

Miami to get nation's first major black-owned hotel

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — The nation's first major black-owned hotel will feature an oceanfront setting and Art Deco facades on two buildings, but the symbolism of the Royal Palm Crowne Plaza Resort is bigger than the project itself.
 The \$64 million hotel — the centerpiece in a 20-point plan to end

a black tourism boycott of Miami — is committed to hiring minorities for half its staff and at least a quarter of senior management.
 "We are building a symbol of economic opportunity that will forever change the social landscape of our country," Washington developer and project leader R. Donahue Peebles said at a groundbreaking ceremony

Tuesday.
 The combination resort and convention center hotel on South Beach's famed Collins Avenue is one of more than 20 major hotels planned nationally by Peebles in the next five years. His work follows an NAACP campaign examining the track record of the nation's hotel chains in minority hiring and business development.

"We can lay to rest the fact that there is not a black-owned hotel or resort in this nation," said Leon Russell, Florida president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a national board member. "We look forward to many more such opportunities."
 The boycott was launched in 1990

when the Miami city commission snubbed visiting anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela, now South Africa's president, for his refusal to repudiate Cuban President Fidel Castro.
 It ended in 1995 when civic leaders agreed to plans intended to halt what boycott leader Marilyn Holifield called "deeply entrenched economic exclusion."

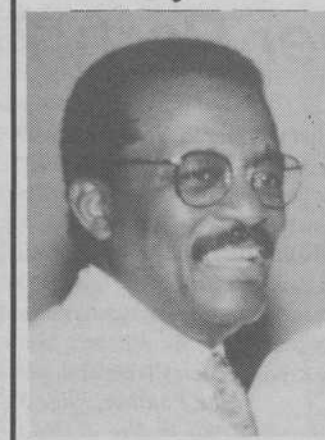
ABA says America getting, needs more minority lawyers

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 TORONTO — More United States lawyers are of racial and ethnic minorities these days, but few have reached the highest-level jobs, an American Bar Association panel said Tuesday.
 "There has been some progress, but the progress is not as great as we must have," said new ABA President Philip Anderson of Little Rock, Ark. "Too many minorities are dropping out of the profession somewhere along the way," he added.
 Minorities made up 10 percent of the associate members of large law firms in 1996, double the 5.1 percent share in 1985, said the report by the ABA's Commission on Opportunities for Minorities in the Legal Profession.

Among the nation's law students, almost 20 percent were minorities in 1996, up from 10.6 percent a decade earlier.
 The report did not have current figures on the share of minorities in the overall legal profession, but said about 7.5 percent of the nation's lawyers were minorities in 1990, up from 5 percent a decade earlier.
 Only about 3 percent of the partners in large law firms were minorities last year, and minority partners were more likely than whites to be paid by salary instead of being given a share of the firm's profits, the report said.
 Minorities also were more likely than whites to take government and public interest jobs rather than go into private

law practice. The report said minorities sometimes have trouble advancing in private law firms because they feel isolated and lack mentors.
 Anderson said he was appointing a task force to study racial and gender bias in the legal profession.
 The ABA will co-sponsor a conference in Washington, D.C., next May to consider ways to boost Americans' confidence in the legal system, he said, noting that state chief justices as well as other legal and political leaders will attend. Other sponsors of the meeting will be the Conference of State Court Administrators, the League of Women Voters and the Conference of Chief Justices.

Judge dismisses lawsuit filed by Johnnie Cochran



Special to Sentinel-Voice
 LOS ANGELES — A federal judge has dismissed a \$10 million libel suit filed by Johnnie L. Cochran against a *New York Post* columnist who wrote that the lawyer would "say or do just about anything to win, typically at the expense of the truth."
 U.S. District Judge Kim M. Wardlaw ruled Monday that the column by Andrea Peyser was a constitutionally protected expression of opinion.

"All are free to disagree with her views," Wardlaw said. "But Peyser's right to express her opinion on the subject is absolutely protected by the First Amendment."
 The judge said Peyser's statement "cannot reasonably be read as an allegation that Cochran committed a serious ethical breach. At most, it conveys that Cochran performed well the role of a criminal defense lawyer, successfully developing a theory to explain the facts and tell a logical story to absolve his client."
 Cochran, a member of the team of lawyers who successfully defended O.J. Simpson during his double-murder trial, was unavailable for comment.
 His attorney, Deborah Drooz, said she disagreed with parts of the judge's analysis.
 "We'll see what the client has to say as to where we go from here," Drooz said.
 Peyser wrote the Aug. 29, 1997, column shortly after Cochran became one of the lawyers for Haitian immigrant Abner Louima, who allegedly was subjected to torture by New York police officers.
 "The judge upheld what I said at the onset — which is that the column is my opinion," Peyser said. "The last time I checked, Americans have the right to express opinions."

Simpson's former estate razed by new owner

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 LOS ANGELES — The mansion where O.J. Simpson lived when his ex-wife was slain two miles away was bulldozed Wednesday, a scene that neighbors applauded and Simpson shrugged off, saying: "It's not my house and I could care less."
 "It's part of my past," Simpson told *The Associated Press* in a telephone interview from a rented home a few miles away.



flocked to his house rather than to the Bundy Drive condominium where Ms. Simpson and Goldman were stabbed to death.
 "Nothing bad happened at Rockingham," he said.
 Perhaps not bad, but momentous.
 The house was where the infamous Bronco chase ended, where Detective Mark Fuhrman said he found a bloody glove that matched one left at the crime scene, where houseguest Brian "Kato" Kaelin heard thumps on the wall and where Simpson said he was chipping golf balls, taking a shower or napping at the time of the stabbings.
 Some of Simpson's neighbors were glad to see the landmark bulldozed to smithereens, hoping it would end the invasion of tourists and lookalikes who continued to come even after he moved.

As 360 N. Rockingham Ave. in Brentwood was reduced to scrap, a thick dust settled over the property that became infamous after Simpson was accused of killing Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman on June 12, 1994.
 Simpson said he was notified the demolition was scheduled, but he was unmoved by the destruction. It was demolished to make way for a new home.
 "I am a sentimental guy," Simpson said. "But there's things you've got to compartmentalize. You take them and file them away. I've always tried to live my life forward and not backward."
 Simpson lived in the luxurious estate for 20 years, basking in the successes of his pro football career. He was evicted last year after defaulting on the mortgage. The 6,200 square-foot mansion, with its waterfalls, tennis court, swimming pool and guest quarters, was bought by an investment banker for nearly \$4 million.
 Simpson said if he still owned the place, he would probably have done the same thing.
 "I remodeled the house twice and I said one day if I had the money, I'd probably tear it down and start over," Simpson said.
 He said he was always amazed that curiosity seekers

Thomas
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 Thomas said, "Not one of us has the gospel. Not one of us can claim infallibility ... None of us has been appointed by God."
 President Bush appointed Thomas to the top court, but his nomination was opposed by numerous minority-rights groups, including the National Bar Association.
 The National Bar Association, now with about 18,000 members, was founded in 1925 at a time when blacks were not welcome in the American Bar Association. Today, many lawyers are members of both organizations.

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