

L.A.'s African marketplace on upswing

By Olu Alemoru
Special to Sentinel-Voice
LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - Organizers of one of the city's best-known cultural exchange festivals are promising to breathe new life into the event after the attendance at last year's event dropped by nearly half, raising doubts about its future.

The African Marketplace and Cultural Faire, which regularly attracts more than 200,000 people, marks its 21st

year by returning to its roots at Rancho Cienega Park for three consecutive weekends starting Aug. 19 and running through Sept. 6.

The fair, which was founded in 1985 by James V. Burke, had been a fixture on the front pad of the Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena at Exposition Park since 2002. However, confusion ensued last year when the event was moved to the back of the arena two weeks be-

fore it was scheduled to begin.

Burke, a director of special events for the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department, acknowledged that last year was a "struggle."

"Last year was a travesty for us, and many people saw the demise in the African Marketplace," said Burke, noting that the 2005 event lost \$93,000.

"We lost some key volunteer personnel in marketing

and promotions who were the backbone of the organization."

Burke said he was also engaged in negotiating a contract for an African Marketplace to be held in San Francisco and spoke of the difficulties in securing the Exposition Park venue.

"You're dealing with at least five different entities," he said. "The city, the state, the county, local stakeholders and a private concession-

aire which handles all the parking. Then outside of that you have the Figueroa Corridor community and we have to negotiate with all of them."

Nevertheless, Burke said, the return to Rancho Cienega marks a renewed energy for the event. He highlighted the return of a key fair staffer, Chief Operating Officer Mehta Williams, who was unable to participate last year because of ill health.

"Going back to our original location has really built a momentum for this year," Burke said. "We are attracting new vendors and want to let everyone know there will definitely be an African Marketplace."

Longtime vendors Bill and Brenda Hart, who run African-themed Foo Foo Fashions and are appearing for their 17th year at the fair, agreed.

"It did lose its luster last year with all the problems, and a lot of people have been pushing for it to go back to Rancho Park," Bill Hart said. "Now it's coming back, and I think we will be able to pump new life into it. The fair is part of the community's

heritage. It's the one [time] in the year when African-Americans can see and be part of our African culture."

Roscoe Lee Owens, a member of the Jazz Zone, a collective of artists, musicians and business owners, supplies some of the musical talent that performs during the marketplace. This will be his eighth year of participation.

"That's been the paramount challenge, to get the word out," Owens said. "If you want to attract new customers, reconnect with old ones and be part of something that brings a positive vibe to South Los Angeles, then the African Marketplace is where you want to be."

The 2006 marketplace has a South African celebration theme, "Ubuntu," or "I exist because you exist."

Some of the diverse cultures being highlighted are the Brazilian Festival, Doo-Wop and Big Band Swing; an African Fest featuring Ghana, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Senegal; a Children's Village; art exhibits and a food court with international cuisine.

Olu Alemoru writes for WAVE Newspapers.

Newspaper exec joins Ebony, Jet

By Demetrius Patterson
Special to Sentinel-Voice
CHICAGO (NNPA) - Nearly one year after her father's death, Johnson Publishing Company CEO Linda Johnson Rice continues to put her imprint on the world's largest Black publishing company as evidenced by the hiring of its first editorial director, former Knight Ridder executive Bryan Monroe.

Johnson Rice announced the hiring of Monroe as vice president/editorial director of the company's flagship publications, *Ebony* and *Jet*. He officially began his new position Aug. 1.

As editorial director, Monroe will be responsible for helping unite both *Ebony*

and *Jet* to work in a more cohesive and unified manner. He said he would also work closely with Johnson Publishing's website designers to help give the publications a stronger presence, more content and a better look on the Internet.

"Like many in the African-American community, I have read *Ebony* and *Jet* all of my life, and to work there in some capacity has always been a dream job to have," said Monroe, who is also president of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Not only has Monroe, 40, landed his dream job, but he also will bring "a fresh approach to the largest-selling

magazines geared toward the African-American community.

Ebony boasts a monthly circulation of 1.4 million, and for *Jet*, more than 950,000 weekly.

Monroe has approximately 19 years in the newspaper industry, 16 of those years as a photographer, reporter, editor and eventually assistant vice president of news for Knight Ridder, Inc. For many years, Knight Ridder was the second largest newspaper company in the U.S. until ceasing to exist in June after being bought out by the Sacramento, Calif.-based McClatchy Co.

Under Monroe's leadership, he and the staff of the

newspaper in Biloxi, Miss., were awarded the 2006 Pulitzer Prize Gold Metal for Public Service for keeping the newspaper running during Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

He also has been recognized by *Presstime* magazine as one of the top 20 American journalists under 40 years old and was named by *MediaWeek* magazine as one of the nation's Media Elite.

Ebony and *Jet* move toward an exciting future," Rice said in a statement.

Demetrius Patterson writes for the Chicago Defender.

Dillard delays fall semester

Special to Sentinel-Voice
NEW ORLEANS (NNPA) - On June 30, Dillard University celebrated its return home to Avenue of the Oaks almost 10 months after Hurricane Katrina's approach forced 2,200 students to evacuate from the Gentilly neighborhood's campus.

Dillard officials have pushed back the starting date for their fall semester to September 25, a month later than usual.

The move reflects, according to Walter Strong, school vice president, "the

realities of the environment." "We just revised our academic calendar to reflect the fact that by that point in time, 80 percent of the hurricane season will likely be behind us," he said. "It represents to us a much better time for the opening of classes, and that's going to be our approach from here on."

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's records of hurricanes that have hit the New Orleans area, 75 percent of them, including all of the most destructive storms,

have struck in either late August or September. When Dillard does open this fall semester, students can expect an expanded curricula.

Dillard President Marvalene Hughes said Hurricane Katrina provided an opportunity for the institution to improve itself.

"As one of the nation's noted Historically Black Colleges and Universities, we approached this disaster as a point of opportunity to enhance and expand rather than retract this great institution," Hughes said.

Families

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to discern — from these young people — calls for love, unconditional love, from both parents and, indeed, from extended families and communities. This is the most urgent need.

Every juvenile that is released from incarceration should return to a community that welcomes them and commits to helping them re-enter and avoid returning to jail. Church can play a key role here. Every successful African-American adult should find a way to interact with young men — especially as mentors, coaches, guest lecturers at schools and churches, even as volunteer CASA ad-

vocates for abused and neglected children or as liaisons with public defense offices, or as parenting educators.

Every religious, spiritual or moral leader needs to open a dialogue about the importance of creating stable families, which can best meet the needs of developing children, especially African-American male children. This important level of community and individual mobilization and action must increase now. The future of the African-American community may well depend on it.

Gail C. Christopher is V.P. at the Joint Center, and directs the Joint Center Health Policy Institute.

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