

# NEWS CLIPS

## BOOK DETAILS BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY FOR VETS, FAMILIES AND SURVIVORS

Though more than \$42 billion was paid out in veterans benefits last year, billions more are still unclaimed. Every year the types of benefits available and the eligibility criteria change and few veterans or their survivors keep up with the latest rules. The changing criteria means many veterans, their families and survivors are now entitled to money and other government benefits even if they weren't eligible in the past. The Consumer Education Research Center, a 25-year-old national nonprofit consumer group, compiles a book annually detailing the latest rules, benefits and how to qualify. Robert L. Berko, the center's executive director, says many survivors of veterans are unaware they might be eligible to receive money, medical care, educational assistance, help in buying a home or other benefits. Eligibility and benefits change constantly and some people ineligible in previous years can now get money. Besides the veteran, those who qualify to receive benefits may include: common-law spouses, those who remarried after the death or disability of a veteran, children born out of wedlock, parents of veterans and dependent grandchildren. The 240-page Complete Guide to Federal and State Benefits For Veterans, Their Families and Survivors, with a forward by former Kansas Sen. Robert Dole, is available from the Consumer Center by calling (800) 872-0121.

## KARENGA AWARDED HONORARY DOCTORAL DEGREE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Activist-scholar Dr. Maulana Karenga received an honorary doctorate of philosophy from the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa. Already holding two doctoral degrees he earned and being a professor and chair of the Department of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, Karenga delivered a commencement address titled "Reaffirming Human Dignity, Justice and the Good in the Next Millennium: The Legacy and Lessons of African Culture." Other recipients of honorary doctorates at the graduating ceremony were Dr. Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, and Miriam Makeba, Africa's First Lady of Song, who played a central role in the struggle against apartheid by carrying the message of South Africa's struggle for freedom to the world. The citation acknowledging Karenga noted that he was chosen for his "intellectual and practical work on behalf of African people" nationally and internationally. Also highlighted were his intellectual and practical contributions to Black Studies, "not only in the U.S. but also worldwide," including his vanguard role in implementing ancient Egyptian studies into Black Studies. The citation also praised Karenga's creation of the African-American and pan-African celebration of Kwanzaa.

## ALPHA PHI ALPHA LAUNCHES HOUSING REINVESTMENT INITIATIVE

In a move to spark reinvestment in housing in African-American communities, the Alpha Phi Alpha Building Foundation has embarked on a national neighborhood revitalization project to build homes for low- and moderate-income families. This announcement was made while leaders of the fraternity were in Chicago to dedicate its newest set of family homes in the city's historic Bronzeville community at the site of the fraternity's former headquarters. The area has been renamed Alpha Village. Everett B. Ward, chairman of the building foundation, told attendants "the sole mission of the foundation is to lead a massive reinvestment campaign in order to protect, preserve and promote African-American communities throughout the nation." Alpha Village was developed by Urban Equities, a black-owned development firm. Best American, a black-owned development company, built the homes. The fraternity will reinvest in similar communities around the nation. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. is the nation's first and largest African-American Greek-letter organization.

## PROSECUTOR IN TORTURE CASE RESIGNS

NEW YORK — The lead prosecutor in the case of four white police officers accused of torturing a black Haitian immigrant resigned on Tuesday. Assistant U.S. Attorney Catherine Palmer said she is leaving to return to private practice. Her departure comes three months after U.S. Attorney Zachary Carter's office took over the case from state prosecutors. "It's just time for me to move on," said Palmer, 42, whose resignation is effective Friday. "It's time for a new adventure." Four police officers are charged with beating Abner Louima last year after his arrest in a melee. Two are also charged with sodomizing Louima with a stick in a police precinct bathroom. Louima suffered a ruptured colon and bladder and was hospitalized for months. Disorderly conduct charges against him were dropped.

# NAACP to agriculture dept: Remedy black land loss

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**  
BALTIMORE, Md. — NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to intensify its efforts to address the plight of black farmers and land owners who continue to lose their land.

