

NEWS CLIPS

NAACP TO HOLD 90TH CONVENTION IN NEW YORK

The NAACP will hold its 90th Annual Convention July 10-15 in New York City. The theme, "NAACP: 90 Years of Making Democracy Work," commemorates the association's historic founding in New York in 1909. "It's a momentous occasion for those of us who are committed to justice and equality for people of color. Over the past 90 years, the NAACP has played a significant role in making America work for all of its citizens," NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume said. An estimated 14,000 delegates and visitors, representing the NAACP's 2,200 branches are expected to attend the 6-day convention. Invited guests include President Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Rep. J.C. Watts, R-Okla., and James Clyburn, D-S.C., chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus. Those interested can call (410) 358-8900.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S INSTITUTE HONORS 11 WOMEN

The African American Women's Institute in the Howard University Department of Sociology recently honored 11 outstanding Black women with the 1999 "Distinguished Service and Leadership" award. The international conference, devoted to the presentation of scholarly work by Black educators, administrators and students, recognized: Mary Frances Berry, chairperson, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights; Mary Schmidt Campbell, dean of Tisch School of the Arts, NYU; Elizabeth Catlett, artist; Camille Cosby, philanthropist; Adelaide Cromwell, educator; Eta Falconer, provost at Spelman College; Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, chief justice of the International War Crimes Tribunal; Constance Baker Motley, Federal District Court judge/counsel, *Brown v. Board of Education*; Eleanor Holmes Norton, District of Columbia delegate; Jessie Carney Smith, Fisk University librarian; and Alvia Wardlaw, curator 20th Century Art, Museum of Fine Arts-Houston and associate professor, Texas Southern University. Founded in 1993, the AAWI is the focal point for cross-cultural studies of women of color. The institute seeks to build collaborations with women's programs at local universities and community organizations.

MOVIE — 'THE WOOD' — HITS SCREENS NEXT WEEK

HOLLYWOOD — "The Wood", based on writer/director Rick Famuyiwa's vivid memories of growing up in the middle-class African-American neighborhood of Inglewood, California, opens nationwide on July 16. The ensemble comedy, starring Taye Diggs of "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" fame, Omar Epps and Richard T. Jones, follows the lives of three best friends; Mike (Epps), Slim (Jones) and Roland (Diggs), as they reminisce about growing up in the Wood before Roland's impending marriage. Replete with a hip hop-laced soundtrack, including cuts from Run DMC, Eric B and Rakim, Whodini, Heavy D and Biz Markie, the film shows the progression of black youth culture. "I wrote about what I remembered growing up," says Famuyiwa. "I think it's a universal experience."

LOW IQ LEADS TO DEATH ROW REVERSAL

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A three-time killer with an IQ of 65 was taken off Nebraska's death row Wednesday, saved by a law that bans executions of the mentally retarded. Clarence Victor, 66, had his death sentence reduced to life in prison because of a state law passed last year that made it illegal to execute anyone with an IQ below 70. "He was pleased," defense attorney Mark Weber said. "He leaned over to me and repeatedly said, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.'" State Sen. Ernie Chambers, who sponsored the bill, sat in the courtroom with Victor's sister. "This law should not have been necessary because no civilized, mature society would ever entertain the possibility of executing anybody who was mentally retarded," Chambers said afterward. The state attorney general said he would appeal. "What this law does is let people with below-average intelligence, who do understand that it was wrong to kill, to escape the death penalty."

Support for FAMU, FIU law schools increasing

Austin Miller
The Miami Times

Showing a force of unity, a group of lawmakers from both political parties agreed to petition their colleagues for support of law schools for two Florida universities.

Florida A & M University and Florida International University have gotten some powerful support in their quest to have law schools.

"We're working together for one common goal, and that's to make sure that at the end of the day, both F.I.U. and FAMU will both have a law school so students can attend," Sen. Daryl L. Jones, who is an attorney and one of the chief supporters of the proposal.

"This is an historical adventure we're embarking on and our momentum will not be slowed," said Mario Diaz-Balart, organizer of a recent press event.

News conferences were held simultaneously at the South campus of F.I.U. and FAMU's auditorium in

Tallahassee. Legislators stressed the importance of having a law school to provide access to financially challenged students who cannot afford higher tuition rates from private universities.

Of the 5,103 law school seats available in the state, only 1,777 or 34.8 percent are located at public institutions. The University of Florida and Florida State University are the only two public institutions in the state that have law schools.

