

Rice accepts deejay's apology for racial slur

Washington (AP) - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has accepted the apology of a disc jockey fired for using a racial slur to describe her, saying the incident shows that even mature democracies take centuries to heal racial wounds.

"My understanding is that he apologized, said he didn't mean it," Rice told "Fox News" Sunday.



CONDOLEEZZA RICE

"I accept that because we all say things from time to time that we shouldn't say or didn't mean to say."

Dave Lenihan of KTRS in St. Louis apologized on the air immediately after making what he said was a slip of the tongue during his morning show last week.

Lenihan had praised Rice, who has frequently said she aspires to run the NFL one

day but has ruled out seeking to replace retiring Commissioner Paul Tagliabue, who recently announced his retirement.

On his show, Lenihan said: "She's been chancellor of Stanford."

She's got the patent resume of somebody that has serious skill. She loves football. She's African-American, which would kind of be

a big coon. A big coon. Oh my God. I am totally, totally, totally, totally, totally sorry for that."

He said he had meant to say "coup" instead of the slur. KTRS president and general manager Tim Dorsey agreed that the remark was accidental but announced the same day that Lenihan had been fired.

Rice said Sunday that the

incident is evidence that the "birth defect" of slavery infuses even mature democracies with racial tension that take generations to heal.

She added that she hopes the episode inspires Americans to "be a little bit more humble" about the progress of emerging democracies such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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"Justice Brown had served on the Sixth Circuit of Appeals and was the holder of degrees from Harvard and Yale," observed Jones, who retired from the same appeals court. "Yet, he lacks the values that sensitized him to understand why the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments had to become part of the Constitution. That responsibility fell to the lone dissenter, John Marshall Harlan, the son of Kentucky slave owners, a graduate of Centre College and Transylvania University. Justice Harlan offered an eloquent prophecy that the court and the nation would regret the doctrine it had imposed on the nation.

"At first glance, Justice Brown's academic and career credentials may have appeared more impressive than Justice Harlan's. But in the final analysis, it was Justice Harlan, with his superior values, who was unquestionably the finer judge. Clearly, if Justice Harlan's dissent had been the majority view, we would not be faced with the continuing struggles over race."

Jones' contribution was one of eight essays included in this year's State of Black America. In addition to the essays, the report presents this year's annual National Urban League Equality Index, a yardstick for measuring progress, and an analysis of African-American presence on Sunday morning talk shows.

"I wish that the Urban League could tell you that the State of Black America in 2006 was improving. We can't," said Marc H. Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League. "We are here to tell it to you straight. The State of Black America is in trouble. We can't close the great divides in this country in a day just like we can't end poverty in a night. But we're going to start by speaking truth to

power. America is not America when millions of our citizens are still viewed as a fraction of a person."

The essay on Black homeownership contains some stunning revelations.

"Between 1994 and 2004, the Black homeownership rate rose from 42.3 percent to 49.1 percent, the highest rate in history. Moreover, the Black homeownership rate grew faster than the White homeownership rate," writes Lance Freeman in "Black Homeownership: A Dream No Longer Deferred?" He continues, "Despite these impressive gains, however, the Black homeownership rate in the first decade of the 21st century was only beginning to approach the White homeownership rate of 1900."

NNPA News Service Editor-in-Chief George E. Curry served as editor of this year's State of Black America report and wrote a chapter titled, "Racial Disparities Drive Prison Boom."

He cites a Sentencing Project report: "African-Americans who use drugs are more likely to be arrested than other groups, and then to penetrate more deeply into the criminal justice system. While African-Americans constitute 13 percent of the nation's monthly drug users, they represent 35 percent of those persons arrested for drug crime, 53 percent of drug convictions and 58 percent of those in prison for drug offenses."

Curry wrote that racial disparities grow even wider in states with "three strikes and you're out" mandatory sentencing requirements. California, the nation's most populous state, is a case in point.

Quoting one report, he writes: "Minorities tend to be arrested at higher rates than Whites, then the [disproportion in rates] increases as they proceed through the system... African-Americans

constitute 6.5 percent of the state population but 21.7 percent of the felony arrests. Going deeper into the system, they constitute 29.7 percent of the prison population, 35.8 percent of second strikers and 44.7 percent of the third strikers.

"On the other hand, Whites constitute 47.1 percent of the population but only 35.7 percent of felony arrests and 28.7 percent of

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President and CEO
National Urban League

the prison population. Whites constitute 26.1 percent of second strikers and 25.4 percent of third strikers. Thus, as cases move through the process into progressively harsher punishment, the proportion of Whites diminishes while the proportion of African-Americans increases."

Marian Wright Edleman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, quotes a German theologian who argued that the test of the morality of a society is how it treats its children. The U.S. is failing that test, especially in how it treats Black babies.

"Black babies are four times as likely as White babies to have their mothers die in childbirth. A Black preschool boy born in 2001 has a one in three chance of going to prison in his lifetime; a Black preschool girl has a one in 17 chance... Black youth are 48 times more likely to be incarcerated than White youths for comparable drug offenses."

National Urban League President Marc Morial, a former two-time mayor of New Orleans, and Louisiana

native Donna Brazil, a political consultant, offered deeply personal reflections on Hurricane Katrina and their hometowns.

"As we rode back across the St. Claude Avenue Bridge toward downtown New Orleans, we encountered a man walking swiftly with what appeared to be a large book," Morial recalls. "He recognized me and we embraced. He said that he had walked



55 blocks, defying the order to stay away from the lower 9th Ward area. He not only wanted to see his home, but retrieve his large family Bible. That was what he carried under his arm, and he said it was one of the few things in his home that was not completely destroyed. Seeing his home had brought him to closure, and retrieving his treasured family Bible gave him the power and strength to move on."

Brazile, who grew up in Kenner, La., outside of New Orleans, writes: "Katrina struck my hometown in the early hours of the morning at the end of a long, hot month, when people living paycheck-to-paycheck are often without resources to do more than just survive. Countless New Orleans residents, like my Dad and several of my siblings, were stuck in Katrina's path without cars, gas, money, public transportation or credit cards to take them to higher ground. More than 1 million people were displaced in the days and months following Katrina, and less than half have returned. Some may never go back home."

The National Urban League Policy Institute, based in Washington, studied the guest lineups of Sunday morning TV talk shows from January 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005. Discouraged by its findings, it launched a larger, 2-year study from January 1, 2004, through December 31, 2005.

Stephanie J. Jones writes: "Although the preliminary report was widely-publicized — with the hope that networks would take it upon themselves to present a more diverse palette — the full two-year follow-up study showed no significant

progress since publication of the initial study. Indeed, in some areas there has even been retrenchment."

For example, the percentage of Sunday morning news shows with no interviews with Black guests increased between the two studies from 78 percent to 80 percent."

A widely referenced component of the Annual State of Black America is what the organization calls its equality index," measuring the decreasing or increasing gaps between Blacks and Whites in health, education, economics, social justice and civic engagement.

Of those areas, the greatest disparity was the economic gap, which more than 20 percent wider than in any other category. The median net worth of Blacks (\$6,166) is 10 times less than that of the average White family (\$67,000.) Much of that difference is because of the different rate of home ownership, with nearly 50 percent of African-Americans owning their homes, compared to more than 70 percent of Whites.

"Overall, the Total Equality Index is virtually unchanged, registering 0.73 in both 2005 and 2006," this year's report stated. "This is not surprising, since wholesale national changes move at a glacial pace."



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