the National Board of Directors is engaged in this matter."

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