"This is an increasing dilemma for African-American farmers and the NAACP has been concerned for some time now about long-term consequences," Mfume said this week. "The present condition of things is

unacceptable. There continues to be a growing number of foreclosures on black farms, and the disclosure of widespread discrimination in lending, along with the backlog of several hundred pending civil rights cases, is alarming. We must move quickly to assess the seriousness of this problem so that African-Americans are not relegated to a perpetual consumer class only."

Mfume said "a close working relationship with USDA is paramount in

developing an immediate plan of action to prevent additional loss of black-owned farms."

As a result, the NAACP established an Office of Rural Development Outreach. A USDA official will work at the civil rights organization's national headquarters here to coordinate this effort. The Office of Rural Development Outreach will prepare NAACP branches to become advocates for small and minority farmers.

The NAACP will be reviewing and investigating requests for aid and identifying

short- and long-term solutions.

"I don't necessarily expect that this will be a panacea," Mfume said. "The process will be a long and tedious one; however, it is certainly the first step in the right direction."

"Today, in 1998," Mfume said, "there are less than 16,000 African-American-owned farms across the nation. Overall, 500 small farms fail weekly. African-American farmers are losing land at a rate of 1,000 acres each day."

"The Black Farmers (See Land, Page 16)

# Parks happy to be home after accident

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**  
DETROIT — Six days after leaving the hospital, civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks said she felt fine and was glad to be back among friends.

The 85-year-old mother of the Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott emerged from a car Sunday and was slowly guided up the stairs into St. Matthew

AME Church.

"We've saved your favorite seat for you," the Rev. Eddie Robinson told Parks as he walked with her to the left front row.

There, with the choir singing in the background and church members looking on, Mrs. Parks whispered answers to reporters' questions before

the start of services.

"I'm very happy to be here at St. Matthew's again," she said.

"I'm very happy to see so many friends here today."

Parks was hospitalized May 30 after falling in her Detroit apartment.

Tests at Harper Hospital found no evidence that she had

a heart attack or stroke, and doctors released her June 1.

Parks helped launch the modern civil rights movement by her refusal in 1955 to surrender her seat to a white man on a segregated bus in Montgomery.

Her arrest triggered a boycott led by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

# Study probes race-death penalty sentencing connection

**Special to Sentinel-Voice**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The NAACP earlier this week said studies by the Death Penalty Information Center linking race to a higher incidence of death penalty rulings should spur Congress to action.

DPIC's study examined statistics correlated with research-backed data saying African-Americans are four times more likely to be sentenced to death than members of other ethnic groups.

This study is coupled with a second study that reports 98 percent of the nation's chief prosecutors are white.

The first study supports data unearthed by University of Iowa Professor David Baldus in the mid 1970s linking race to higher averages of death penalty sentencing. The U.S. Supreme Court agreed with Baldus in the McCleskey vs. Kemp case. George Woodworth joined Baldus in the new study.

Being black in Philadelphia is an "aggravating factor," making a death sentence more likely, said the study which later identified

legitimate aggravating factors: whether the victim was tortured or whether the defendant inflicted great harm, pain or fear on the victim.

According to the study, the death sentence rate for African-Americans in Philadelphia was 38 percent higher than for other defendants who committed similar crimes.

These statistics were coupled with data showing that only one or two percent of the nation's district attorneys pushing for the death penalty decisions were minorities.

Data from other states where race and the death penalty have been studied over the past two decades reveal that in 93 percent of those states, death sentences were more likely if the murder victim was white than if the victim was African-American.

In almost half of the states, there was evidence that minority defendants were discriminated against.

NAACP officials say the new statistics warrant an evaluation of the death penalty and its links to race, and legislation to remedy the problem.

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Timothy Williams is a member of the Nevada & Illinois State Bar, practicing primarily in personal injury cases.

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