

Sharpton group recalls kudos for Tyson, Wal-Mart

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The National Action Network, the New York-based organization run by activist and former presidential candidate Al Sharpton, has withdrawn two "Dream Keepers" awards originally earmarked for Tyson Foods and Wal-Mart, after learning of race discrimination charges against Tyson.

"The National Action Network president and national board members reviewed allegations of discrimination against Tyson Foods and Wal-Mart as Reverend Sharpton advised NNPA he would in August. At the time, Reverend Sharpton asked the local Los

Angeles Chapter of the National Action Network to await the outcome of these allegations before moving forward in any way to honor these companies directly or indirectly," says a NAN statement to the NNPA News Service.

Sharpton Spokeswoman Rachel Nordlinger said NAN's board of directors subsequently voted to withdraw the awards.

Sharpton said he was not aware of the federal lawsuit, filed Aug. 12 against Tyson by 12 Black employees, until an interview with the NNPA News Service. At the time, he said he would have his nominating committee review the award decision and would have it overturned

if necessary.

The employees allege segregated bathrooms with a "Whites Only" sign, the pervasive use of the n-word, "monkey," "boy" and "watermelon" insults of Black people and a threat with a noose. The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law is representing the plaintiffs, who are joined in the suit by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Tyson has issued a statement denying the allegations, saying it has conducted its own review of the allegations. But the company has refused to disclose particulars of the in-house investigation.

"While the details of this

review are now a matter of litigation, we can tell you we believe the charges are without merit," said a Tyson statement. "We can also tell you the presence of any sign suggesting 'Whites only' or segregation of any kind is, without a doubt, a violation of our policies and contrary to our company's culture. It is not and never will be condoned or tolerated by Tyson Foods or our management team. Our company has zero tolerance for discrimination in the workplace."

Wal-Mart Corporation, the world's largest retailer, with 4,717 stores worldwide, and 3,422 in the U.S. and 1.2 million U.S. employees, opposes unions and is the target of multiple civil rights

lawsuits alleging violations that include refusal to pay overtime, use of illegal workers and pay inequities for women.

On its website, Wal-Mart defends its record, noting that it hires more than 139,000 Hispanics and more than 208,000 African-Americans. Of its 14-member board, it states, two are Black, two are Latino and one is female. It further states that its "officer compensation is now linked to a diversity goal" and that a manager who fails to reach his or her diversity goal could lose up to 15 percent of bonus money.

Sharpton said the Wal-Mart award was slated to go to Esther Silver Parker, Wal-Mart's vice president for diversity relations, who has been credited for planning and executing much of Wal-Mart's diversity efforts.

The Tyson and Wal-Mart nominations were strongly criticized by labor activists, who questioned the giving of awards to large companies who may have records of philanthropy in the Black community, but questionable hiring, labor or civil rights records.

Sharpton said Gene Mor-

ris, president of Chicago-based E. Morris Communications, nominated Tyson Foods approximately three months before the suit was filed. Morris, who says he has had a strong and positive business relationship with Tyson, has denied directly nominating the company for the award.

He said that he and Sharpton mutually agreed during a telephone conversation that Tyson would be a good choice.

Sharpton has declined further comment on the issue, but he argues that he will always hold companies accountable, no matter what good they seem to be doing.

"In fact, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) honored Reverend Sharpton the same weekend for his work for the humane treatment of animals against companies, including Tyson Foods," says the NAN statement to the NNPA News Service.

"Despite the fact that Wal-Mart sponsors Tavis Smiley and others, as a civil rights organization, the National Action Network seeks clarity on any allegations of discrimination."

Farrakhan

(Continued from Page 4)

a general fund for the agency. That episode has forced many contributors, especially in the African-American community, to demand an accounting of exactly where the money they donate goes.

"So, we want to set up an oversight committee to make sure that the money goes where the money is needed," Farrakhan said, adding that a sharp eye must also be kept on the over \$62 billion in taxpayer money that Congress has already appropriated towards the recovery effort.

It was right after Katrina hit the Gulf Coast states of Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana more than three weeks ago that Farrakhan directed all Muhammad's Mosques in the country to open their doors to hurricane survivors without qualification.

