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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Blige captures Billboard haul

LAS VEGAS (AP) - Mary J. Blige won big at this year's Billboard Music Awards as her chart-topping comeback album "The Breakthrough" landed the R&B diva a leading nine honors. Among the awards the 35-year-old singer claimed Monday night were R&B/Hip-Hop Artist of the Year, Female R&B Artist of the Year and R&B/Hip-Hop Album of the Year.

"The Breakthrough" shot to No. 1 after it debuted on the Billboard charts in December 2005 and has sold 2.6 million copies since.

Blige, in white go-go boots and a sparkly mini-dress, rocked the full house by belting out a medley of her "Enough Crying" and "Take Me As I Am" during the two-hour show aired live from the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Blige said she's already reached the pinnacle of her career by enduring personal struggles that once led her to sing hopefully about having "no more drama" in her life.

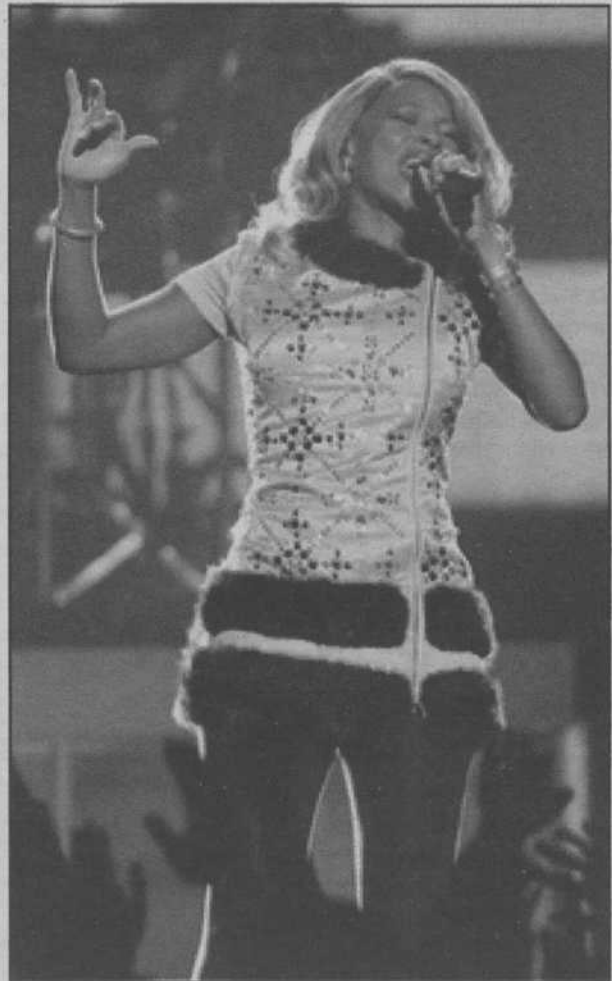
"I've realized if I don't [love] myself, nobody will. Nobody is going to love me more than I do," Blige told reporters after the show.

Chris Brown, a 17-year-old lothario who calls his music "hip-hop with a swagger," won New Artist of the Year, Male Artist of the Year and Artist of the Year awards.

"I'm 17. That's crazy. It's mind-boggling," said Brown. "My mom, she still keeps me humble. She tells me to take out the trash, ya know, clean my room."

Newcomer Rihanna also walked away with high honors. The 18-year-old from Barbados edged out Blige and Beyonce for the top songstress honor.

"I really can't feel my legs, this is phenomenal," said Rihanna as she accepted the award for Best Female Artist (See *Billboard*, Page 6)



Mary J. Blige performs at the Billboard Music Awards.

