

## NEWS CLIPS

### U.S. MILITARY DENIES MURDERING BLACK SOLDIERS

The U.S. Army has officially denied charges that it murdered 1,250 out of 3,000 troublesome black soldiers on a military training base in Mississippi during the fall of 1943. The allegations were made by author Carroll Case in his book "The Slaughter: An American Atrocity," released in August. Responding to requests for an investigation from the NAACP and Congressman Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., Army Secretary Louis Caldera, in a letter to NAACP CEO Kweisi Mfume, stated, "We have examined a sizable portion of the records, and we have found nothing that supports Mr. Case's allegations." According to Case, for 13 years he was unable to get the records from the Army because he was told "they were destroyed in a fire." The book states that 1,250 members of the all-Black 364th Infantry Regiment, stationed at Camp Van Dorn in southwestern Mississippi, were machine-gunned, loaded onto boxcars and carried to mass graves. He says the victims' families were notified that they died in the "line of duty." The book is based on eyewitness accounts, declassified government files and missing records. The NAACP is not satisfied with the Army's investigation and is calling for "a more thorough and impartial investigation of this alleged incident."

### CRITICS SAY TOBACCO DEAL IGNORES GLOBAL PROBLEMS

NEW YORK (IPS) — A \$206-billion settlement unveiled by major U.S. tobacco companies will go toward paying for the health costs of smokers in the United States, but critics argue it will not help the new pool of smokers worldwide. Analysts of international tobacco sales contend that the settlement announced between four tobacco giants — R.J.R. Nabisco, Philip Morris, Brown and Williamson and Lorillard — and eight U.S. states does little to deal with the main problem: the huge expansion by those companies in overseas cigarette sales. "There is not a single international tobacco-control measure in this deal," says Robert Weissman, co-director of Essential Action, a Washington-based group which opposes the big tobacco firms. "The attorneys-general who are backing this are making a mistake." "It is irresponsible of the attorneys-general to let big tobacco (firms) off the hook," adds Karen Licavoli, associate executive director of the American Lung Association of San Francisco. "Any settlement must protect public health both in the United States and abroad." The deal's defenders contend that the settlement will provide money to states — the largest amount given in a civil suit ever — to help those states recoup money spent on health care for people suffering from lung cancer, emphysema and other smoking-related ailments.

### COURT HEARS CASE FOR HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGES

NEW YORK (IPS) — Three gay couples brought a suit before the Vermont Supreme Court on Nov. 18 as the campaign to legalize homosexual marriages gathered steam in the United States. The case, which will take months to settle, began with one judge, Denise Johnson, pondering the issue of "Why are people being excluded from a marriage license here?" Beth Robinson, the lawyer for the couples, urged the state Supreme Court to follow the lead of California's Supreme Court, which in 1985 lifted an interracial marriage ban and prompted other states to follow. Yet, the chances for winning gay marriages in the Vermont case remained mixed. In the Nov. 3 elections, voters in both Hawaii and Alaska backed measures to ban gay marriages by two-to-one margins, reversing decisions by courts in both states that would have made them legal. The Assistant Attorney General Eve Jacobs-Carnahan argued that if the couples want to have their marriages recognized, they should take it up with the state legislature and not with the courts. Having the courts redefine marriage "would eliminate the safe harbor for the legislature about where it can operate, where it can legislate without looking over its shoulder" to the courts, she argued.

## FBI likely to investigate Albany shooting

By Cristina C. Breen

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Two days after police say a pair of white men shot a black woman on an Albany street, a grand jury indicted the men on charges of attempted second-degree murder.

The grand jury heard testimony last Friday afternoon from Laura Harden-Massey, who said she witnessed the shooting as she sat in a car talking to a friend.

"I was hysterical," Harden-Massey told the *Albany Times Union* last week. "I think I woke up the whole block."

Meanwhile, federal authorities were working with local police to determine whether the suspects violated federal laws.

"We have opened a preliminary inquiry, and we're working with the Albany Police Department and they are sharing information with us," said Albany FBI Agent John Sennett.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Storch said information still needed to be gathered before federal authorities would decide whether to step in.

