

# Racial tensions flair again in Los Angeles schools

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Early this month, a white principal at a mostly Hispanic elementary school was beaten up outside by two men who told him: "We don't want you here anymore, principal. Do you understand that, white principal?"

In January, another Los Angeles-area school dropped its observance of both Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo after Hispanics complained they were getting only one day of attention compared with a whole month for blacks.

The two racial flare-ups illustrate the challenges faced by Los Angeles-area schools as urban neighborhoods are transformed by new ethnic groups.

"Our communities are changing quickly," said Lee Wallach, executive director of Days of Dialogue, a nonprofit conflict resolution group that led mediation talks after the attack on the principal. "L.A. is such a melting pot and so transient and these communities are changing, really monthly. When that happens and no one's talking to each other, it creates a lot of hostility."

Norman Bernstein, the 65-year-old principal at Burton Street Elementary, was beaten on Feb. 1 in an attack police are investigating as a hate crime. He told police that at least one of the assailants was Hispanic.

No arrests have been made.

The attack on the 40-year district veteran led to angry words among teachers, parents and administrators, who blame each other for creating a volatile atmosphere at the 750-student school, which is 90 percent Hispanic.

Burton Street Elementary is in Los Angeles' Panorama City section, in the San Fernando Valley. The neighborhood had a more even balance of whites and Hispanics back in the 1980s.

Some parents had been pushing for Bernstein's replacement for the past year by a Spanish-speaking principal. They complained he was insensitive to their concerns over Proposition 227, the state law banning bilingual education. They also accused him of trying to thwart their efforts to obtain waivers allowing their children to remain in bilingual classes.

"We just want justice for our kids," parent Lorena Aguilar said. "There are students who tell their parents they don't want to come to school. What will happen when they get to junior high or high school?"

Bernstein has not gone back to work since the attack and has not returned calls for comment.

The question of whether predominantly ethnic schools should have principals and

administrators who speak the same language is at the heart of much of the tension in the 600,000-student Los Angeles district.

District leaders, as well as Mayor Richard Riordan, strongly believe administrators should be chosen on the basis of ability, not cultural background.

Some school board members disagree, siding with a growing number of ethnic parents who feel their children are best served by administrators of the same background.

Riordan has said such talk only serves to further divide the city. When School Board President Victoria Castro suggested Burton Street parents had a right to want a Spanish-speaking principal, Riordan responded angrily by saying Castro should "wash her mouth out with soap."

Just outside the city, Inglewood High School dropped both Black History Month and Cinco de Mayo this year for fear of the violence and student walkouts that have occurred during the past several years.

Inglewood High was once overwhelmingly black, but in a transformation that began in the late 1980s, it is now nearly 60 percent Hispanic.

Last May, Inglewood High was forced to close for a day after a riot broke out and dozens of police were called in. A task force

found that the fight began, in part, because Hispanic students were angry that blacks got a whole month to celebrate their heritage. Cinco de Mayo marks a May 5, 1862, victory in Mexico's battle for independence.

Principal Lowell Winston has told teachers instead to follow a "multicultural education approach" throughout the school year and "talk about all cultures and contributions all the time."

"You can't continue to do things the way they were done in the past," he said. "This school has had racial problems that are unique. The old ways didn't work."

Back in the Los Angeles school district, three black teachers and a 13-year-old black former student at South Gate Middle School near Watts have filed a lawsuit alleging the district failed to halt discrimination against them at the school, which is more than 98 percent Hispanic vs. 63 percent black in 1978.

At Burton Street Elementary, Mia Regalado doubts her 9-year-old son Steven will learn how to read anytime soon, not with educators and parents busy trying to ease racial tensions.

Said Ms. Regalado, whose son is repeating second grade because of his inability to read: "I'm not so much concerned about race as I am about a teacher's ability to teach."

## Simpson memorabilia set on fire, other items auctioned

LOS ANGELES (AP)—O.J. Simpson memorabilia went up in flames to a chorus of cheers and boos Wednesday, a day after it was sold at auction to help pay off the \$33.5 million judgment he owes in the deaths of ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend.

Two No. 32 football jerseys and a Professional Football Hall of Fame induction certificate were burned and two trophies were smashed outside the Criminal Courts Building in a protest organized by a Christian radio talk show host who purchased \$16,000 worth of items.

The auction last Tuesday raised \$430,000, including \$255,500 for Simpson's Heisman Trophy.

