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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Graduation highlights Kwanzaa celebration

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

Celebrating the African-American family, community and culture is happening increasingly each year with the observance of Kwanzaa from Dec. 26 through Jan. 1.

Hundreds of West Las Vegas gathered Saturday, Dec. 28 to celebrate the second day of Kwanzaa at the West Las Vegas Library. A group of young African American males also concluded a rites of passage.

Kwanzaa is an African-American and Pan-African holiday. It's name is derived from the phrase "matunda ya Kwanza," which in Swahili means "first fruits." Dr. Maulana Karenga, professor and chair of the Department of Black Studies at California State University, Long Beach, created Kwanzaa in 1966.

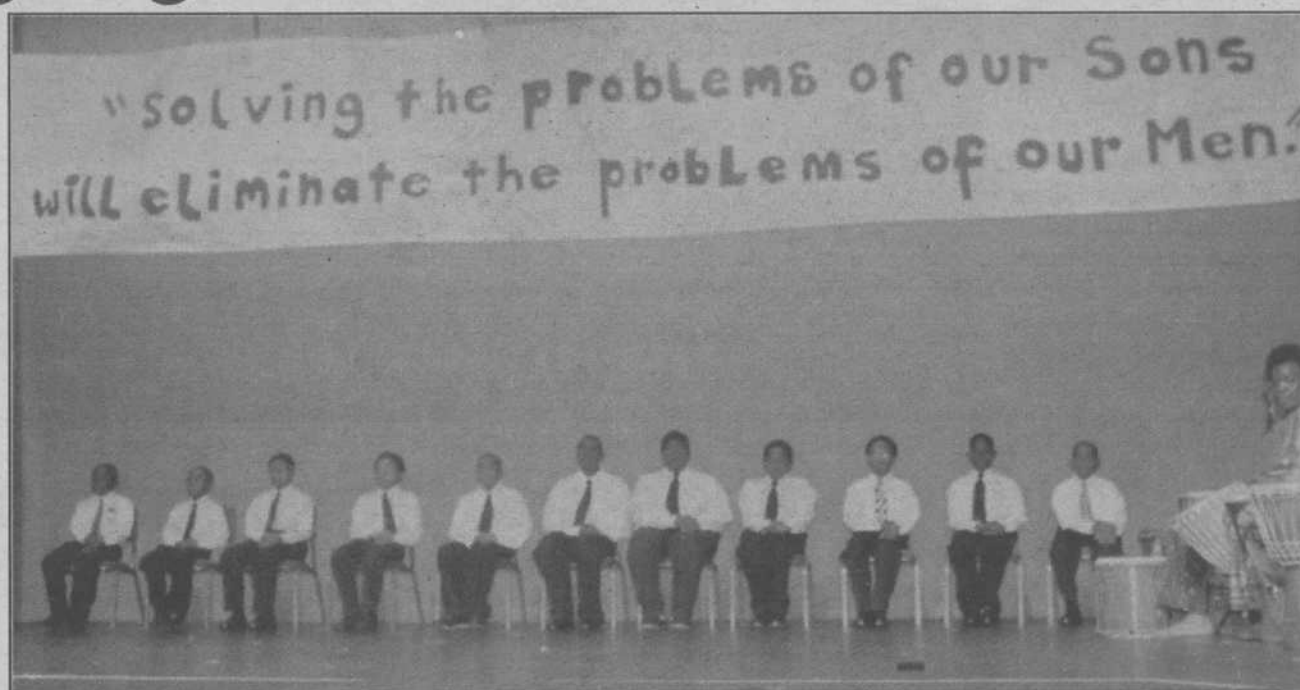
Kwanzaa is not a religious celebration, but restores African culture and reinforces



Speaker Anika Johnson-Cunningham calls for unity Saturday at the West Las Vegas Library Theater.

bonds between African-Americans, educating and introducing Nguzo Saba (The Seven Principles).

