

NEWS BRIEFS

TELEVISION COMPANY WON'T SHOW JACKSON FOOTAGE FOR NOW

LONDON (AP) - The television company that angered Michael Jackson with a documentary about his life promised a judge Friday it would lock away unseen footage until its dispute with him is resolved. Jackson's lawyers had planned to seek an injunction barring Granada from airing outtakes from its interviews with the pop singer until his claim about journalist Martin Bashir's program is settled. They agreed instead to accept Granada's legally binding promise to keep the footage in secure conditions at the company's London headquarters until an April court hearing. The company also said it wouldn't release the program, "Living with Michael Jackson," on video or DVD. Jackson, 44, has said he felt "more betrayed than perhaps ever before" by the documentary, in which he said he sometimes lets children sleep in his bed and Bashir expressed concern about Jackson's treatment of his three children. The singer's lawyers argue that Bashir "breached the terms on which he was permitted to film Jackson." Granada lawyer Geoffrey Hobbs said the company did nothing wrong and that its promise to secure the footage implied no admission of improper behavior. Jackson's lawyers also filed complaints with Britain's Independent Television Commission and the Broadcasting Standards Commission, saying the program "unfairly treated" Jackson. Bashir's report, which first aired in Britain, drew 27 million viewers when ABC broadcast it in the United States in early February.

SEN. TRENT LOTT SAYS HE'S ADJUSTING TO NEW ROLE

WASHINGTON (AP) - Sen. Trent Lott, the former Senate majority leader, says his work on the Intelligence Committee is helping him adjust to life outside the Republican Senate's leadership. "It's preferable to be majority leader, but life goes on, and you try to find a niche where you can make a contribution to the people who elected you and to your country," Lott said Sunday on CNN's "Late Edition." Lott was to have returned to his majority leader status in January but resigned after an uproar over comments that appeared to praise retiring Sen. Strom Thurmond's pro-segregation 1948 presidential campaign. Sen. Bill Frist of Tennessee became majority leader. Lott, the junior senator from Mississippi, now sits on the Intelligence Committee and chairs the Senate Rules Committee. There is one advantage to being on the Intelligence Committee and not majority leader, Lott said. "I feel like I'm getting even more answers than I did when I was majority leader," Lott said. "I got occasional briefings, but usually it was to tell me, 'We're doing this.' At least on the Intelligence Committee you get a little input as you prepare to take an action."

MORE WOMEN, MINORITY REPORTERS ON BROADCAST NETWORK NEWS

NEW YORK (AP) - Women and minority reporters are becoming more visible on the broadcast network evening news programs, according to a study released Friday. Women reported 29 percent of 12,179 stories on the ABC, CBS and NBC evening newscasts in 2002, according to the Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs. Minority reporters accounted for 14 percent of the stories. Both were record highs in the CMPA study, which has been done annually since 1990. Minorities also reported 14 percent of the stories in 1999. "Network news diversity is like the stock market - it goes up and down but up in the long run," said Robert Lichter, the center's president. In the first year of the organization's study, women reported 13 percent of the stories and minorities 7 percent. NBC's Andrea Mitchell was the most visible female reporter, seen on 123 evening news stories last year. ABC's Pierre Thomas and CBS' Byron Pitts were the only two blacks to crack the top 50 most visible reporters. For the first time, two Asian-American reporters - Joie Chen of CBS and John Yang of ABC - made the list of top 50 busiest reporters, the organization said. "Of all American institutions, journalism probably needs diversity the most, because journalists pass on their view of the world to the rest of us," Lichter said.

Philly black police claim harassment

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Three black police officers who said they were assigned to desk jobs for growing beards have filed a lawsuit, claiming the dispute was symptomatic of pervasive racism in their station house.

The men said they are among 10 black officers in the same division who filed complaints with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that investigates discrimination claims.

The federal lawsuit said white commanders at the officer's station created an atmosphere of "pervasive and relentless discrimination, harassment and retaliation" by refusing to authorize over-

time pay for black detectives and penalizing blacks more severely for minor workplace infractions.

