

# NAACP unmoved in criticism of Florida cops

By Starla Vaughns Cherin  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (NNPA) - Marsha Ellison, president of the local NAACP reacting to reports that members of the Fraternal Order of Police are dissatisfied with her leadership, stated that "the NAACP will remain unbought and unbossed."

In a press conference outside the Fort Lauderdale Po-

lice Department recently, Ellison, Florida State Conference President Adora Obi Nweze, representatives from NAACP Dade County chapter and local leaders voiced their opposition to a membership drive being held at the behest of the fraternal organization, the FOP, which has a majority White membership.

In a memo sent last month, FOP President Jack

Lokeinsky expressed disdain at the branch's stance on racial profiling, discrimination and police misconduct.

"The FOP is tired of the current position of the president of the Broward Branch of the NAACP. In an effort to vote out the president and her views of the police, I support the membership drive. A one-year membership allows you to make the change and get rid of this us against them

attitude," Lokeinsky wrote.

Lokeinsky, who did not attend the press conference and could not be reached for comment, is probably referring to the series of meetings the branch held last month, where more than 80 residents stood up and gave personal accounts of their encounters with various police departments in Broward County.

Currently, the NAACP is documenting these cases.

Each one that is taken on an individual basis is provided with advice and referrals from local attorneys working pro bono with the NAACP. The cases will also be forwarded to the National NAACP for a response at the national level.

"We hear people complain every day and they have a right to be heard. The NAACP means civil rights and justice for all. We will not accept the membership of anyone that does not believe in the NAACP mission," Nweze said.

All branch membership applications to the NAACP are sent to the national branch. It is a non-profit organization whose membership is open to all. Local leaders were responding to the FOP's sudden interest in membership in the 97-year-old organization.

"The NAACP believes most police officers do good work performing a tough demanding job. Sadly, a few bad apples can spoil the efforts of those men and women who put their lives on the line to serve and protect the community. Resistance to accountability and the refusal of police officers to receive complaints against fellow officers is widespread," Ellison said.

Lauderdale Lakes Commissioner Levoyd Williams referred to the number of African-Americans, especially males, in prison as proof of racial profiling. "African-Americans represent 13 percent of the population, yet they are 35 percent of those arrested and 70 percent

of those incarcerated. Injustice and racial profiling exists, and we have to do something about it."

Deerfield Beach Commissioner Sylvia Portier said, "This is real. We get at least 10 calls a week on police brutality. We're keeping a log of the phone calls."

The branch, with support from the state and national NAACP, vowed to continue in their efforts to monitor police behavior and encourage accountability.

"Let me make it perfectly clear my positions have not changed. I believe that racial profiling and police misconduct exist. I believe that citizens who believe they have been victims of police misconduct should be able to file a complaint and have their complaints thoroughly investigated. I believe that officers found guilty of police misconduct should be punished," Ellison said.

Dade's NAACP representative Brad Brown called for civilian review boards. Fort Lauderdale Police and the Broward Sheriff's Office have review boards that include civilians and police.

The 50-member Fort Lauderdale Black Police Association hasn't weighed in on the subject. Its president, Fort Lauderdale Police Captain Anthony Williams hopes the issue will be resolved. "This by no means reflects the thoughts of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. I would like to see it resolved and both parties come to the table to discuss solutions."

Starla Vaughns Cherin works as a writer for the *Westside Gazette*.

## King continues nonviolent legacy

ATLANTA (AP) - The youngest daughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. told a teen audience Saturday that she intends to do more to carry on the legacy of non-violence espoused by her parents.

"I haven't done as much as I should be doing in the last few years of my life," the Rev. Bernice King said at a panel discussion for teens as

part of the 100 Black Men of America Inc. 20th Annual Conference this week.

"My desire is not to be a hypocrite. I want to make sure my life is not a contradiction when I take a platform," she said.

King said she is looking inward to discover how she can more fully embrace a nonviolent lifestyle.

