

N.C. NAACP: Governor snubs Blacks

By Cash Michaels

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WILMINGTON (Special to the NNPA) The chasm between Gov. Mike Easley and North Carolina's Black leadership has gotten a little wider, thanks to a scurrilous admonition from the president of the NC NAACP charging that Easley has ignored previous invitations to meet with them.

"During our annual NAACP Legislative Day we will invite the members of the North Carolina Council of State, along with the Lt. Governor, to make presentations to our members," Melvin "Skip" Alston, state NAACP president, told reporters at a recent press conference at the Legislature.

"You should note that an invitation to address the NC NAACP membership during our annual Legislative Day (June 10, 11 a.m. at the General Assembly) will not be issued to our governor. This is because the governor over the past three years has rejected our invitation to address our members and we will not give him the option of accepting our invitation during an election year," Alston continued. "We will, however, continue to hold the governor and his staff ac-

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countable to our members and the African-American citizens throughout this state."

Though the NAACP is supposed to be a nonpartisan civil rights organization, it is still known for embracing politicians it finds favor with. What makes this rift with Gov. Easley so interesting is it's happening during his bid for reelection.

The rift is also important because, according to the NC Black Leadership Caucus, Easley, a Democrat elected in 2000, hadn't met with the state's Black leadership until early 2004. Even then, according to those who attended, the meeting yielded no real Black agenda for change.

There is additional frustration in the African-American community that the governor refused to get involved after seven Black NC Dept. of Transportation employees complained after a

hangman's noose was displayed in their machine shop by a White coworker as a symbol of racial intimidation.

The FBI is reportedly investigating the incident after the Wake County District Attorney decided not to pursue hate crime charges.

"The fact that a hangman's noose was allowed to hang in a work shop in the [NCDOT] warehouse and no one being reprimanded is absurd," NC NAACP President Alston said, adding, "Several calls have been made to the Governor's office for his intervention [in] this matter, which have fallen on deaf ears."

"The NC NAACP and our members will not tolerate this level of disrespect from our governor's office, and will continue to press our governor to do the right thing and dismiss the Secretary of Transportation Mr. Lyndo Tippet and others who have

clearly been identified as the perpetrators of this hate crime, and disrespect for the African-American employees who continue to work in the [NC DOT] under this stressful atmosphere."

In published reports, Cari Boyce, the governor's spokesperson, defended Easley, saying he stayed out of the hangman's noose case because NCDOT was investigating and a lawsuit had been filed.

Gov. Easley spoke at the 2001 NC NAACP Convention in addition to meeting with NAACP officials, Boyce continued, and doesn't come to the Legislative Building (where the NC NAACP holds its Legislative Day) unless invited for special reason by state lawmakers.

She also noted that Alston had once canceled a scheduled meeting with the governor.

The NC NAACP president countered that he canceled that meeting because Easley would not commit to a Legislative Day to address the entire membership.

Per the NC NAACP's Legislative Agenda, Alston said the civil rights group wants to see new com-

(See Snubbing, Page 12)

Lawmaker: Motel gave Blacks inferior rooms

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) - A motel owner placed Black customers in inferior rooms and kept them from using the pool, Florida's attorney general alleges in a civil-rights lawsuit filed Tuesday.

The Southern Inn in Perry had separate rooms for Black customers that were "markedly less desirable, more poorly maintained and more unattractive" than rooms reserved for White customers, the lawsuit claims.

The suit also claims owner Raj Patel told Black customers they could not use the

pool.

It said he would pour chemicals in the pool immediately after Black guests used it and once did so while a 3- and 5-year-old were still in it. Patel's wife once charged Black guests \$5 each to use the pool before Patel "raged" at the guests to get out, the suit said.

"It is stunning to say the least," Attorney General Charlie Crist said. "I doubt anybody in 2004 in Florida would imagine the kind of allegations that we have unearthed would continue in a modern age."

Patel wouldn't comment, but his lawyer, Earl Johnson Jr., said the allegations were untrue. He said several of the motel's Black guests have written letters supporting Patel, originally from India.

