

NEWS BRIEFS

REV. AL SHARPTON'S NATIONAL ACTION NETWORK HEADED TO LAS VEGAS

The National Action Network will hold a press conference at North Las Vegas City Hall on Friday, beginning at 6:00 p.m. The 10-year-old political, social and activist organization which is lead by its President/Founder Rev. Al Sharpton will be unveiling its plans to opening a chapter in Las Vegas.

STUDY BY TWO UNIVERSITIES REPORTED 4 TO 6 MILLION VOTERS DISPLACED

A study by two universities reported that between 4 million and 6 million Americans either had their votes discarded or didn't vote in last year's controversial presidential election. The study, conducted by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the California Institute of Technology, said problems included bad voting equipment, failures in polling places, mistakes with registration or absentee voting, and failures at polling places. It suggests the federal government set up an election technology standard agency and to financially assist with the upgrading of voting machines, a state government function. African-Americans have been among those calling for election reform since last November's presidential election, during which there were scores of reports of African-Americans being intimidated at the polls and Black votes being thrown out in Florida.

ARIZONA TO APPOINT BOOT CAMP TASK FORCE

PHOENIX (AP) — Gov. Jane Hull wants the state to look into boosting oversight of private boot camps in the wake of the death of a 14-year-old boy at one of the facilities. Hull said her staff is researching how other states keep tabs on such programs and that she will appoint a task force to suggest possible steps the state should take. "Camps of this type operate outside government oversight; they occupy a 'black hole' in our state's regulatory scheme - and that's wrong," Hull said last Thursday. "I will not have the state of Arizona be a haven for unscrupulous or abusive people who prey on desperate parents and their children," she added. Anthony Haynes, 14, had been attending a private boot camp outside Phoenix before he died July 1. A court document said he was forced to stand in sweltering heat as punishment and drowned at a motel where he vomited mud.

BET, CBS NEWS ANNOUNCE NEWS PARTNERSHIP

Black Entertainment Television and CBS News recently announced a partnership to beef up the cable channel's news operation. Under the agreement, BET will increase its correspondents and bureaus, create a broadcast newsmagazine called "Inside Studio 2" and other programs, and have access to the satellite newsgathering operation known as CBS Newspath as well as other resources from CBS-owned stations. The move—which again calls the question of BET's editorial direction since it was purchased by Viacom, CBS's parent company, last year—shook up BET's news operation, leading to reported layoffs and the temporary suspension of its newscast, "BET News." Debra Lee, BET's president and chief operating officer, said CBS would not control the Black-oriented network's editorial product.

CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP PREPS FOR WORLD CONFERENCE ON RACISM

WASHINGTON — In an early media breakfast, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), led by Executive Director Wade Henderson and other civil rights groups, gathered recently to increase public awareness and action concerning the upcoming United Nations World Conference Against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The event is scheduled to take place in Durban, South Africa from Aug. 31 through Sept. 7. The conference, one of the largest of its kind, is being organized by prominent organizations from around the world via the U.N., although it is still receiving relatively little recognition or support—particularly from the United States, which is troubled by the emphasis on reparations for slavery. As a coalition, many of the issues addressed at the world conference reflect information and data on race and civil rights that individual groups have already gathered.

ACLU: Election reform discriminatory

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP)—Civil liberties groups are objecting to sections of Florida's elections reform package, saying they discriminate against minority voters.

The Florida Equal Voting Rights Project, whose members are drawn from the American Civil Liberties Union and other civil rights groups, said Thursday it has written to the U.S. Justice Department objecting to several provisions.

The Legislature overhauled the state's election laws this spring in the wake of the 2000 presidential election, which was decided by a

razor-thin margin that illuminated flaws in the voting system.

But Project members say they object to a section of the reform package which mandates that a list of voter responsibilities be posted at polling places along with a list of voter rights.

The list says, among other things, that voters are required to "study and know candidates and issues."

The group issued a news release Thursday saying such wording "harkens back to literacy tests," that were used to disqualify black voters.

"Rather than moving forward into the future, the pro-

visions in question threaten to return minority voters to the Jim Crow past," said Howard Simon, executive director of the ACLU of Florida.