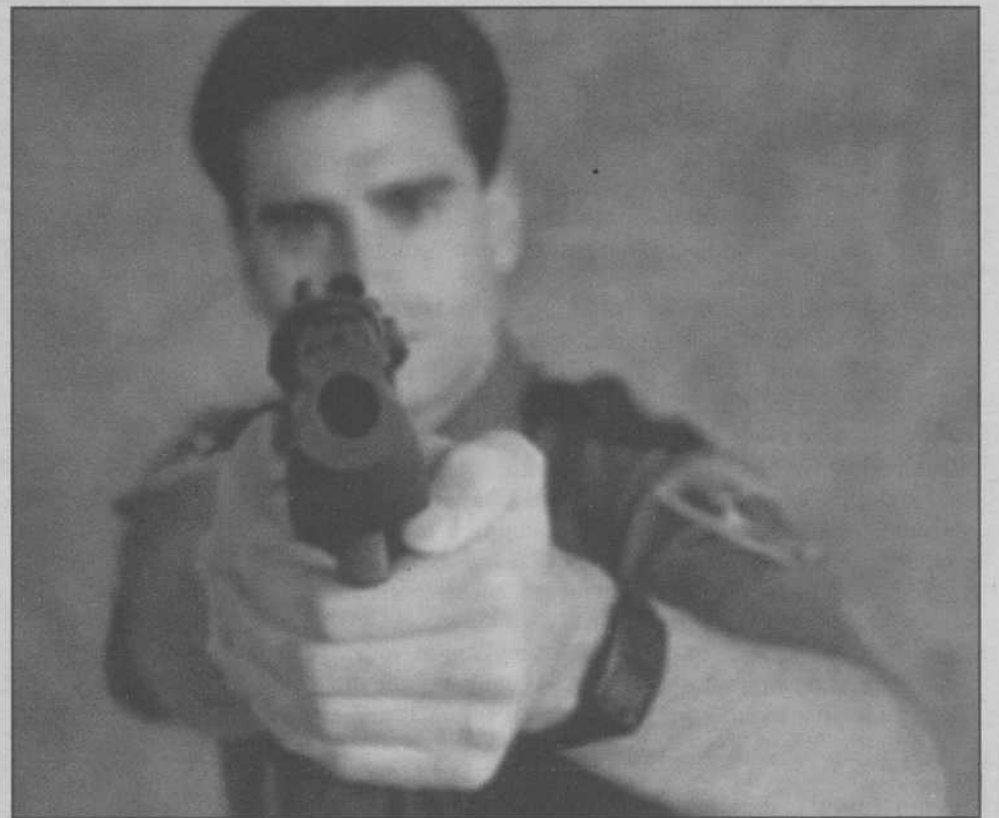
Brutality charges rise

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

Fifteen years after the videotaped Los Angeles police beating of Rodney King sensitized America about police brutality, some civil rights advocates say cops are still out of control in Black neighborhoods, and the violence appears to be increasing with the institution of anti-terror measures.

"The heightened so-called war on terrorism — I think that is fueling police aggression," said Diop Kamau, a former Hawthorne, Calif. police detective and executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Police Complaint Center. "I think that the president's choice with regards to torture, the attack on habeas corpus, the kind of things that we're doing overseas, I think, are actually impacting domestic police policies."

"I think the green light, with regards to spying and everything else, what it has done is elevated the role and the public's regard for law enforcement to the attitude that says, 'Those are our protectors. We need to take the



The Police Complaint Center reports a 40 percent rise in police brutality charges in 2006.

gloves off and give them the room to do what they need to do.' Well, they're not always fighting terrorists, and they're not always arresting bad guys. More often than not, they're dealing with regular people for small and minor incidents."

And they're disproportionately Black.

"It's still mainly just us... We are the fodder for the lion. And the bottom line is that's not going to change any time soon," said Kamau. "I think that as African-Americans continue to be viewed and anticipated by police as violent and uncooperative with all of this negative stereotype associated with Black youth,

those are going to be the principle victims."

The center files complaints on behalf of victims, assists citizens with reporting of misconduct, tests for racial profiling and tests to determine whether police complaint systems work.

Between Dec. 2005 and (See *Brutality*, Page 2)

Court looks at race, schools

WASHINGTON (AP) - Pro-affirmative action demonstrators bearing "Fight For Equality" placards descended on the Supreme Court Monday as justices prepared to hear fresh arguments in cases testing when race may be used as a basis for assigning students to public schools.

Parents in Louisville, Ky., and Seattle are challenging school assignment plans that factor in a student's race in an effort to have individual school populations approximate the racial makeup of the entire system. Federal appeals courts have upheld both programs.

On the sidewalk in front of the Supreme Court, hundreds of pro-affirmative action demonstrators marched

to dramatize their issue. A parent-teachers group from Chicago and several civil rights groups were among those sponsoring the demonstration.

The school policies in contention are designed to keep schools from segregating along the same lines as neighborhoods. In Seattle, only high school students are affected. Louisville's plan applies system wide.

"The plan has prevented the re-segregation that inevitably would result from the community's segregated housing patterns and that most likely would produce many schools that might be perceived as 'failing,'" the Seattle school district said in its brief to the high court.

The Bush administration

has taken the side of the parents who are suing the school districts, much as it intervened on behalf of college and graduate students who challenged affirmative action policies before the Supreme Court in 2003.

In 2003, the court upheld race-conscious admissions in higher education in a 5-4 opinion by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor.

O'Connor, however, has since retired and been replaced by conservative Justice Samuel Alito. Lawyers on both sides of the issue presume that Alito is inclined to oppose the school plans.

About 400 of the nation's 15,000 school districts are under court orders to desegregate. It is believed that hundreds more voluntarily take

race into account.

There are no firm figures, although the Pacific Legal Foundation of Sacramento, Calif., said up to 1,000 districts voluntarily use race as a factor in school assignments, drawing boundaries, deciding where to locate new buildings and in other ways. The foundation opposes race-based policies.

Seattle has tried for years to achieve racial diversity in its schools in the face of persistent segregated housing patterns. The city's schools have never been subject to court order. Seattle put the assignment system at issue in place in 1998, but suspended it after parents sued.

The Louisville schools, with a history of state-imposed (See *Race*, Page 10)