

Baquet firing hurts Black writers

By Betty Pleasant
Special to Sentinel-Voice
LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - Dean Baquet, one of the few African-American editors of daily U.S. newspapers, has resigned from the *Los Angeles Times*.

Company officials confirm that Baquet was forced to resign at the request of the newspaper's new publisher after refusing to agree to further cuts of his editorial staff.

The departure of Baquet, who led the *Times* for one year and was employed by the newspaper for six years, was scheduled to be announced last Thursday. But the news was leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* earlier, on Tuesday afternoon, forcing David Hiller, who has been publisher of the paper for only one month, to deal with the issue that day.

Baquet confirmed to his staff that he had been asked to leave.

In a statement issued by the *Times*, Hiller said: "I want to thank Dean [Baquet] for all of his contributions and leadership during the past six years. He is a great editor and journalist. But, after consid-

erable discussion during the past several weeks, Dean and I concluded that we have significant differences on the future direction of the *Times*."

The newspaper has been in turmoil ever since the Chicago-based Tribune Co. bought it in March 2000, after which the executives there immediately began battling *Times* executives over the implementation of cost-reduction measures, including ordering significant reductions in the number of employees.

Baquet and then-publisher Jeffrey Johnson defied the Tribune's calls to reduce their newsroom staff in September, and Johnson was forced to resign. Hiller was sent from Chicago to replace him. Baquet, believing further cuts of his editorial staff would hurt the paper's ability to cover the news of the world, the nation and the state properly, refused Hiller's order to make deeper staff cuts and was asked to leave.

Janet Clayton, a *Times* assistant managing editor and a founder of the Black Jour-

nalists Association of Southern California, called Baquet's resignation "very upsetting." She explained, "It was a real blow to the newsroom. He was a very popular editor with a great eye for the news. People would walk on coals for him. This was a hard thing to take."

Baquet held a meeting with his editorial staff Tuesday to announce his departure and to deliver a pep talk to his troops, at the conclusion of which he was given a 10-minute standing ovation.

"It feels like a death in the family," Gayle Pollard-Terry, a *Times* staff writer and former president of the Black Journalists Association of Southern California.

Pollard-Terry, who has been a writer for 23 years and currently serves on the board of BJASC, the journalists association, said: "Many of us are afraid that we'll lose our jobs. Hiller said there would be no layoffs this year, but since [only six weeks remain in the year], there was a lot

of snickering among the staff about that assurance. Hiller told us there will be 'cost reductions' at the *Times*, hopefully through attrition. But we don't know what's going to happen."

Pollard-Terry said the level of turmoil is very high

at the newspaper and many of the employees are wondering if Baquet's ouster marks the end of an era at a newspaper that has won multiple Pulitzer Prizes in recent years.

"I don't know what Dean's departure bodes for

the rest of the staff," said Clayton, who has also spent more than 20 years at the *Times*. "I don't know if I'm secure. No one has a sense of 'what's next.' It's very disconcerting."

Betty Pleasant writes for WAVE Newspapers.

Fireman's suit settled

LOS ANGELES (AP) - The city is paying \$2.7 million to settle a lawsuit brought by a Black firefighter who claims he suffered racial discrimination after co-workers served him spaghetti laced with dog food.

The City Council approved the award last week, 11-1.

In his lawsuit, firefighter Tennie Pierce, 51, said after he took a bite of the meal two years ago, he noticed other firefighters laughing. He demanded to know what was in the food after a second bite, but nobody answered.

Pierce said he suffered retaliation for reporting the incident and verbal slurs, insults and derogatory remarks, including taunting by firefighters "barking like dogs (and) asking him how dog food tasted," the lawsuit said.

David Wellman a professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz hired by

Pierce's attorney, said the association of a Black man and dog food "resonates with the deep historical roots of slavery and the corresponding dehumanization."

"It's not just silly stuff. It's racially motivated," he said.

As part of the settlement, the two captains involved were given one month off without pay, and a firefighter was ordered off work for three days without pay.