"We are destroying O.J. Simpson's property in front of the L.A. courthouse because the criminal justice system is destroying justice



O. J. SIMPSON

before our very eyes," protest organizer Bob Enyart of Denver said.

The destruction was criticized by some spectators at the downtown courthouse and by Simpson, who said it was a waste.

"I wonder about the mentality involved in this," Simpson said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press.

"The guy's burning up \$16,000 he could use to fight AIDS or help kids with cancer

or even donate to battered (women's) homes."

Several hundred spectators booed and cheered at the destruction of the items, which included jerseys from the University of Southern California and the National Football League's Buffalo Bills and two 1973 "Lifesaver" trophies apparently given for charity contributions.

The Heisman was the auction's big item and was not part of last Wednesday's demonstration.

The winning bid of \$255,500 came from an anonymous East Coast collector.

Money raised by the court-ordered auction goes to the estate of Nicole Simpson and Ronald Goldman's family.

A jury made the award in a wrongful death lawsuit that followed Simpson's acquittal on criminal charges in the

1994 killings.

Simpson is appealing the judgment.

Also auctioned off were football awards, artwork, Tiffany-style lamps and a fox fur coat that belonged to

Simpson's first wife, Marguerite.

The prices surprised some collectors because Simpson sports memorabilia hasn't been selling well.

"Most people don't want

to have anything to do with O.J. Simpson. There's a real sour taste in their mouths," said Scott Welkowsky, owner of Out of This World Memorabilia in Orange County.

## Writer rounds out Black History Month activities

Bestselling author Shaneska Jackson will read excerpts from her novels, sign books and answer questions at two venues Sat., Feb. 27.

The author of "Blessings," "Caught Up in the Rapture," and "Li'l Mama's Rules," will be at Native Son Bookstore, 1301 N. "D" St., from noon to 2 p.m. She will be at Borders Books, 2190 N. Rainbow Blvd., from 3 to 5 p.m.

Jackson earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from California State University at Northridge. While in college,

she worked as an intern for CBS' "60 Minutes" news magazine and cable's "E! Entertainment," wrote for her campus paper and produced segments for "Valley View News," a 30-minute cable show for the San Fernando Valley.

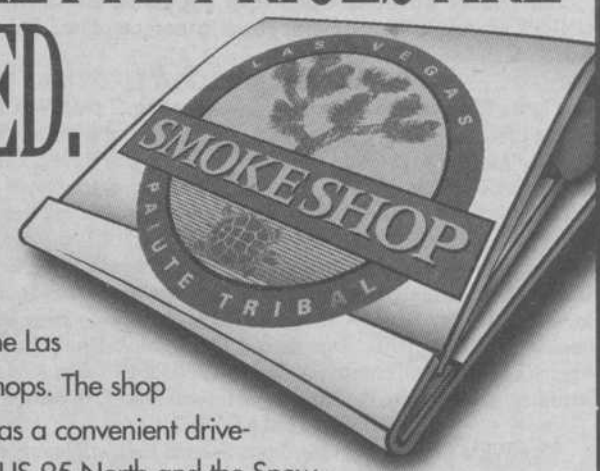
The South Central Los Angeles' born writer covers contemporary Black life in her novels.

"Caught Up in the Rapture" centers around the efforts of two young sisters from South Central trying to make it into the music world. "Rapture" explores love in



SHANESKA JACKSON the ghetto and "Li'l Mama's Rules" touches on black love in the 90's.

# OUR CIGARETTE PRICES ARE UNMATCHED.



If you're looking for fine cigars, pipe tobacco, or brand name and generic cigarettes - make a stop at the Las Vegas Paiute Tribal Smoke Shops. The shop at 1225 North Main Street has a convenient drive-thru. The second location at US 95 North and the Snow Mountain Exit has gas, wine, beer, a walk-in humidior and much more. So, come in today for the best selection at even better prices.

Las Vegas Motor Speedway  
**Winston Cup**  
March 7, 1999  
Register to win FREE tickets\*

DOWNTOWN SHOP  
1225 North Main Street

Hours: Monday - Saturday 7am to 8 pm, Sunday 8 am to 7 pm, Drive-thru 9 am to 6 pm Daily

SNOW MOUNTAIN SHOP  
**US 95 North at the Snow Mountain Exit**  
Hours: 7 am to 8 pm Daily

WE ACCEPT MASTERCARD, VISA AND DISCOVER  
Prices subject to change without notice.

\* No purchase necessary. Additional entries available with purchase. See stores for complete rules.