"There have been no decisions made yet regarding whether there will be any involvement" by federal authorities, Storch said.

"There are a number of federal statutes that deal with (hate crime law)," Storch said. "We've really got to work with the local authorities and learn the facts" of the case, he said.

Police say Sonya Thompson, 38, was shot in the neck at close range by 20-year-old Rudolph A. Berry of Rotterdam early Wednesday morning as she walked down a street in

Albany's Arbor Hill neighborhood.

Berry's friend, 20-year-old William R. Hines, is also facing attempted murder, assault and weapons charges.

Thompson was listed in fair condition at Albany Medical Center Hospital.

Hours before the shooting, police say the two men sat in their Rotterdam home and devised the plan to drive to the predominantly-black Albany neighborhood in the hopes of finding and shooting a black person.

Shortly before 4 a.m., the  
(See Shooting, Page 5)

## Minority leaders assail union for defending officers

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — A City Council member has castigated the local police officers union for defending eight high-ranking officers who are accused of sending racial and ethnic slurs over the police department's e-mail system.

Niagara Council Member Robert Quintana, with the support of more than 20 black and Hispanic community and city leaders, also called for a federal review last week and for the resignation of Lt. Robert Meegan Jr., president of the Buffalo Police Benevolent Association.

"He has been tolerating this sort of thing for years. He needs to understand that his actions are wrong. He is the obstacle as to why the city can't move forward," Quintana, who is on a leave of absence from the police department, told *The Buffalo News*.

The e-mail messages referred to former Deputy Police Commissioner John R. Battle, who is black, as an "Orange Man," and the son of a police department secretary as a "half caste" because his father is black and his mother is white, police officials said.

The messages also described high-ranking department

members as "dagos," officials said, and mocked some white supervisors, describing one as the "Wig One" because he wears a hair piece.

Capt. David J. Andrews, Henry E. Baranski and Michael S. Leggio; Lts. Kevin S. Barberg, Joseph Lynch Jr., Brian D. Marren and James P. Shea; and Detective Mark Lauber were to be suspended without pay.

Michele Graves, the police employee whose son was referred to as a "half caste," said she has never paid attention to what she believes was ridicule directed at her and her interracial marriage, but when her son became a target, a line was crossed. Aaron Graves, 16, has a rare form of cancer and undergoes chemotherapy twice a week.

"Maybe these guys should trade in their white shirts and gold badges for bed sheets and white hats," said Robert Meldrum, who was active in University District block clubs.

Battle, who now works as chief of the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's police force, declined to comment beyond saying, "There's absolutely no doubt that racism and bias are still alive in American society."

## Candlelight vigil held in response to suspected hate crime

MOSCOW, Idaho (AP) — About 120 people gathered last week at a candlelight vigil to denounce a suspected hate crime targeting a Moscow activist who had protested at an Aryan Nations parade.

Participants who gathered downtown in Friendship Square vowed not to let last Tuesday's cross-burning and fire-bombing at Lori Graves' home erode their commitment to human rights.

"These people are cowards," Moscow resident Alan Rose said of the person or persons responsible for the attack. "When everybody stands up, it doesn't happen anymore."

"And people are standing up. Look at the number of people out here."

An FBI agent from

Lewiston was assigned last Thursday to assist the local police investigation.

Police have said a Molotov cocktail apparently was thrown at Graves' home and ignited on the front steps. Graves found the cross burning about 20 feet in front of the house.

By the time authorities arrived, Graves had put out both fires.

Graves also reported finding a note in her mailbox that called her "a disgrace to your race" and warned her to stay out of Coeur d'Alene.

Graves, a 29-year-old Washington State University graduate student, had joined hundreds of protesters at July's parade in Coeur d'Alene by the white-supremacist Aryan Nations.

Graves and another Moscow resident, Jonathan Crowell, were arrested at the parade after they refused to allow police to search their backpacks. A charge of resisting arrest that had been

filed against Graves was eventually dropped.

But she and Crowell are suing, alleging the city violated their constitutional protection from unreasonable search and seizure.

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