

EDUCATION

Berkeley 'pledges' to reach minority students

Special to Sentinel-Voice

OAKLAND, Calif. — Fifteen-year-old Leano Rice is a quick bike-ride from the University of California at Berkeley.

But trading the urban blight of McClymonds High School for Berkeley's hallowed halls will take much longer. That's why he's sitting in his high school classroom, gazing at a grotesque picture of the common house fly on his computer screen.

The McClymonds High sophomore is part of a UC Berkeley program called "City Bugs" which uses insects, the Internet and mentoring to reach disadvantaged high schoolers.

The idea behind City Bugs, one of several recruitment efforts known collectively as the Berkeley Pledge, is to make sure students know the road to the university is still open to them — even though the university system has abandoned race-based admission policies.

In 1995, the UC Board of Regents decided it was unfair to give applicants extra points based on race. Critics predicted the number of minority students on campus would get smaller. It has.

Even with affirmative action, approximately eight students from the predominantly black school were applying to UC Berkeley annually. Two or three were accepted. The Pledge hopes to boost those numbers.

The Berkeley Pledge was formed to combat the decline by sending university staff and

students into public schools. So far, more than 40 San Francisco Bay area schools are involved.

The community surrounding McClymonds signify urban rot: boarded-up windows, glass-strewn streets and chain link fence surrounding a nearby delivery yard topped by barbed wire.

The Pledge, which aims to boost minority student application and enrollment, began with \$2.5 million in campus and private funds. Another \$2.5 million is needed to continue operation to 2000. To date, \$300,000 has been raised.

System-wide, race-based admissions has produced mixed results. But recruitment efforts such as the Pledge seem to be paying off.

Undergraduate applications for fall are up by 3.1 percent for blacks and 10.1 percent for Mexican-Americans.

Life is different at McClymonds under the Pledge. Before biology teacher Joe Pinador got hooked up with Berkeley's Interactive University, the technology arm of the Pledge, he had to resort to chalk drawings on the blackboard and dead bugs on pins.

That changed with the arrival of Lewis, his team, 16 personal computers — and the World Wide Web.

Among those new to the Internet was 11th-grader Charles King, who beamed as he showcased his newfound knowledge and joked about not always being so interested in learning.

California legislator introduces anti-Proposition 209 bill, ACA 3

Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES — Assemblymember Kevin Murray, D-Los Angeles, recently introduced legislation he hopes counter the effects of Proposition 209, which, last year, eliminated race-based preferences in California's public agencies and public universities.

"Proposition 209 denied the fact that the legacy of past discrimination still exists and ignored the diversity of the state's current population," Murray said. "(Assembly Constitution Amendment 3) ACA 3 is a way to assure full inclusion of all Californians and continue the efforts to ensure diversity in our work force, public education system and the awarding of public contracts."

ACA 3 states that California may take any steps it deems necessary, including the creation and implementation of programs, to promote and enhance equal access to opportunities in public education, public employment and public contracting consistent with the U.S. Constitution.

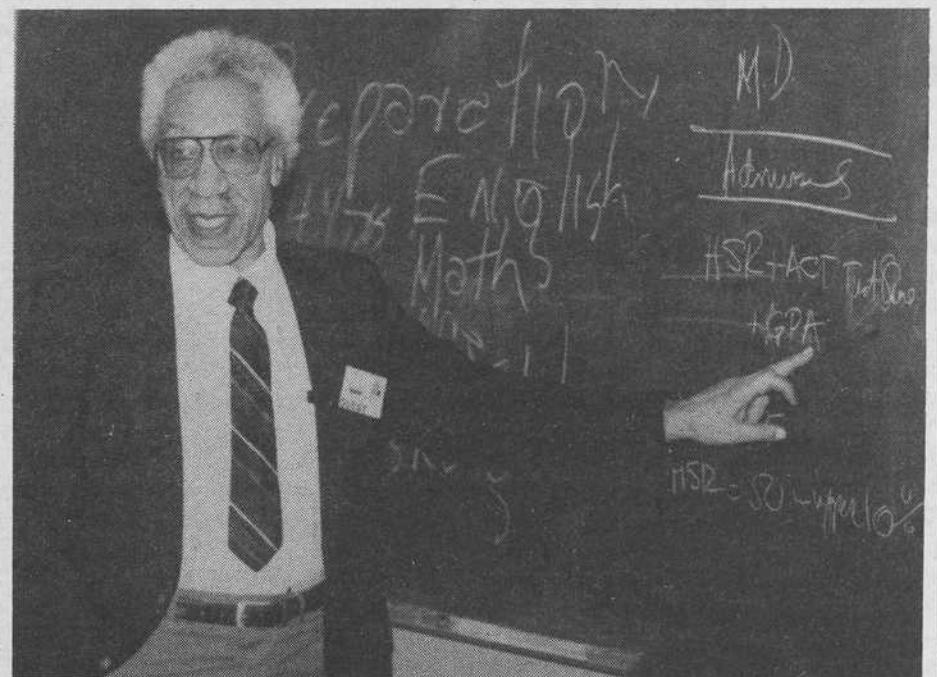
Proposition 209, which passed in November 1996 with 55 percent of the vote, outlawed affirmative action in California.

