

Texas law students chastised for party

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — A group of first-year law students at the University of Texas at Austin has been chided by the dean for participating in a "Ghetto Fabulous"-themed costume party and posting pictures from it online.

The party is the latest racially insensitive incident to emerge from the university, which has struggled for years to boost minority enrollment and make students of color feel welcome.

"Among the many ways to happily party in Austin, this particular one was singularly heedless and odious," Dean Larry Sager said in an e-mail Friday to the law school's stu-

dent body.

Nick Transier, a first-year student who attended the party in September and posted pictures on his website, said nobody meant to offend anyone of any race.

"We had no intention by any measure to choose a group or class of people and make fun of them," said Transier, 26, of Houston.

But the photos — in which partygoers carried 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor and wore Afro wigs, necklaces with large medallions and name tags bearing traditionally Black and Hispanic names — upset some Black law students, said Sophia Lecky, president of the Thurgood Marshall Legal Soci-

ety.

"I just thought overall that it was kind of insensitive, that it was mocking a group of people or a class of people in just a real stereotypical or negative way," said Lecky, whose group aims to improve the academic and social climate for Black UT law students.

Sager met with about 18 students who were at the party and said he is convinced they didn't think their actions would offend classmates.

No disciplinary action is currently planned.

Transier said he and other partygoers have apologized to members of the Thurgood

Marshall Legal Society.

About 70 of UT's roughly 1,300 law students are Black, according to preliminary enrollment figures.

There are about 800 White students, 225 Hispanic students, 75 Asian students, 55 foreign students and 75 whose ethnicities were unknown.

Former UT President Larry Faulkner ordered sweeping changes in curriculum and culture in 2004 after a series of incidents that included the egging of the Martin Luther King Jr. statue and fraternity parties where Blacks were portrayed in Jim Crow racial stereotypes.

State lawmakers agree to fund slavery study

By Mema Ayi

Special to Sentinel-Voice

CHICAGO (NNPA) — State legislators are hopeful that a study to be released in the spring will provide a clear picture of the negative effects of the transatlantic slave

trade on Black Americans.

At a news conference last week, community leaders and five Democratic Black legislators announced the establishment of the Illinois Transatlantic Slave Trade Commission.

A 2005 joint resolution funded a \$400,000 grant to the Center for Inner City Studies of Northeastern Illinois University, where elected officials and members of the 25-member commission discussed their plans

to improve the lives of those historically disadvantaged due to the slave trade.

The commission includes Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich, state legislators and researchers and scholars from all over the country.

"We want to find out what really happened to African-Americans and what vestiges of slavery remain with us today," said Anderson Thompson, director of research for the project.

The study will address the impact of politics, economics, education and societal issues on the transatlantic

slave trade and slavery by examining the institution of slavery from 1619 to 1865, federal and state government support of slavery and discrimination by law in the public and private sectors against free Africans.

The study will explore how slavery functioned, its lingering effects, as well as the system and process of the capture, procurement and treatment of enslaved Africans, Thompson said.

The commission will be dissolved after it reports its findings to the General Assembly in the spring.

State Senator Donne Trotter said six months may not be enough time for researchers to complete the study.

"The resolution is not set in stone. We can extend it," Trotter said.

Conrad Worrill, national chairman of the National Black United Front and director of the Center for Inner City Studies, said he expects the study will show that Black Americans are suffering a form of post-traumatic stress syndrome as a result of the slave trade.

The negative effects of (See Study, Page 9)

Immigrants

(Continued from Page 1)

worker and they know it would be extremely difficult for her to obtain other employment.

Her life away from the job revolves around window-shopping, reading in the park, going to movies and relaxing in her home. At times, she has to guard her language, like when she's on the bus.

She's heard another passenger say, "I would have a seat if these illegal immigrants would just get off the bus." Michelle said, "It hurts. It hurts. It breaks my heart. And we can't even say anything back."

Shanta Ramson, a Washington lawyer who specializes in immigration, explains: "There is no law in place right now. Right now, there is no law on the books that can help her."

Recent immigration reforms have failed to pass Congress, including a reform proposed by President Bush that would allow the 11 to 12 million undocumented workers in the U.S. to gain temporary legal status.

Michele's biggest dream is to go to college in the U.S. and earn a business degree. But, being illegal, she couldn't even qualify for student aid.

"We want better jobs, we want to go to college, we want opportunity, we want a piece of the pie too," she said.

And that's not all Michelle wants. She wants freedom to visit home to visit relatives, including a 15-month-old nephew.

"I wish I could see him in

his young tender age, where you can hug him and kiss him and bite up his cheeks," she said, smiling.

She regularly speaks to her mother by phone. Once, she came to visit and Michele delighted in her mother's company for weeks, but the airport departure was unbearable. "We cried so hard. I cried long," she recalls.

Experts say that not all immigrants are treated equally. Those from Haiti, for example, encounter more difficulty obtaining legal status in the U.S. than others, such as Cuba.

Donald J. Hernandez, professor of sociology at the University of Albany and an expert on immigration and diversity, said the difference in treatment is more about the United States' relationship with that particular nation than it is about race.

"It really is very country specific. Cuba has been a favored country because of the Cold War," Hernandez said. "People from Trinidad and Tobago have not had that favor, per se, because they have not had that geopolitical importance."

Ramson said marriage to an American could open the door to begin application for legal status. But Ramson em-

phasizes, that is only in cases of "good faith marriages; not for fraudulent purposes or to circumvent the immigration law."

Americans view Trinidad and Tobago as a vacation or retirement destination with palm trees, coconut milk, mangos, and beaches with blue water. Though the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the wealthiest countries in the Caribbean, largely because of its oil and gas reserves, its per capita income is only \$10,440 a year. The prospect of a better standard of living for immigrants — legal and illegal — is one of the attractions of the U.S.

The worst case scenario, if Michelle ever gets deported, she must wait as many as 10 years before being eligible to apply for a visa.

"I want hope. I want hope. If God would just open up the windows of heaven and say that there's a new start, I want to be free so I can come out and soar like an eagle," she said.

"You try your best to, kind of like, blank it out. But you can't blank it out because you never know what is going to happen when enforcement comes."

Correction

Vol. 27 Issue 23 had a picture of students in a classroom at Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy not Wendell P. Williams Elementary.

Vol. 27 Issue 24 had Lou Collins' birthday listed as his 40th, it was number 39.

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