

## NEWS BRIEFS

### HIGH COURT REJECTS WHITE FIREFIGHTERS ATTACK ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

White Chicago firefighters recently lost a Supreme Court appeal in which they were opposing a department affirmative action plan which promotes non-Whites into high ranks. Ninety-one firefighters and one of its unions claimed the increasing numbers of Blacks and Hispanics into supervisory positions came at the expense of the White firefighters. City lawyers had said the legacy of discrimination at the fire department, which had been the object of litigation over hiring since 1973, had continued. In the appeal, the White firefighters claimed qualified Whites took too long to get promoted because of a "never-ending prescription for preferential treatment for minorities."

### DISBARRED CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY MADDOX PAYS BRAWLEY CASE LIBEL

Alton H. Maddox Jr., the disbarred New York civil rights attorney who was one of Tawana Brawley's three advisers, has paid the \$95,000 damage award won by a former White prosecutor who claimed the Brawley team defamed him. The check, paid to Steven A. Pagonis—a former Dutchess County, N.Y. prosecutor that Maddox, civil rights lawyer C. Vernon Mason and the Rev. Al Sharpton named as one of the men who kidnapped and raped the then-teenage Brawley in 1987—was signed by John Beatty, the owner of The Cotton Club, according to one of Pagonis' attorneys. Brawley's claims, which galvanized Blacks in New York City to take to the streets in protest, were found to be a hoax by a grand jury in 1988, the same year Pagonis' suit was filed. Sharpton, with the help of several of New York's Black political leaders, paid off his portion of the \$345,000 levied against the three men last June. Mason has paid about \$7,000 of the \$185,000 in damages, according to press reports.

### WHITE FRATERNITY MEMBERS PUNISHED FOR RACIST HALLOWEEN PARTY

Two White students at a Alabama university have been expelled and four suspended by their fraternity at NNPA presstime because they participated in a campus Halloween party where members dressed up in Ku Klux Klan robes and in Blackface, the latter students portraying members of a Black fraternity and also the victim of a lynching, complete with a rope around his neck. Two predominately White fraternities, Delta Sigma Phi and Beta Theta Pi, were temporarily suspended by Auburn University after pictures of two White students in Blackface, wearing Omega Psi Phi T-shirts, were widely circulated across the country on the Internet. Delta Sigma Phi, ironically, is known as the nation's first fraternity to accept both Jews and Christians as members. "In the wake of what we experienced Sept. 11, this is the last thing we would have expected to see," Evelyn Crayton, the university's Black caucus president, said to reporters. Lloyd Jordan, the national president of Omega Psi Phi, called the images "very insulting" and asked for a public apology. Omega Psi Phi is the oldest Black fraternity at Auburn.

### FAIR HOUSING GROUP SUES PRUDENTIAL FOR REDLINING BLACK NEIGHBORHOODS

Prudential Insurance Co. is the target of a lawsuit filed in federal district court by a national housing group, claiming Prudential continues policies that restrict or deny homeowners insurance in non-White communities. The National Fair Housing Alliance said in a statement it filed the suit after three years of "unsuccessful efforts to resolve allegations of discrimination at Prudential." The lawsuit claims the company has been using the age of homes as a factor in denying policies, which has disproportionately harmed Black homeowners. Prudential spokeswoman Laurita Warner read the company's statement to the NNPA. It stated: "We're disappointed that the NFHA has filed this lawsuit...[Prudential's policies] 'are among the most progressive in the insurance industry and do not place limits on the age or value of homes that we will insure. We intend to defend this lawsuit vigorously.'"

## Doubts cast about black activist's accuser

By JoNina M. Abron  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
BATTLE CREEK, Mich.—The fingerprints of Black anti-police brutality activist Robert C. Mitchell were not on a drinking glass that he is supposed to have touched during his alleged assault on a White woman, according to tests by the state police laboratory.

Mitchell, 42, is accused of assaulting and kidnapping Deborah Sparks Gordon in her apartment here on July 12 of last year. Gordon testified at Mitchell's preliminary hearing on May 12 that during the alleged assault she asked Mitchell for a glass of water, which she said he gave her.

The glass was examined

Aug. 17 by Sgt. Gregoire P. Michaud, a specialist in the forensic science division of the Michigan State Police laboratory in Lansing. In his report, Michaud said that six fingerprints were found on the glass, all belonging to Gordon. There were no other fingerprints of value, Michaud said.

