

Bush continues to snub Black media

By Makebra M. Anderson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — President George W. Bush has rejected invitations to be interviewed by reporters from the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service, which provides stories to more than 200 African-American newspapers, and Black Entertainment Television (BET), which reaches 80 million households.

"It doesn't make political sense not to talk to voters," says Robert L. Johnson, president and CEO of Black Entertainment Television. "I think this doesn't support the rhetoric I hear from the Republican Party that they want to compete for the Black vote and they are trying to reach African-Americans."

The NNPA News Service contacted the Bush campaign

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in September, requesting an interview. As directed, the reporter submitted a formal request in writing to Susan Whitson, a campaign aide. Receipt of the request was later confirmed and NNPA was told that someone would get back in touch with the news service. After no one from the Bush camp followed up, the campaign office was contacted again by the NNPA News Service and again told

the reporter that she would be contacted. To date, NNPA hasn't even been afforded the courtesy of a reply.

The NNPA News Service operates under the NNPA Foundation. Brian Townsend, president of the NNPA Foundation, says: "If President Bush values each potential voter, as he proclaims, he should be eager to address our readers. It's unfortunate that he would pass

up these opportunities in what is expected to be a close election."

Although Bush has refused to be interviewed by members of the Black Press, his Democratic opponent, John Kerry, has granted two exclusive interviews to the NNPA News Service and sat for a 30-minute interview with Ed Gordon that aired on BET.

Bush, like Kerry, did accept an invitation from American Urban Radio network to speak to Black America without fielding any questions.

"We did pretty much what Bob Johnson at BET did. On the 27th of September, we extended an invitation to both Kerry and Bush. Kerry accepted first, and then Bush accepted," states Jerry Lopes, president of Program Opera-
(See Snub, Page 20)

No hate crimes law in Georgia

ATLANTA (AP) - The Georgia Supreme Court unanimously struck down the state's hate crimes law Monday, saying the measure is so broadly worded that it could even be used to prosecute a rabid sports fan for picking on somebody wearing a rival team's cap.

The 7-0 ruling came in the case of a White man and woman convicted of beating two Black men in Atlanta.

It was the first application of the 2000 law, which called for up to five extra years in prison for crimes in which the victim is chosen because of "bias or prejudice."

Forty-eight states have hate crimes laws, but Georgia's was the only one that did not specify which groups qualified for protection.

Angela Pisciotto and Christopher Botts were accused of severely beating two brothers, Che and Idris Golden, in 2002 while screaming racial epithets. They pleaded guilty to aggravated assault, and the judge sentenced them to six years in prison, plus two years under the hate crimes law.

Their lawyers argued on appeal that the hate crimes statute should be struck down because almost any crime involving prejudice falls under its scope.

The high court said that it "by no means" condones the "savagely attack... or any conduct motivated by a bigoted or hate-filled point of view."

But it said the law was "unconstitutionally vague" and so broad that it could be applied to every possible prejudice.

"A rabid sports fan convicted of uttering terroristic threats to a victim selected for wearing a competing team's baseball cap; a campaign worker convicted of trespassing for defacing a political opponent's yard signs; a performance car fanatic convicted of stealing a Ferrari
(See Hate Crimes, Page 20)

Boy's killing sparks grief, anger in LA

By Gene C. Johnson Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES — There were few dry eyes among the more than 250 people who on a recent Monday evening participated in a three-hour candlelight vigil and march to the South Los Angeles alley where 14-year-old Byron Lee Jr. was shot 19 times.

"You people out there, this boy had 19 holes in him," said the child's grief-stricken mother, Keva Byum, at the site where her son was gunned down. "There are too many windows in this alley for anyone to not see or hear anything. This is our community and my own child died around the corner from where he lives."

The march began at Byum's home in the 600 block of East 81st Street. She had, about 11 months ago,

said friends and relatives, lost another son to cancer.

According to 14-year-old Yariana Jones, one of Lee's close friends, he was the kind of person who "always made everybody laugh."

"If he made you sad or really ticked you off, he would put a smile right back on your face," Jones said.

"It was hard to believe that a person you just [saw] two days ago was gone," added Lee's best friend, Starquita Washington, choking back tears.

Washington and some of Lee's other friends including Jones and 13-year-old Delia Armijo on Monday began a drive at Fremont High to help Byum pay for her son's funeral costs. As of Monday, the teenagers had collected \$156.

According to KJLH-FM's

spokesperson Greg Johnson, listeners to that station chipped in more than \$5,000 to assist in funeral costs.

Lee's funeral was at Praises of Zion Church at 83rd Street and San Pedro Avenue, said area activist Najee Ali, who once lived six blocks from Lee's home.

Witnesses told police that the Fremont High ninth-grader was shot by two men in a dark-colored car while riding his bicycle. The gunmen then exited the vehicle and repeatedly shot Lee as he knelt in the alley clasping his hands, apparently pleading for his life.

LAPD Deputy Chief Earl Paysinger said authorities had "two good descriptions of the suspects."

"It had to be a case of mistaken identity," said Mustafa Fletcher, who heads

the organization Unity Two Gang Intervention, "or just somebody just wanting to hurt somebody."

"He was a good little dude," said Fletcher of Lee,
(See Killing, Page 20)

Georgia congressman, U2's Bono rewarded for committed activism

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) - U2 lead singer Bono and a civil rights leader from Georgia received awards Monday from the National Civil Rights Museum at the site of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

Bono, a native of Ireland, was honored with the international Freedom Award for promoting greater Western involvement in improving medical care and reducing poverty in Africa.

Bono said in a speech to 3,500 public school students before the ceremony that the kind of energy young people brought to the civil rights movement is needed in the fight against AIDS.

"What are the blind spots of our age, of these times? What might you help the rest of us to see?" he said. "It might be something as

simple as the idea that every human life, no matter where they live, has equal worth."

Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., was the national award winner for his civil rights work in the 1960s. He was jailed during a protest at a Whites-only lunch counter in Nashville in 1960 and joined the marches and voter registration drives aimed at breaking racial segregation in the South.

The National Civil Rights Museum opened in 1991 at the former Lorraine Motel, where King was shot in 1968 while in Memphis to lead a strike by city sanitation workers.

Past Freedom Award recipients include King's widow, Coretta Scott King; former South African President Nelson Mandela; Secretary of State Colin Powell and former Presidents Carter and Clinton.

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