

NEWS BRIEFS

BLACK GROUPS, ACLU FILE SUE CINCINNATI POLICE DEPARTMENT

The NAACP recently joined the lawsuit filed against the Cincinnati Police Department, charging the city's law enforcement authorities with a 30-year pattern of racial profiling. Police denied the merits of the suit, filed recently in federal court by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Cincinnati Black United Front. The suit was in mediation at NNPA presstime. "This is a city with problems," said the ACLU in a statement. "In Cincinnati, racial bias touches almost every aspect of law enforcement." After visiting Cincinnati, NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume said he is clear "that the local police department has targeted African American citizens because of their race." The city is recovering from three days of disturbances following last month's fatal shooting of a 19-year-old unarmed Black man by a White police officer. It was the 15th fatal shooting of Black men by police since 1995.

KKK BOOTED FROM MISSOURI'S 'ADOPT A HIGHWAY' PROGRAM

The Ku Klux Klan has been dropped from Missouri's "Adopt A Highway" program after it refused to pick up any trash when the highway was named after civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks. "In the year and a half that they've been in the program, they never picked up the trash," Jeff Briggs, spokesperson for the state Department of Transportation, told reporters. "They certainly didn't seem to have any interest in picking up litter." The Klan in 1999 won the right to participate in the state-sponsored program from a favorable ruling by the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals. In response, the state government last year named the highway The Rosa Parks Freeway. Parks' refusal to give up her Montgomery, Ala. bus seat to a White man in 1955 sparked the modern Civil Rights Movement. The Klan, who had put up signs along its five-mile stretch saying "The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Realm of Missouri," did not publicly comment about the state DOT's action.

NAACP NAMES LOWE'S 2001 CORPORATION OF THE YEAR

The Southeast Region of the NAACP awarded Lowe's Companies, Inc. as its 2001 Corporation of the Year at its 49th annual regional conference in Nashville, Tenn. last month. Rev. Charles L. White, the NAACP's Southeast Region director, presented the award to Lowe's for its consistent support of the region, including funding for renovation of the regional headquarters and a \$1 million contribution to the rebuilding of Princeville, N.C., America's oldest township founded by freed slaves. Floods following Hurricane Floyd devastated the town. The Princeville Recovery Project included a 12-home, Habitat for Humanity project. Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse sponsored this year and supported with employee volunteers. White said the conference was dedicated to the late Earl T. Shinhoster, the NAACP's southeast region director for 17 years. He died in a car accident last summer. Said White: "Shinhoster was an advocate of freedom, justice and equality for all citizens. We honor Lowe's for its support of these same qualities and present this award for its consistent generosity toward the southeast region of the NAACP." Darryl K. Henderson, Lowe's vice president of corporate human resources and fairness program, accepted the award. "To receive this award from the Southeast Region, in which the civil rights movement was born, is truly an honor," he said.

CALIFORNIA STUDY SHOWS MORE BLACKS SELF-EMPLOYED

More African-Americans, particularly African-American women, have started their own businesses in the last four years, said a recent study. Thirty-one percent more Blacks listed themselves as self-employed between 1997 to 2000, according to a University of California, Santa Cruz professor's study based on figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number of Black women who own their own businesses during the same period jumped to 50 percent, it added. A total of 4.8 percent of African-Americans are self-employed, the study stated.

Activist thrown in segregation

By JoNina M. Abron
Special to Sentinel-Voice
BATTLE CREEK, Mich.— A Black anti-police brutality activist has been placed in disciplinary segregation in the county jail here for providing legal assistance to his fellow prisoners.

The confinement of Robert C. Mitchell III to the "hole" at Calhoun County Jail violates a 1969 U.S. Supreme Court decision, according to Mitchell's supporters. In the case of Johnson v. Avery, the court ruled prisoners have unrestricted rights to legal assistance from other prisoners, known as "jailhouse lawyers."

"...The State must provide access to the courts by ensuring that those who cannot help themselves have reasonably adequate assistance in preparing their post-conviction papers," the court said.

Mitchell, 46, is a trained paralegal.

In a letter to Calhoun County Sheriff Allen L. Byam, who oversees the jail, the Southwest Michigan Coalition Against Racism and Police Brutality accused jail officials of illegally denying Mitchell access to the jail's law library. The coalition, part of Mitchell's legal defense committee, said it will

file a federal civil rights lawsuit against Byam and county officials for violating Mitchell's constitutional rights.

The county sheriff's office did not return calls to NNPA before deadline.

An outspoken critic of police brutality and racism, Mitchell led a march against racial profiling in June and was instrumental in a federal civil rights lawsuit now pending against the city's fire department.

Mitchell faces six felony charges for the July 13 alleged attempted murder and kidnapping of Deborah

Sparks Gordon. Police say Mitchell assaulted Gordon, 45, during an argument in which she threatened to tell the woman with whom Mitchell was then living that he was having an affair with Gordon. Gordon is White. Mitchell and the woman with whom he was living are Black.

Police records state Gordon, armed with a gun, came to the home of the Black woman on July 12 and threatened to kill her. Fearing for her safety, the woman, who asked that her name not be used, took out a protective

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Critics: Expanded police powers could harm Blacks

By Raoul Dennis
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON — The recent Supreme Court ruling that gives police more latitude to make arrests without a warrant based on minor offenses is expected to have broad, negative effects on communities of color across the nation, according to several observers.

"There is already a police predisposition to stop Blacks and Hispanics," says David Bositis, policy analyst at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington, D.C.-based public policy center.

"If you're behind that wheel of a car, police have the right to arrest you at will. Will this reduce arrests and jailings? No, in fact, it encourages more arrests."

The ruling is "an erosion of the 4th Amendment and infringement of civil liberties," David Ruffin, deputy director of public affairs at the AFL-CIO, told the NNPA. "It cuts the civil liberties of a great number of law abiding citizens."

The high court's 5-4 decision asserts that officers should be allowed to use their discretion in the filed in determining whether or not to arrest a suspect. The new twist the ruling brings is that an officer can arrest a citizen on a minor infraction—such as driving without a seatbelt, jaywalking or minor traffic violations.

The ruling seems to further legitimize the incident that sparked three days of rioting in Cincinnati early last month. Timothy Thomas, 19,

a Black man, was gunned down by a White police officer after a chase on a city street. The chase started when Thomas was spotted by an off-duty officer who knew he had several outstanding misdemeanor warrants, including not wearing a seat belt.

The case originated when Gail Atwater, a White woman, filed suit against the state of Texas after being arrested because her children were not wearing seat belts.

Once under arrest, a citizen can be subject to search, property or automobile search and property seizures, the court ruled.

The ruling, supported by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony M. Kennedy, Clarence Thomas and David H. Souter, teeters on infringe-

ment of the fourth amendment rights of citizens, which bans unreasonable searches and seizures, according to dissenters.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, a dissenting voice on the case, wrote, "After today, the arsenal available to any officer extends to a full arrest and the full searches concomitant to those searches."

O'Connor also pointed to the current political climate in light of profiling by police, noting that this new ruling will likely add more frustration to minority communities who are already typically targeted by police as suspects.

Ruffin said even though the Supreme Court case involved a White woman, "this has serious implications for

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