NOI mosques in Atlanta, Detroit and New York are among the many that have already welcomed the Katrina homeless.

"All of us have committed ourselves to open our mosques, and get our brothers and sisters from wherever they come from. We're not asking anybody what your status is; what your education is; have you ever been in jail — that's irrelevant. If they're hungry, if they're naked, if they're out-of-doors, that's what we intend to serve," he said.

Any children of Katrina evacuees will be placed in NOI schools where there are any, Minister Farrakhan added.

"What we now have to do is get our people past the red

tape and out from where they are, and bring them to the cities where we are."

Farrakhan said this is the time to "show the love" that Jesus and Prophet Muhammad said all Christians and Muslims should show in times of trial.

"The Christian thing to do, and the Muslim thing to do, is to share what you have," Farrakhan said. "If you have a bowl of soup and your brother has none, half of your bowl belongs to your brother. So [the Katrina survivors] have a right to what we have, and we have a right to give it to them."

Farrakhan joined the chorus of criticism of how slow the federal response in Katrina's aftermath was, and the resulting suffering and death among stranded, predominately Black evacuees at the New Orleans Superdome and convention center.

He also had praise for the immediate and tremendous outpouring of aid from across the country, saying, "The people are better than their government."

Farrakhan said, however, that African-Americans were justified in seeing the federal government as no friend of poor people or communities of colors, especially after Hurricane Katrina debacle.

"There is ample evidence of government complicity in the destruction of a people who are now useless," he said. "The American people have no idea about the wickedness of things going on in high places," said Farrakhan, adding that "there is a conspiracy against the poor of this nation, no matter what

their color is."

The religious figure also called the devastation of Hurricane Katrina "divine vengeance" by God to punish America for what many have called its "oppressive" policies, and starting wars on false information. He warned that "more is on the way" unless the government, and the people who follow it, repent. You haven't seen the wrath of God yet."

Farrakhan, 72, made those remarks at a press conference before delivering an address to a packed McDougald-McClendon Gymnasium on North Carolina Central University's campus. During that address, the Winston-Salem State University alumnus talked about the need for the Black community to return to righteousness in its everyday living.

The appearance was one of many the Muslim leader has been making as he tours the country promoting the Millions More Movement, the 10th anniversary commemoration of 1995's historic Million Man March.

Unlike a decade ago, when only Black men were asked to take part in the march, men, women and children of all colors have been invited to attend the Millions More Movement, scheduled for the weekend of Oct. 14-16 in Washington, D.C.

Farrakhan said unlike 1995, the Millions More Movement is being endorsed by a cross section of African-American organizations and leadership, including the Congressional Black Caucus. He hopes that Black scholars and religious leaders will sit

down and hash out a plan that will lead to the masses of African-Americans using their resources to save themselves from the disparities of poverty, poor health, homelessness, crime and broken families.

He explained, "We are creating a movement for change."

Cash Michaels write for the Wilmington Journal.

Expertise Student of the Month

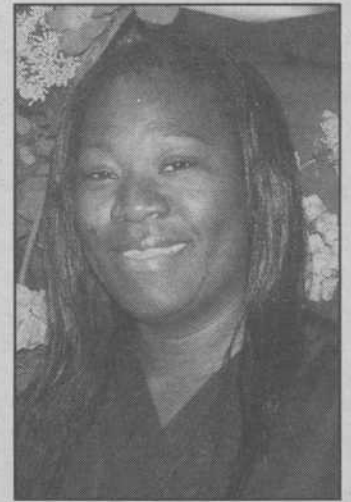
Expertise School of Beauty student Cynthia Dunn has been selected Student of the Month.

The 36-year-old, mother of four plans to partner with her sister Yulander and open what will be the first of four salons here in the Valley after graduation.

"A vision came to me in the form of a dream — that I would own four salons," she said.

In her dream she was shown that the salons will be named after her four daughters — Jasmine, Rayon, N'Jala and N'Jada. "I saw the names before I even had four daughters, or was even considering becoming a cosmetologist." Dunn is a native Las Vegas. Her styling expertise is individual braids.

"I'm known for my braids. Dunn highly recommends Expertise for training. "Expertise is a great school where you learn a lot about all types of hair and styling techniques."



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