From the 1880s into the 1960s, a majority of American states enforced segregation through "Jim Crow" laws, named after a black character in minstrel shows.

Another provision of the law creates provisional ballots for people whom poll workers aren't sure are registered. Elections officials can settle the registration question later, but the ballots must be cast at the right precinct.

The provision could re-

sult in vote disqualification because a voter at the wrong precinct may be given a provisional ballot rather than simply be redirected to the correct polling station, Project members argue.

The group also objects to new procedures for removing ex-felons from voter rolls, saying underfunded county officials will determine which voters are ex-felons and then voters will have to prove their eligibility.

State Rep. Dudley Goodlette, a Republican, the chief sponsor of the elections reform package in the House said he hadn't read the letter and couldn't comment.

Group backs reparations for slavery

UNITED NATIONS (AP) - A prominent human rights group said late last week the United States should offer reparations to blacks because of slavery, and it urged other countries to make similar pledges at a U.N. conference on racism next month in South Africa.

New York-based Human Rights Watch laid out suggested guidelines for reparations, an issue that has bedeviled plans for the conference and a proposed declaration against racism.

A two-week meeting in Geneva intended to draw up an agenda for the conference ended in deadlock June 1 over whether nations that benefited from slavery should formally apologize and pay compensation.

The Bush administration opposes offering financial reparations or a formal apology, saying they would not help fight racism today.

Human Rights Watch said such reparations could be more palatable for governments if the money is put into poverty-fighting programs instead of cash payments to individuals.

The group called on countries to admit that racist institutions like slavery, apartheid, or Jim Crow laws were "serious human rights violations."

However, Human Rights Watch admitted there are practical problems with trying to make amends many generations later.

"If one goes back far enough, most everyone could make a case of some sort for reparations, trivializing the concept," it said.

The group called for "truth-telling" panels to examine past crimes, followed by anti-poverty programs.

It said those programs should:

- Target the poorest members of minorities, not those who have managed to surmount lingering racism.
- Be paid for by the entire country, not select groups such as descendants of white slave owners.
- Encourage the building of monuments or museums so that the sins of the past are remembered.

Blacks protest ruling on Klansman bomber

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Blacks singing civil rights anthems picketed a courthouse last week to protest a judge's ruling that a former Ku Klux Klansman is mentally incompetent to stand trial in the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls.

Demonstration leaders said Alabama has executed six mentally retarded black men since 1989, yet 72-year-old Bobby Frank Cherry apparently will go free without answering murder charges in

the blast at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

"There's a different standard for white folks than for black folks," said Rev. Abraham Woods, local president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "We're sick and tired of being sick and tired."

Demonstrators sang "We Shall Overcome" and chanted "No justice, no peace" as they marched outside the Jefferson County criminal courthouse. They rapped sticks on the stone plaza to make noise.

The group included about two dozen mostly older demonstrators and nearly 40 children who arrived on a school bus from a program for the needy. "It seems like the only way to get justice done is with protests like this," said City Council member Sandra Little, who is black. "It's sad it's come to this."

Circuit Judge James S. Garrett declared Cherry incompetent on Monday. Tests showed he suffers from dementia caused by reduced blood flow in the brain.

Two other former Klansmen have been convicted in the 1963 blast, the deadliest crime of the civil rights era.

Tension

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police pullback.

"I didn't see them in this area a lot before all the trouble started, but now you hardly ever see them," said Royston, who is black. "Before, you would see them drive by sometimes."

The man killed in April was the 15th person - all of them black - to have died at the hands of Cincinnati police since 1995. Thirteen were armed. The officer who shot Thomas, Stephen Roach, has been assigned to desk duty as he awaits trial in September on two misdemeanor charges.

Fangman said police morale is low and some officers are leaving for jobs in the suburbs. Hennie said his mother in suburban Cleveland keeps a scrapbook with stories about Cincinnati's troubles, and his wife worries.

"She knew I always wanted to be a cop," Hennie said. "But she wouldn't be upset if I chose another profession."

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