

# Calif. assemblyman opposes Schwarzenegger college plans

Special to Sentinel-Voice

California Assemblyman Meryvn Dymally called the budget-cutting deal between Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the University of California and California State University "a step backwards for California parents and children trying to advance their futures."

Under a recent agreement, University of California president Robert Dynes and California State University Chancellor Charles Reed agreed to accept the governor's budget cuts in exchange for a compact to provide more money in the future.

Dymally says the governor's proposal would greatly dilute the effectiveness of outreach for many students who would be the first in their families to attend college. Among its tenets are enrollment caps, which would force more students otherwise bound for UC or Cal State campuses to enroll



University of California, Berkeley freshman Adia Harrison sits in a classroom on campus in Berkeley, Calif.

in community colleges, reduced financial and increased student fees. Under the plan, UC and Cal State fees will increase by 10 percent each year for at least three years. In addition, outreach programs would become academic preparation programs, increasing "the effects of disparities in educational opportunity for underprivileged students," says Dymally, who

indicated dissatisfaction with top university officials that back the proposal.

"Education is the key to the American dream. It is unacceptable to take needed resources from underprivileged students," he says. "We will be closely examining this proposal with an eye toward keeping our promise to the class of 2005 and every future graduating class."

## Africa

(Continued from Page 1)

eling and doing business in Africa. The continent is wide open with opportunities.

"From the 53 nations of which Africa is composed, you can choose either North, Central, South, West or East Africa," Muhammad said. "Most African-Americans who are involved in business usually are in West Africa. Ghana happens to be one of the centers and also in South Africa. There are quite a few that have made investments in Tanzania and Kenya. However, West and South Africa seem to be the most attractive."

The Nation of Islam is providing directions.

"The Nation of Islam is, as you know, a religious-based organization in America that deals with social issues that affect Black people across this country, the Caribbean and even in Africa," Muhammad said. "What we do is help business people to give them direction. We do not provide capital for a business venture in Africa. However, there are individuals that do joint ventures and help in getting involved with others in Africa. If you are interested in that area, we can point out those individuals. We do not have startup funds as banking or financial institution would have in order to help people get started in business in Africa under the Nation of Is-

lam.

"There are many success stories of African-Americans in Africa," he said. "In Ghana, we have quite a few. One sister, in particular, from Minneapolis, owns the Avis Car Rental franchise. There is a brother in the pharmaceuticals business. There is another brother who opened up a sports club teaching physical exercise, body training, etc. There are many more cases in Africa of people who have been successful in business."

Business, of course, is not the only subject of the lecture.

"I will share with the people that attend my lectures observations of my life-long travels to 37 African countries," Muhammad said. "I will share my experience of living, working and doing business in Africa and give them a flavor of travel to Africa."

Africa is important to African-Americans to have a sense of cultural awareness.

"It is natural," Muhammad said. "Right now there is a DNA project being handled by Howard University where they are actually tracing your DNA and comparing it to the millions of DNA that they have collected from West Africa. In particular, they want to pinpoint where individuals came from in Africa. It is a sense of finding your roots. It is a process of mak-

ing you whole knowing where you came from. Your cultural links with Africa are important. For many years the United States did not encourage cultural links with Africa for the African-American community. Now is the time for us to stretch out and do it for ourselves."

Nigeria has been known for scamming people around the globe, snaring unsuspecting people through extravagant schemes.

"Nigeria has a history of what we call 419," Muhammad said. "They are simple scams. This represents only a few Nigerians. Nigeria is a country of 120 million people. This is a very, very important country on the African continent with its tremendous wealth in oil and human resources. But because of a few bad Nigerians, who have been engaging in worldwide scams, Nigeria should not be frowned upon. You need to look carefully into any offers coming your way."

Plans are in the works for a cultural delegation to travel from Las Vegas to Ghana in December. Information will be also provided to parents interested in sending their children to summer camp in Africa during summer 2005. At the end of the lecture, there will be an auction of African artifacts.