"He's a person of color and truly treats everyone with equal respect and hospitality and our case is shored up by a number of African-American patrons that have come forward on his behalf," Johnson said.

The investigation began after a family reported last summer that Patel told them "coloreds" weren't allowed

in the pool. Crist's office has since found another family that complained about the motel during a 1999 stay.

Investigators also talked to former employees who said Patel would become angry if they put Black guests in "White rooms."

If found liable, Patel could face fines of up to \$10,000 for each incident of discrimination.

Perry, about 50 miles southeast of Tallahassee, faced protests in 2001 because a Black bar customer was told he could be served only in a back room.

100 Black Men

(Continued from Page 2) Caesars vice president for human resources and diversity.

"The bottom line," Mosley said about the grant, "it will support our tutorial efforts. Our mentoring is not just feel good. We help with grades, self-esteem and behavior. With the grant from Caesars Entertainment, we can get teachers and graduate students to work with our students in the areas where they

are experiencing difficulties. This will allow us to focus on what we do best and that is mentor."

Known as the Wimberly Initiative for Special Education Action, the program will provide special tutoring for elementary school students whose reading skills are substantially below grade level. The intent of the program is to improve the students' reading skills so that they are no longer at risk of being held

back or placed in a special classroom. The grant is earmarked for the Westside schools where the 100 Black Men of Las Vegas has established mentoring programs with minority students.

This program is intended to address one of the most serious challenges facing youngsters from disadvantaged families," Mosley said.

"That is the challenge of developing strong reading skills early in their academic

careers. Without these skills, many of these youngsters could find themselves held back or otherwise singled out by the educational system. The consequences of that can last a lifetime."

The Las Vegas Chapter of 100 Black Men is currently having a recruitment drive for new members.

For more information, contact Julius Conner, recruitment chair, at (702) 876-6138.

N.J. police receive profiling counsel

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) - For the first time, New Jersey is requiring every one of its police officers to go through training designed to get them talking about what is - and isn't - racial profiling.

It is the largest effort yet by the Garden State to combat race-based police tactics, which government leaders grudgingly admitted troopers did for years.

A year ago, Gov. James E. McGreevey signed a law making profiling illegal. It carries a penalty of up to five years in prison.

But state officials say a more proactive approach is needed.

"We can talk about prosecutions till the cows come home, or we can really do something in partnership with the police departments," Attorney General Peter C. Harvey said.

The training program tells officers of all ranks that "racially influenced policing" is wrong in every case, whether it's used to justify a traffic stop or the search of Black pedestrians in a White suburb.

Harvey and his deputies have worked on the training package for the past two years, all while overseeing reforms to the state police ordered by a federal court.

"Every police department should get the materials in July, and local training sessions are expected to begin in the fall," Harvey said.

The video portion features a series of re-enactments, all based on existing case law.

In the first example, two police officers stop two Black men driving in a suburb. One officer confronts the driver, asking him where he is from and why he is there. "OK, just a routine check," the officer says.

"I guess they just wanted to know why we're here," the driver says to the passenger. "I didn't know we needed a reason," the passenger says.

The video screen then asks police officers if that was good police work, questionable behavior or outright racial profiling. The question also asks officers if they need more information to make a decision.

Some scenarios involve people who have drugs or weapons, but others feature people who turn out to be law-abiding citizens.

All force officers to confront their own stereotypes and old habits, Harvey said. The goal is to remove any argument that race-based tactics may have at least gotten a criminal off the street.

Training programs for New Jersey State Police were rewritten as part of a massive overhaul of that agency. It came after the state agreed to federal oversight in December 1999, more than a year after two troopers fired on a van carrying four unarmed minority men on the turnpike, wounding three.

But police departments need to do more than just one training session, however good it might be, said Deborah Jacobs, the ACLU's New Jersey executive director.

"I'd like to know that this is just a first step," Jacobs said. "You don't eradicate the kinds of racial profiling practices that have been ingrained in New Jersey police departments overnight."

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