"Nonviolence is deeper

than turning the other cheek," she told the teens. King said she has been recovering from the death of her mother, Coretta, who died in January, and is praying for direction on how she can best honor her parents' memories.

"I'm asking God, 'Where do I belong in this thing?' Just because I'm Dr. King's daughter doesn't mean I'm supposed to be on the front

line for everything," she said.

King was only five years old when her father was slain in 1968 in Memphis, Tenn.

The 100 Black Men has mentored thousands of children since it began in 1986 with nine chapters. Now 10,000 members strong, the group focuses on mentoring, education, health and wellness, and economic development

## ACT SO

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like that. The time we spent before the competition was very beneficial with the speakers and coaches we had."

She and other winners have their hearts set on one more competition this year. Winners of the local competitions aim for the national finals. First place local event winners from some categories will get an all expense paid trip to compete in the nation's capital.

"This is the first competition I have entered and won, and I am very excited about going to Washington, D.C., to compete," Steptoe said.

Instrumental/contemporary category winner Alex Gordon said of the next contest, "I am really, really looking forward to the trip to compete [at nationals]."

## Meth

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more widely used today than it was 10 years ago. Data from the jail populations of a handful of cities on the West Coast also show what King called a "highly localized" problem.

Among men arrested in Phoenix, 38.3 percent tested positive for methamphetamine. Figures for other cities are: Los Angeles, 28.7 percent; Portland, Ore., 25.4; San Diego, 36.2 percent; and San Jose, Calif., 36.9 percent.

But nationally, just 5 percent of men who had been arrested had meth in their systems. By contrast, 30 percent tested positive for cocaine and 44 percent for marijuana, the report said, citing government statistics.

Treatment programs for meth also have been portrayed inaccurately, with news re-

ports suggesting that meth users do not respond as well to treatment as users of other drugs, King said. The Bush administration's recent methamphetamine control strategy also referred to a "common misperception that methamphetamine is so addictive that it is impossible to treat."

Programs in 15 states have had promising results, King said.

"Mischaracterizing the impact of methamphetamine by exaggerating its prevalence and consequences while downplaying its receptivity to treatment succeeds neither as a tool of prevention nor a vehicle of education," he wrote. King called for a tempered approach to the problem, focusing on local trouble and using federal money to beef up treatment.

He recalled, "I heard from a church and I figured I would be a part of it. I wanted

to interact with other talented students and have fun as well."

When he won, Gordon said he was "really shocked but very excited."

He plans to attend college and pursue a career in audio engineering and music production, which is in keeping with the goal of the program — to encourage academic and personal success for youth.

Coaches were also acknowledged and ACT-SO Chairman Horsford, ended the program with inspiring closing remarks, expressing a desire to make the program bigger and better next year.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Winners (L-R): Laura Sheppard (vocal contemporary), Simone Ruffin (original essay), Detrick Sanford of Nevada Partners, Alex Gordon's mother (he won for instrumental/contemporary), Mikayla Steptoe (instrumental/classical) and Sydnee Mack (dramatics).

## Diploma

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school in 2001, only 50 percent of all Black students, 51 percent of Native American students and 53 percent of all Latino students got a high school diploma for that year.

The study found that the problem was even worse for Black, Native American and Latino young men at 43 percent, 47 percent and 48 percent, respectively.

Similar figures were found by the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, which reported that only 50 percent of Black and Latino students in the United States complete high school with a diploma. According to the U.S. Census in 2004, 85 percent of adults age 25 and over had completed at least high school, an all-time high. The percentage of non-Latino Whites (89 percent) and Blacks (80 percent) who had a high school diploma or beyond marked record highs.

The proportion of Blacks rose by 10 percentage points from 1993 to 2003, while non-Latino Whites saw an increase of five percentage points in this category.

"Our youth need to take their education seriously," stressed Muhammad. "They need to explore their interests and not be afraid to explore what they like to do. You can make money doing anything that you enjoy. It'll be easier to work at it if you enjoy what you're doing."

Nisa Islām Muhammad writes for *The Final Call*.