For further information, call (702) 450-9121.

# Vieques tourism flourishing

By Larry Luxner  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN JUAN (Special to the NNPA) — A year after the US Navy's exit, Vieques tourism is booming.

Since the early days of World War II, the U.S. Navy had used Puerto Rico's offshore island municipality of Vieques as target practice, turning two-thirds of its territory into a vast artillery and bombing range.

But few people here were happy about it, and after years of protests, the island's 9,300 people were successful in getting the Navy to pack its bags and sail into the sunset. On May 1, 2003, an enormous fiesta erupted when, for the first time in 60 years, local viequenses could visit once-forbidden beaches and reclaim the 135-square-kilometer (52-square-mile) island for themselves. One year later, things have quieted down a lot. Deprived of its favorite bombing range, the Navy has even shut its enormous Roosevelt Roads Air Station on the main island of Puerto Rico.

"The Navy oppressed us. Now we can finally enjoy our own beaches," said Nazario Cruz Viera, who at 94 is the island's oldest inhabitant.

Cruz, taking his daily stroll on Red Beach along the island's south coast, says he would like tourists to come, but not too many. After all, few people want to see Vieques turned into another St. Thomas or San Juan, with their accompanying hotels, cruise ships, advertising clutter and traffic congestion.

"We are pushing eco-tourism, low-key bed-and-breakfasts and centers for marine biology," said local activist Myrna Pagán. "Certainly there should be some good hotels, but they should not be on the beach and should not exclude locals. We do not want to see our coastline taken over by exclusive hotels."

That's also the viewpoint expressed by José Suárez, executive director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (PRTC).

"Vieques represents a tremendous opportunity for Puerto Rico now that the bombing has stopped," he said. "The type of tourism we're proposing for Vieques is different from what we want on the big island: more sustainable tourism that respects the environment. Not that we don't do that on the main island, but we have an opportunity to preserve the beauty of Vieques even the areas where the Navy was."

Local activist Roberto Rabín, whom

the Navy used to equate with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, insists the people of Vieques should be the ones who decide the fate of Vieques, not bureaucrats in Washington or even San Juan.

"We know better than they do how to develop this island," he said. "There are intensely wonderful possibilities and worrisome ones, too. We're at a crossroads. If we want, we can make Vieques a model of non-violent civil disobedience and a model of sustainable development."

In fact, the Navy's presence on Vieques was one of the few issues that have ever united all three of Puerto Rico's major political parties, from independentistas on the left to statehooders on the right. Some protesters even went to jail for their occasionally violent protests.

But their cause went nowhere until April 19, 1999, when a Navy bomb killed a local security guard named David Sanes. That sparked an enormous uproar, eventually leading to a municipal referendum on what to do about the Navy.

The results of the referendum: only 29 percent wanted the Navy to stay, while another 3 percent supported an option backed by the Clinton administration and Puerto Rico's governor at the time, Pedro Rosselló. But the overwhelming majority 68 percent of Viequenses elected to kick the Navy out immediately.

As a result, at the stroke of midnight on April 30, 2003, the Navy vacated its last 14,000-acre parcel of land. But the property wasn't turned over to the government of Puerto Rico, nor the municipality of Vieques. Instead, its deserted White-sand beaches and rolling, forested hills are being managed by the US Interior Department's Fish and Wildlife Service. For several years now, the PRTC has promoted Vieques and the nearby municipality of Culebra as the "Spanish Virgin Islands" a marketing gimmick similar to the somewhat artificial designation of western Puerto Rico as "Porta del Sol."

"We're promoting smaller, eco-friendly hotels, and we're in constant contact with developers," said PRTC's Suárez, a former manager for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts. He added that a recent Puerto Rican law offers 100 percent exemption from municipal and commonwealth taxes, as well as tax credits based on specific investments.

Suárez said, "Any development there is on Vieques will be small-scale. We don't want any major developments there."

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