

Black family sues Denny's for racial discrimination

LOS ANGELES (AP) - A black family is suing the Denny's restaurant chain for \$10 million, claiming their party of 25 people was refused service.

The racial discrimination suit was filed this week in Superior Court on behalf of Marcia M. Hooks and her family.

"What we have is a clear and blatant act of racial discrimination," said Melanie E. Lomax, the family's lawyer. "Denny's continues to preach that they have reformed, but these things continue to happen.

Hooks said she and 24 family members went out to lunch on Feb. 18, the day after her husband's funeral.

After waiting nearly two hours, they were ultimately

refused service, the suit claims. "It was humiliating," Kevin Hooks said. "One white man came over after his meal and said, 'Don't let them do this to you. Fight for your rights.'"

Spartanburg, S.C.-based Denny's disagreed with the family's version of events.

"I wish we could have been faster and more efficient," said Rachele Hood-Phillips, chief diversity officer for Advantica Restaurant Group Inc., Denny's parent company. "But let's not confuse the delay of service with discrimination."

In 1994, Denny's settled a \$46 million lawsuit that claimed black customers were denied service or forced to pay in advance.

PNBC

(Continued from Page 3) ing the hotel's investigation, a routine when employees are accused of inappropriate behavior. The paper also reported that this isn't the first time a large group of African-American visitors complained about hospitality in Tampa.

In 1994, fans attending the Florida Classic annual college football game were outraged when they learned that

a mall had closed early, having anticipated their arrival.

Jones reportedly told a Marriott employee that he saw a server take a glass of punch from the bowl, drink some, and dump the rest back in the bowl. But two other servers said the employee removed a ladle that had partially slipped into a half-full bowl of punch. There were also allegations by unidentified sources that someone spit

in the bowl.

Stewart said hotel officials met with Convention officials and Mayor Dick Graco after the incident, but nothing was resolved. Daniels said Convention attorneys will seek remuneration.

The annual session generates \$18 to \$25 million for the host city each year, and this year Daniels said the money was not well spent. In an interview with reporters

last week, he cautioned the Olympics committee, which also was in Tampa last week, saying the committee should consider the allegations made at the Marriott.

The Progressive National Baptist Convention, an offshoot of the larger National Baptist Convention, represents 2.5 million Baptists at 2,000 churches. Approximately 15,000 delegates attended the session in Tampa.

Mourners recall Smith

By Roy Lewis and Sonsyrea Tate
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Hundreds of friends, relatives and colleagues of the late Rev. Dr. Bennett Walker Smith Sr., former president of the Progressive National Baptist Convention, gathered from around the world at his Aug. 15 funeral in Buffalo, N.Y. to celebrate his vision, passion and accomplishments.

Politicians, including Sen. Hilary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.), joined religious leaders including Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr.; the current PNBC president, Rev. Dr. C. Mackey Daniels, and many other dignitaries at the St. John Baptist Church. The crowd of friends and family spilled out of the sanctuary into overflow rooms in the basement.

Clinton thanked Smith for the support he offered her family during difficult times, New York State Gov. George E. Pataki spoke of his gratitude for Smith's life and legacy, and shouts of "amen" rang out throughout the funeral service as Smith's many contributions were celebrated.

Smith walked with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the early days of the Civil Rights Movement. In 1972 he began ministering at St. John Baptist Church. While vice president of PNBC, Smith led 125 churches in South Africa to join. As president, he organized the International Region, which included churches from Cuba, the Caribbean, and the United Kingdom. Smith also was involved in Rainbow/PUSH, the NAACP, the World Council of Churches, the Congress of Black Churches and other organizations.

Adults get mixed grades for back-to-school driving

Survey asks about sharing the road with school buses, driving in school zones and driver distractions

MAYFIELD VILLAGE — When children go back to school, parents develop a checklist: shop for clothes, buy new shoes, and purchase pens, paper and notebooks. But Progressive Insurance (NYSE: PGR), the nation's fourth largest auto insurer, wants everyone to put one thing at the top of their list during the back-to-school season — safe driving.

To better understand drivers' knowledge of rules regarding sharing the road with school buses and driving in school zones, a survey that queried 625 respondents was conducted on progressive.com.

Falling under the "needs improvement" category... the survey found that only 56 percent of respondents knew that you should wait for a school bus driver to disengage the red flashing lights of



the school bus before proceeding, while 33 percent of unique respondents said they had engaged in at least one of the following distracting activities while driving through a school zone: answering a cell phone, changing radio/

tape/CD, eating/drinking, or making a call on a cell phone. The survey also found that 26 percent of respondents would drive by a school zone cautiously only if school were in session.

On the positive side, the

survey found that 95 percent of respondents would come to a complete stop when approaching a school bus from behind that is displaying flashing red lights, and another 95 percent said they would slow down to the

posted speed limit when approaching a school zone during school hours.

"The back-to-school season is an important time for drivers to pay extra attention to the road because children are getting on and off buses, walking to and from school, and playing on or near school property and in neighborhoods," said Toby Alfred, site manager for progressive.com. "We are encouraged by some of the results we've seen from this survey but want to remind everyone to drive carefully, especially while in school zones."

And while the survey found that a majority of

people understood the rules of driving in a school zone, 36 percent of respondents said they know someone who has been ticketed for speeding in a school zone or for passing a school bus illegally.

Further, 31 percent of respondents said they would not change their driving habits when they know school is in session, 65 percent said that while driving, they have experienced a child suddenly darting out on a bicycle from a driveway, and 27 percent have swerved to avoid hitting a child on a bicycle. Also, 36 percent of respondents said they were not able to see a child riding a bicycle because it was dark out.

Welfare

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ciency. Next year, Congress has a chance to address problematic aspects of TANF when PRWORA is reauthorized. Remedies for caseworker and employer discrimination should be among their top priorities since we cannot expect these troubling problems to disappear without appropriate intervention. Considering what the data shows about race and the role of discrimination in the welfare system, Congress should also rethink the feasibility of harsh time limits that may place recipients on the street who have not had appropriate support systems in place to help them achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Maya Rockey Moore, Ph.D. is senior resident scholar for health and income security with the National Urban League Institute for Opportunity and Equality.

Children

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ance by the majority of states, this law clearly defines parents' rights and responsibilities. Knowledge of the law will help parents to force compliance and access the services their child needs.

It is also important for parents to become familiar with their state's special education law. There are minimum requirements that states must meet in order to receive federal funds to assist in providing special education and related services but the specifics of each state law may vary. A parent handbook should be available from each state's Department of Education in the Office of Special Education.

If you would like more information about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or other information available for families and children with learning disabilities, please contact the National Association for the Education of African-American Children with Learning Disabilities at P.O. Box 09521, Columbus, Ohio, 43209.

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