"I truly hope that my case will make a difference for African-Americans in the Los Angeles Fire Department," Pierce said in a statement.

The department takes seriously the issues raised by the lawsuit, Fire Chief William Bamattre said. "It has been and remains our goal to create a positive workplace environment that supports all men and women that comprise the workforce of the Fire Department," he said.

Your Horoscope Says... Nov. 16-Nov. 22

ARIES

Ding-dong! Destiny is at the door. Let it in and enjoy the change of pace. You'll be happy to make a few adjustments for this most welcome guest. Follow through on instincts and hunches.

Soul Affirmation: My spirit makes all things new.

Lucky Numbers: 38, 41, 55

TAURUS

Stay on course with your current decisions and dreams. You may doubt your progress this week but you really are moving toward a better tomorrow with your determined attitude.

Soul Affirmation: I enlarge my happiness by forgetting about myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 20, 27, 32

GEMINI

You feel great. Your shining spirit attracts many seekers this week so let your best wisest self answer questions that are put to you by those who want advice. You'll smooth over a sticky situation at work with ease.

Soul Affirmation: Distant love is sometimes sweeter.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 24, 36

CANCER

Busy week. You'll want to get up with the birdies and you may even want to whistle a happy little tune. You'll be very much in demand for your expertise and positive attitude. Way to go.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the act of adoring.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 16, 18

LEO

Happiness arrives and sits on your shoulder like a bright butterfly this week. A relationship can make significant progress if you stay open to love. Keep your evening free for romance in a social setting.

Soul Affirmation: I give thanks for whom I am this week.

Lucky Numbers: 5, 26, 49

VIRGO

Take charge of a project at work and get it finished up. It's been languishing on someone else's shoulders and desk for way too long. A sensible outlook will get you far this week.

Soul Affirmation: My hunches work well for me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 32, 48

LIBRA

You may find yourself faced with many distractions this week but you'll sail through and accomplish much if you stay focused on each task and take them one at a time. You know you can do it this evening.

Soul Affirmation: Money opens doors for friendship to enter.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 32, 44

SCORPIO

Creativity is favored and yours is especially favored with some project that you've been working especially hard on. For the next few days watch for a romance that will bring special gifts.

Soul Affirmation: I care deeply about the feelings of others.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 19, 29

SAGITTARIUS

Your new ideas combine well with your will and skill. You get a lot done at work this week. Be soft and forceful. Make time for family life tonight. Your rewards come from those who are related to you by blood.

Soul Affirmation: I let positive emotions carry me through the week.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 22, 31

CAPRICORN

Before you spend your money, check the quality of the goods. This rule applies to intangible goods as well. Make the first move with your honey this week. Be sweetly aggressive.

Soul Affirmation: The enjoyment of good food is high on my agenda this week.

Lucky Numbers: 11, 45, 51

AQUARIUS

Let your creative juices flow. Advice from a child has a reward in it. On the job, coworkers will help you expand your sense of accomplishment. Only you can stand in your way.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy learning new things about myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 40, 53, 54

PISCES

Opportunity knocks this week, be ready and waiting. An old love resurfaces. This week is good for you financially. Look for a special opportunity at work. Family matters, spend time with yours.

Soul Affirmation: I let myself experience my true ambitions this week.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 28, 43

3 OUT OF 4 PEOPLE HAVE EXPERIENCED DÉJÀ VU... EVER WONDER WHY?

DENZEL WASHINGTON
A JERRY BRUCKHEIMER PRODUCTION A FILM BY TONY SCOTT

DÉJÀ VU

TOUCHSTONE PICTURES AND JERRY BRUCKHEIMER FILMS PRESENT
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PAULA PATTON BRUCE GREENWOOD ADAM GOLDBERG AND JIM CAVIEZEL MUSIC BY HARRY GREGSON-WILLIAMS
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PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
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INTENSE SEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AND TERROR
DISTURBING IMAGES AND SOME SENSUALITY

IN THEATRES NOVEMBER 22