

NEWS CLIPS

PBS TO PREMIERE DOCUMENTARY ON BLACK PRESS FEB. 8

"The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords," an historical account of the pioneering men and women of the Black press, will premiere Feb. 8 on PBS in honor of Black History Month. This 90-minute documentary is the first of its kind to provide an in-depth examination of the history and contributions of African-American newspapers, which have been giving a voice to their communities since the 1800's. "I was looking through Black newspapers while researching two other historical documentaries," said Stanley Nelson, producer/director. "I was both excited and overwhelmed by the volume of research materials that laid before me. I realized then that Black newspapers were fascinating in themselves and told their own story." In addition to its television broadcast, "Soldiers Without Swords" has been accepted into the prestigious 1999 Sundance Film Festival in the documentary category.

UNITED NEGRO COLLEGE FUND TOPS \$13 MILLION IN DONATIONS

Armed with a brand new format and a plethora of African-American legends from the entertainment industry, the recent United Negro College Fund telethon raised a record \$13.1 million in cash and pledges. The total amount represents a four percent increase over last year's effort. Dubbed as the "Evening of Stars," the four-hour special brought out some of the biggest names in music and films to drum up support for the nation's oldest and most successful African-American higher education assistance organization. This year's hosts were Tom Joyner, Debbie Allen, Jasmine Guy, and longtime supporter, Lou Rawls. Founded in 1944, UNCF has raised more than \$1 billion to help support over 300,000 needy students.

HEWLETT PACKARD TO PAY FORMER EMPLOYEE FOR STEALING IDEA

Ron Jones, an African-American business owner in Palo Alto, Calif. won a \$6.4 million lawsuit against Hewlett Packard for stealing one of his ideas. After three weeks of testimony, a jury of six Whites, four Hispanics and two Filipinos in the Santa Clara Superior Court agreed that Jones deserved compensation for inventing a process that extends the life of ink cartridges up to 10 times more than the one the company currently uses. Jones worked as an associate engineer for HP from 1979 to 1982 before opening his own firm, Colossal Graphics, Inc. Instead of paying him for his idea, HP decided to incorporate the invention into its HP 2000 that came off the drawing board in March 1997 and started arriving in stores in December of that year. "[HP] committed fraud when they urged me to sign a contract, and they concealed from me the fact that they would use my idea with their new product. They have already made \$3 billion on the HP 2000," he said. "Only in America could one man fight a \$43 billion corporation and win," said Jones' attorney, Ronald S. Katz of Coudert Brothers law firm.

NUMBER OF MINORITY ENGINEERING GRADUATES DECLINED LAST YEAR

The National Action Council For Minorities in Engineering, Inc. has released data that indicates an overall decline in engineering graduates from 1997 to 1998. And, the number of African-American graduates, which had traditionally bucked the trend, fell for the first time in a decade. Fewer African-American graduates, coupled with a decline among American Indians, contributed to the .04 percent increase in the number of underrepresented minorities graduating with degrees in engineering this past year. Minorities constituted 10.3 percent of all the 62,373 graduates in 1997-98. "Given the continuing decline in minority enrollments, this is probably the last year for increased graduation numbers," said Dr. George Campbell, Jr., NACME president and CEO. "To say that we are concerned is an understatement. It is essential that we, as a nation, create better ways to attract students to engineering and develop the underutilized talent pool in our high schools. Students need to know that engineering provides a gateway to enormous job opportunities in the 21st century workplace, and that advanced math and science courses lead the way to engineering."

Former Agriculture Secretary Espy recalls tumult

By Richard Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice
PHOENIX — A

confident, upbeat and reflective Mike Espy told a gathering of African-American newspaper publishers that despite a career-altering, four-year, multimillion dollar criminal investigation against him, he is a stronger person for the ordeal.

Espy made history in 1993 when he became the first African-American and the youngest person ever to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture where he served until 1994. Then, it all began unraveling.

He became the target of an investigation into improprieties alleging that he accepted gifts from



MIKE ESPY

companies with which his office had business dealings. Late last year, however, he was acquitted on all 39 felony counts.

"I never took gratuities from companies I regulated," Espy said. "But, my denial was not heard about the dens, above the cacophony of media trumpets. I read their

papers, and I read your papers. And, I must tell you, I liked your papers a lot better. I would like to thank you for holding your fire and affording me the presumption of innocence."

Espy's afternoon appearance at the Mid-Winter Conference of the National Newspaper Publishers Association last month was not the first time that he had addressed NNPA members. The first time was in Tampa, Fla. in January 1995, two months after he resigned as head of the USDA.

"Four years ago, I agreed to come to Florida because I had a story to tell," he said. "It was right after I had resigned ... and I have to tell you, I feel a lot better today than I felt then. I admit I was

a bit embarrassed then, but I also admit I felt resolute. I told you point blank that I had not sold, not compromised my office. I told you then that I was innocent and that my situation was all about the politics of personal destruction."

Espy began his public-service career in 1980, serving as the assistant secretary of the state for public lands in Mississippi. From 1984-1985, he was the state attorney general for consumer protection. He served from 1987-93 in the U.S. House of Representatives, when he was named by President Clinton to head the USDA. In one of his first public appearances since his acquittal, Espy expressed
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Firefighters

(Continued from Page 1)
black, but I cannot favor one group over another. I answer to everybody, not just black people."

Greene recently appointed a black female as a deputy fire marshal and said that the fire department has promoted fairness during his tenure, citing a county diversity program, working with an equal employment opportunity officer and compliance with judicial rulings.

A 1986 lawsuit filed by the black firefighters association against the fire department found the department in violation of state and federal anti-discrimination laws. The department was forced to

implement diversity training and develop a system to file and investigate complaints.

"They haven't made any strides since Greene came to power," Scott said, pointing to the fact that no blacks have been appointed to temporary assignments in which firefighters acquire skills helpful in gaining promotions.

The Professional Black Firefighters' lawyer, William McNeill III, sent two letters, dated Nov. 18 and another on Dec. 28, requesting updates on department measures taken to ensure diversity. To date, he has received no response. The group has until April to file complaints against the department and any officials who they feel



EARL GREENE

have not complied with the ruling.

George Cotton, the county's equal employment opportunity director, said Greene has been fair and has

appointed the best qualified personnel to positions. He said the entry level exam firefighters must take has been tweaked and that a diversity training program is available for supervisors and employees.

Some firefighters say it isn't enough.

"We've gone from being basement employees to working on the first floor," firefighter Vergus Porter said. "The only problem is we're in a high-rise building."

Porter, a 25-year veteran of the Clark County Fire Department and co-founder of the Black Firefighters, described racism in the department as "systematic".

"When I came in, there
(See Firefighters, Page 10)

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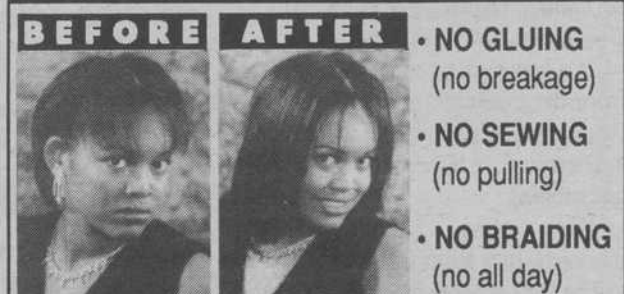


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