According to Michaud's report, he received the glass Aug. 16, almost five weeks after Mitchell's preliminary hearing.

A report from the Battle Creek Police Department shows that the state forensics report did not reach the department until Sept. 18, a month after Michaud finished his laboratory tests.

Police claim that Mitchell

and Gordon, 46, argued after she threatened to tell the Black woman with whom Mitchell was living he and Gordon were having an affair.

Documents from the Calhoun County Justice Center show that the Black woman, who asked not to be identified, secured a personal protection order against Gordon on July 11, the day before the alleged assault. Gordon, armed with a gun, came to the Black woman's home and threatened to kill her.

Mitchell is founder of the National Police Misconduct Project. Less than a month before he was charged with assaulting Gordon, he organized a local march against racial profiling and police

brutality.

A trained paralegal, Mitchell is the lead plaintiff in a federal class action lawsuit that he and 18 other inmates filed in July against Calhoun County Sheriff Allen L. Byam and several deputies at the county jail where Mitchell is a prisoner. Among other things, the lawsuit charges the jail staff with ethnic intimidation of inmates of color.

Mitchell prepared the lawsuit, which is now before the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Since August, Mitchell has suffered a series of heart attacks and strokes and has been rushed to the hospital at least twice with severe chest pains.

## Rev. Jackson urges minorities in energy

HOUSTON (AP) - The energy industry has an untapped resource in minorities who traditionally have been overlooked by big business, including the energy sector, the Rev. Jesse Jackson said Tuesday.

Jackson been in Houston - dubbed the nation's energy capital - bringing together more than 700 representatives of minority-owned businesses with those running some of the nation's largest energy companies at his inaugural Wall Street Project Energy Summit.

"We do not have a talent shortage," Jackson told the minority business owners who sat in on a discussion with representatives from Enron Corp., Dynegy Inc. and Shell Oil Co. "We have

an opportunity shortage."

Jackson, speaking at a hotel just down the street from the headquarters of troubled Enron, said now was the time for minorities to make their presence known with the proposed Dynegy purchase of Enron, its larger rival. He said spin-off companies and other opportunities created by the proposed merger, as well as deregulation of the Texas' energy market, offer possibilities for those who possess knowledge of the changing industry.

"The question is not: 'Can we produce?' The question is: 'Can they see our capacity to produce,'" Jackson said. "We are a knowledgeable people. We have a low profile, but we have a place in the industry."

Energy company representatives agreed. The question for them, however, was how to change what has become business as usual, they said.

"Most CEOs who do business in corporate America are comfortable with who they do business with," said Milton Scott, Dynegy's chief administrative officer and senior vice president. "Many of them are not inherently racist."

"I would call it racism 10 years ago," Jackson replied. "Today I would call it cultural blindness and part of our job is to take the patch off their eye."

Gaurdie Bannister, Shell Oil's vice president of business development, said there are a number of individuals in large companies who are

willing to "break eggs" with minority-owned businesses but often run into roadblocks because those companies are unable to cushion a large risk that would be taken, for example, in an offshore project.

"If you are not big and you don't have the capital to take that risk with me, I can't use you," he said.

Scott said a way for smaller minority-owned businesses to get around such obstacles and get the big contracts is to combine their strengths.

"Join forces," he said. "Set your egos aside and you are going to have a lot more success because then you take away some of the risk."

Reducing risk isn't the goal, Jackson said. Instead, it's a level playing field.

## Powell

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urday, has ruled out meeting with the Palestinian leader. The White House's position is that Arafat has not done enough to reduce violence.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Powell on Sunday in New York. Powell also plans to meet with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa.

"I have seen some progress in recent days and I hope over the weekend to improve upon that progress and keep it moving," Powell told CNN.

Powell said Bush was committed to seeing Israel and the Palestinians resume their negotiations on the basis of U.N. resolutions "that provide land for peace."

Palestinian statehood is implied by the resolutions, Powell

said.

The administration supports Palestinian statehood, and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has accepted the idea, Powell said.

In Jerusalem, Peres suggested Friday that declaration of a Palestinian state could launch the reopening of peace talks. Sharon was unlikely to approve of the idea, although he has said Palestinian statehood was inevitable.

The dovish Peres and the tough-minded Sharon have differing views of a Palestinian state. Peres, for instance, would give the Palestinians control over part of Jerusalem.

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