"Our children should not have to leave us to attend a far away university because we cannot give them the opportunity," said Rep. Frederica Wilson.

FAMU had a law school, but it was closed in 1968 because of a lack of funding. That law school was created because — at the time — Florida's institutions of higher learning were segregated. Virgil Hawkins and some other Black students protested the state's

denial of their admission to law school and FAMU's law school was created. The law school never received a funding increase throughout its 17-year history and ultimately closed.

"We've very few Black lawyers in the state and with the continuation of my school's programs, we can get back to the business of educating our young attorneys," said Art Woodard, a FAMU alumni and longtime supporter of the recreation of the law school there.

Rep. Alex Villalobos addressed the rumor that the two schools would be separated — one for Blacks and one for Hispanics. "Nothing could be further from the truth and you can rest assure, that's not the case," he said.

It is estimated that only \$10 million will be needed to initially operate both programs because the student body the first couple of years will not be large enough to warrant more money.

There are 42,000 lawyers who are members of the Florida Bar association. Of that number two percent are Black and six percent are Hispanic.

"We have a combined population of 30 percent in the state and yet we're underrepresented. That's not right," said Rep. Alzo Reddick. In 1993, the Minority Participation of Legal Educational Program was designed to increase the enrollment of minorities. It only benefited women and Hispanics. Meanwhile the number of Blacks registering declined.

"It turned out that women and Hispanics outnumbered Blacks in registration and so we noticed that the program was not doing its job," Jones said.

Kunga Kihohia, president of FIU's North Campus Student Government, is pleased to see this support: "All of us need to support this endeavor, and I'm glad that there is unity among us."

Cartoonist hits nerve with satirical comic strip

COLUMBIA, Md. (AP) — Racist. Mean-spirited. Degrading.

After two months of national syndication, "The Boondocks," a wickedly satirical comic strip by a young black artist about black children living in white suburbia, has been called all that and more. It has also developed a fierce and loyal following.

Whites and blacks alike have complained that the cartoon promotes violence and perpetuates racial stereotypes. Others have contacted their newspapers to say thanks for giving them a voice.

"I am offended and appalled by The Sun's printing that horrible cartoon, 'The Boondocks.' In this day, when there is so much hatred between the races and violence among our youth, do we need more of the same in the comics?" Cynthia Matthews of Columbia wrote in a letter to the Baltimore newspaper.

Not since "Doodles" in 1970 has a comic had such a successful — or controversial — debut, said John McMeel, president of Universal Press Syndicate, which distributes both comics.

"The Boondocks" was created by Aaron McGruder, a 25-year-old who works from a bedroom in his parents' home in Columbia.

It debuted April 19 and appears in more than 180 newspapers, including *The Washington Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Only one small paper, *The Aiken (S.C.) Standard*, has dropped the strip.

Readers of the 15,000-circulation paper "were offended by it, but they also didn't think it was funny," said Scott Hunter, editor and publisher. "I agreed with them. It seemed to be based all on race, but it wasn't funny."

The strip mirrors the life of McGruder, who was born in Chicago and moved to the suburbs in Illinois, Kentucky and finally Maryland, where he was often the only black child in class.

"I don't get any big thrill out of making people mad, despite what people might think," McGruder said. "I just want to make people laugh and think, and do my thing."

The strip's main character, Huey Freeman, is an angry but respectful boy with a militant outlook. His Afro about a foot high, Huey carries a perpetual scowl and tries to convert his exhausted grandfather and others to his sensibility, dropping references to the Black Panthers and fearing that a neighbor watering a lawn is about to hose the family down, Bull Connor-style.

His grandfather sighs, "Should have never let that boy watch 'Eyes on the Prize.'"

The strip's most controversial character is Huey's little brother, Riley, a pint-sized gangsta wannabe who talks about carjacking a neighbor's Lexus. In one panel, he startles the white driver of a convertible with two words: "Nice car." The flustered driver stumbles into his house as a beaming Riley

says, "Well, that oughta keep him awake tonight."

As of last week, *The Washington Post* had received about 100 calls, e-mails and letters, and the *Los Angeles Times* had gotten about 250 — most of them critical.

"But an almost equal number say the strip portrays their lives accurately and with humor, and critically exposes stereotypes," said Narda (See *Cartoonist*, Page 5)

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