"Prop 209 was a divisive political tool of the California Republican Party as evidenced

by its contribution of \$900,000 to the campaign for Proposition 209," Murray said. He said his bill is needed to insure a level playing field for minorities.

"This bill recognizes the importance diversity plays in California and the tremendous need to allow the state to encourage diversity through appropriate measures," Murray

said. "My efforts are focused on moving ACA 3 through the legislation to place it on the ballot. Our challenge begins with getting the bill through its first policy committee and to the Assembly Floor." The first hearing on the ACA 3 will be March 17 in the Assembly Judiciary Committee at the state capitol in Sacramento.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy
Showing students how to apply for financial aid, Bill Stewart, director of Minority Student Programming at the University of Minnesota, points out the different financial aid packages available during the black student conference at UNLV.

Youth

(Continued from Page 1)

scores on standardized tests. "The ACT doesn't measure your guts or your determination," Purnell said. "It's not the depths that you come from that matter, but the heights that you reach."

Bill Stewart, director of Minority Student Programming at the University of Minnesota, came at Purnell's behest. "He indicated that Las Vegas had some students I needed to come down and talk to," said Stewart,

referring to Purnell. Of the University of Minnesota's 1,950 students, only 85 are black.

"I had the opportunity to come down because we want some black students," said Stewart, who also gave a workshop on financial aid for students.

"I'm glad they started a program like this to help black youths go to college," said Joe Thompson, a Las Vegas High School senior. "Mr. Purnell's speech touched me personally ... I feel I can fly."

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

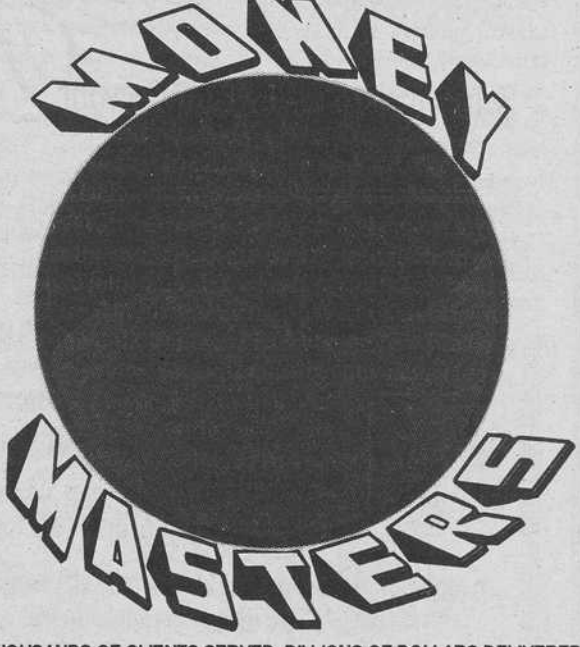
- Collaborated with and performed on Paul Simon's *Graceland* CD
- Sang the South African National Anthem at the Inauguration of Nelson Mandela
- Accompanied Nelson Mandela to accept the Nobel Peace Prize
- Appearances on Sesame Street, Broadway, and Films



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