

# Former 'Apprentice' star fires off

By Clover Hope

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK —A reality show may not be the best place to turn for positive portrayals of African-Americans, at least based on statistics thus far.

As a result, Tara Dowdell, a contestant on "The Apprentice 3" who was fired in a recent episode, was extremely conscious of her behavior going into the show.

"I wanted to make sure that when African-Americans — in particular women — looked at me on the show, that I was someone they felt they could relate to and look up to," said Dowdell. "I saw it as a challenge to be one of the people to go on the show and not have drama and controversy."

The cutthroat reality series headed by real estate mogul Donald Trump pits business-minded contestants against one another, with various missions to determine the individual with the qualities to become a successful corporate leader.

Dowdell, a 28-year-old senior manager of government and community relations for the Port Commerce



Tara Dowdell, right, had racial issues on "The Apprentice."

Department of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey —the first African-American to serve in her position —was dismissed after failing to properly execute a task involving a graffiti mural in Harlem.

"I knew that the show ["The Apprentice"] did not have the best track record as it relates to African-American women," said Dowdell, referring to former contestants Omarosa Manigault-Stallworth and Stacey J., whom many believed were harmfully depicted.

"I did feel some degree of anxiety over even participat-

ing," said Dowdell, adding that the powers of editing can accentuate certain qualities and thus facilitate stereotypes.

While some argued that Omarosa was rendered as a mean-spirited individual regardless of her race, Omarosa contended that "The Apprentice" perpetuated negative images of African-Americans through the editing process. The show's executive producer, Mark Burnett, argued that the show had no such agenda and pointed to first season runner-up Kwame Jackson as an example.

But Dowdell said the pub-

lic tends to forget such positive African-American faces as Jackson, herself, and Kevin Allen from the second season.

"What I see is a double standard," said Dowdell. "I find it very interesting that while Omarosa was vilified for the way she conducted herself on the show, there were a lot of non-African-American women who conducted themselves, to me, much worse but did not receive the same kind of public backlash that Omarosa experienced." When faced with the task of supervising a Sony Playstation 2 graffiti advertisement on a wall in Harlem, Dowdell was expected to excel but was later accused of putting her personal goals ahead of the client's objectives, which ultimately led to her team losing and her ejection from the show.

Dowdell admits putting her ambitions for the community over the business objective. "I wasn't completely comfortable with the idea of putting a graffiti mural in an area of Harlem that was under revitalization," said Dowdell. "Moreover, putting (See *Apprentice*, Page 15)

# FBI closes Notorious B.I.G. investigation

LOS ANGELES (AP) —The FBI has closed its investigation into the 1997 murder of rap star Notorious B.I.G., abandoning the theory that a rogue police officer may have been involved in the slaying.

The case was closed after federal prosecutors reviewed the evidence and concluded there was no basis for prosecution, Louis J. Caprino Jr., acting head of the criminal division of the FBI's Los Angeles office, said in Friday's editions of the Los Angeles Times.

Notorious B.I.G., whose real name was Christopher Wallace, was shot to death in March 1997 in front of hundreds of witnesses as he left a music industry party in Los Angeles.

Investigators have pursued various theories, including one that the killing, and that of rap star Tupac Shakur in Las Vegas the year before, was the result of a feud between hip hop figures from the East and West coasts.

Shakur was the biggest West Coast hip hop star of his time, and he regularly exchanged insults and threats with Notorious B.I.G., his East Coast counterpart.

The FBI had also spent 18 months investigating the possibility that a rogue Los Angeles police officer working with rap mogul Marion "Suge" Knight had orchestrated Notorious B.I.G.'s killing. Knight, whose Death Row Records was Shakur's label, has denied any involvement.

Investigators had said the officer, David Mack, owned a car matching the description of one seen speeding from the murder scene. A witness had also placed him at the scene hours before the murder.

However, other information gathered by investigators did not support the theory and detectives turned their attention elsewhere. Mack, who has since been imprisoned for robbing a bank, has denied any involvement in the killing.

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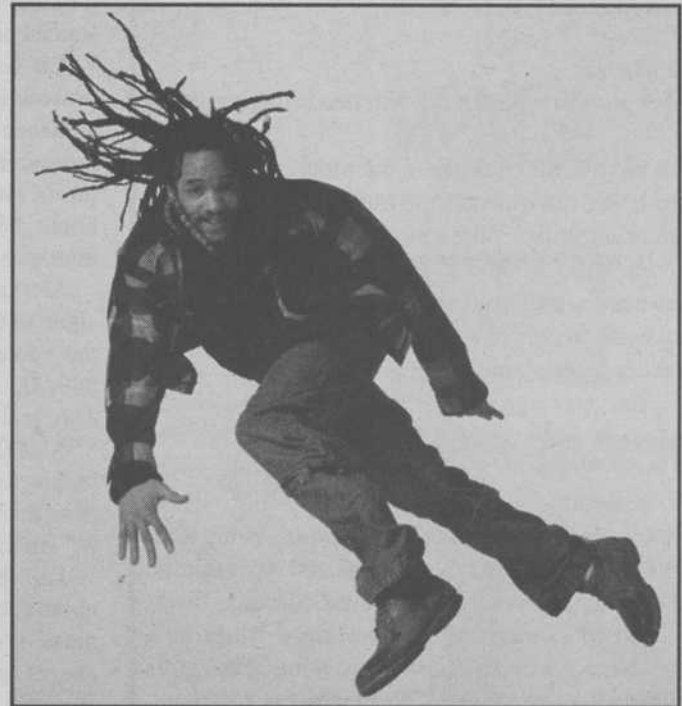
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