"The success of this program came from the support of the community, parents and grandparents coming out today," said Dr. Marcia Robinson, West Las Vegas Arts Center coordinator. "We celebrate Kwanzaa every year, but this was the first time that we incorporated a



Proud Graduates: Young men who participated in a five-week Rites of Passage workshop sit straight and listen attentively Saturday during the "Kwanzaa—Kujichagulia" celebration put by the city government and the library district.

rites of passage event into the program."

Those principles are Umoja, (staying together); Kujichagulia, (self-determination); Ujima, (collective

work and responsibility); Ujamaa, (cooperative economics); Nia, (purpose); Kuumba, (creativity); and Imani, (faith).

The Rites of Passage

Workshop 2003 was as a collaboration between Robinson and facilitator Mujahid Ramadan.

Putting the "man" back in the "hood," Manhood was a

five-week workshop for African-American males ages 10-13.

"It was important to have this program because it was (See Kwanzaa, Page 7)

Jackson: Cop 'manhandling' yields pain

NEW YORK (AP) - Michael Jackson says he is still in pain from being put in police handcuffs last month and tells CBS's "60 Minutes"

that authorities "manhandled" him.

The pop star said he suffered a dislocated shoulder from the way he was cuffed

and handled during his arrest on child molestation charges.

"It's hurting me very badly," Jackson said in an interview broadcast Sunday. "I'm in pain all the time."

Representatives of the Santa Barbara County sheriff's department did not return a call seeking comment Sunday. District Attorney Thomas Sneddon has said Jackson was treated fairly while in custody.

Jackson denied the molestation charges against him in a partial transcript of the interview released Friday, and said he still believes it's acceptable to have children sleep in his bed.

On Sunday, CBS released the full transcript of Jackson's Christmas night interview with Ed Bradley.

Jackson, 45, is charged with seven counts of performing lewd or lascivious acts upon a child under 14 and two counts of administering an intoxicating agent. After surrendering to Santa Barbara, Calif., authorities Nov.

20, he was set free on \$3 million bail.

"It seemed to me like he reindicted himself," Bill Dickerman, an attorney who represented the family of the alleged victim and remains close to them, told ABC's "Good Morning America" Monday after reviewing a transcript of Jackson's interview.

"He said many things that were not in his favor," Dickerman said. "His reference to being Jack the Ripper or a pedophile or not being Jack the Ripper or a pedophile I thought was very strange."

During the televised interview, when Jackson was asked if he thought it was still OK to sleep with children given the charges against him, he answered: "Why not? If you're going to be a pedophile, if you're going to be Jack the Ripper, if you're going to be a murderer, it's not a good idea. That I am not."

(See Jackson, Page 3)



Michael Jackson gives the peace sign as he exits the Santa Barbara County Jail after being booked on child molestation charges in this Nov. 20, 2003 file photo. The Santa Barbara County sheriff denied Wednesday that Jackson was roughed up in jail, saying he was asking the state attorney general to investigate the pop star's claims.

Study: Homelessness on rise across nation

By Hazel Trice Edney

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Despite recent reports of an improved economy, hunger and homelessness are on the rise, according to a study of 25 major cities by the U. S. Conference of Mayors.

"This survey underscores the impact the economy has had on everyday Americans," says conference president, Mayor James E. Garner of Hempstead, N.Y. "The face of homelessness has changed and now reflects who we least suspect."

For example, 61 percent of people requesting emergency food assistance in the cities surveyed held jobs.

The annual "Hunger and Homelessness Survey," released in late December, reports that requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 17 percent over the previous year, and requests for emergency shelter assistance increased by an average of 13 percent.

"It is disheartening and disturbing to learn that so many of our fellow Americans are in desperate need of shelter, food, clothing and the other basic necessities of life," says Richard Macedonia, chief operating officer for Sodexo U.S.A., a leading provider of food and facilities management in the United States. "In nearly every major U. S. city, the problem of hunger and homelessness is steadily growing."

The survey was released only days before the U. S. Department of Commerce released its third and final estimate of the nation's economic performance for the

(See Homeless, Page 4)