The suit, filed by Detective Terrance Anderson, Detective Darryl Pearson and Officer Terrence Davis, said the problems began when they were diagnosed with pseudofolliculitis barbae, a skin condition common in black men that makes shaving painful.

Doctors told the officers the irritation would subside if they grew short, neat beards. But the officers said white supervisors refused to believe the condition was real, and retaliated by transferring them to clerical jobs.

The suit names the city of

Philadelphia and two police captains, Robert Lynch and Joseph O'Donnell, as defendants.

A spokeswoman for Mayor John F. Street said the city would not comment on the lawsuit. A police department spokesman also declined to discuss the case.

Anderson, Pearson and Davis said the harassment stopped and they were returned to their old jobs after Sylvester Johnson, then the department's highest-ranking black officer, was appointed to succeed departing Police Commissioner John Timoney, who is white.

Eugene Blagmond, a spokesman for the Fraternal Order of Police, said the union

was aware the dispute over the department's facial-hair policy had produced racial tensions but believed they had been addressed.

"There were a lot of problems up there, but I'm not aware of any that are ongoing," he said.

The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission would not reveal whether it had received discrimination complaints from other black officers.

Courts around the country have ruled police officers with pseudofolliculitis barbae are protected by anti-discrimination laws, and should be allowed to grow short beards as long as it doesn't interfere with their work.

Black Caucus plans some presidential debates

WASHINGTON (AP) - All the Democratic presidential candidates will be invited to four debates sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus, the first set for this spring.

The debates will take place in Detroit, Los Angeles, Jackson, Miss., and in either Baltimore or Philadelphia. The order of the debates in the different cities and the exact timing has yet to be set. CBC Chairman Elijah Cummings, D-Md., said the debates will allow the candidates to discuss issues that are central to voters' lives.

"We also believe that these debates will help to educate African-Americans about who the candidates are, energize them to register to vote, and in the end, go to the polls on

Election Day in record numbers," Cummings said.

Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick, D-Mich., will be the lead organizer of the debates.

Cummings said the debates will help focus the candidates on the interests of a key constituency within the Democratic Party.

"All too often, African-Americans are forgotten in the primary season because of the attention candidates pay to Iowa and New Hampshire," Cummings said. "We respect the significance those states play in the nomination process, but unfortunately, their populations are not as diverse as the rest of the nation."

Study highlights improved Black health

WASHINGTON (AP) - Boosted by rising incomes and better access to health care, blacks made marked improvements in key health indicators over the 1990s, according to a private analysis of government data released Thursday.

Teenage birth rates declined for blacks more than any other minority group,

while more blacks mothers received early prenatal care.

Cases of tuberculosis also were less prevalent among minorities, especially blacks and Asians, researchers from the State University of New York Downstate Medical Center reported.

Still, long-standing disparities between whites and minorities persist, and may

widen with unemployment rising and governments shifting health care money from outreach and preventative programs to combating bioterrorism, said Dennis Andrulis, lead author of the study.

"That's a one-two punch that may keep the positive momentum from moving forward," Andrulis said after a

news conference where he released the report.

The study used socio-economic data from the Census Bureau and statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among blacks living in cities, there was a 14 percent decline in the teenage birth rate, matching the decline for (See Health, Page 14)

Hip-hop music mogul "Surge" Knight freed from jail

LOS ANGELES (AP) - Rap music mogul Marion "Suge" Knight was released from jail last week Wednesday after a parole board dropped four of five charges lodged against him and gave him credit for time served on the other.

Knight had been jailed since his Dec. 23 arrest for allegedly associating with gang members.

The state Board of Prison Terms upheld one allegation Tuesday but dismissed the others.

The board also ordered Knight to perform 200 hours of community service aimed at persuading children to avoid gangs.

Knight's publicist, Jonathan Wolfson, confirmed the release, but no other de-

tails were immediately available.

The 37-year-old owner of Tha Row, formerly known as

Death Row Records, could have faced up to year in jail.

Knight was paroled in August 2001 after serving

five years in prison for assault and federal weapons violations. He remains on parole until April 2004.

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