

Poor

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them to Arlington National Cemetery for a funeral and to a separate memorial service, also in Arlington — all short rides and accessible by taxi.

Barnett, the corporation president, used a hired car and driver to attend a funeral service for a former board member in Harrisburg, Pa., about a two-hour drive. The cost: \$400.

In a memo on travel policy, Jeffress wrote that first-class travel must follow restrictive government rules. The government allows first-class tickets under circumstances that include: a lack of available coach seats; accommodations for disabilities; security needs; meeting urgent timetables; and flights outside the country that exceed 14 hours.

Barnett flew first class to a conference in Ireland, at a cost the inspector general called unnecessary and excessive.

Jeffress, in another memo, said the corporation adopted government hotel rate guidelines, which allow waivers only under limited circumstances, including escalated rates due to special events or natural disasters.

Ford

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remaining 6 percent are in the state of owning 100 percent of their dealership, said a Chrysler official.

The African-American dealership rolls for foreign car makers is substantially lower than Ford, GM and the Chrysler Group.

Industry experts contend that a lot of the problems facing Ford, including those associated with its minority dealers, stem from an issue with new products — or lack thereof.

Ford, traditionally No. 2 in U.S. sales, fell to fourth place in the U.S. auto market in November, behind Toyota and DaimlerChrysler, for the first time.

The automaker posted an increase in sales in November with the Ford Fusion, Mercury Milan, Lincoln MKZ, the new Ford Expedition and the Lincoln Navigator. However, its domestic sales dropped nearly 10 percent in November, partly due to a decrease in sales of its once popular F-Series trucks and a planned drop in Taurus sales to rental car companies as the automaker ended production of the sedan.

Ford also suffered from poor sales of the Ford Freestyle crossover, with sales reportedly down 40 percent, and the Mercury

Montego sedan, with sales down 42 percent.

Ford yielded a third-quarter net loss of more than \$5 billion.

The current condition of the automaker presents challenges across the board, noted Cain.

"Our sales and our market share have declined over the years and it affects everybody," he said.

Jackson said Ford's sales decline might stem from ineffective marketing strategies and the automaker's inability to position its products to a key consumer group, the minorities the company employs.

Fleming said Ford has set high standards for the development of minority dealerships; therefore, the automaker should want to work aggressively to resolve the decline in African-American dealers.

"We want Ford to resurrect the spirit of Henry Ford," said Fleming.

The goal, said Cain, is to find a middle ground that makes sense for FMMDA and Ford.

He added, "At the end of the day we have to let them know where our business strategies stand and where their business stands."

Marcus Amick writes for the Michigan Chronicle.

Hurricane

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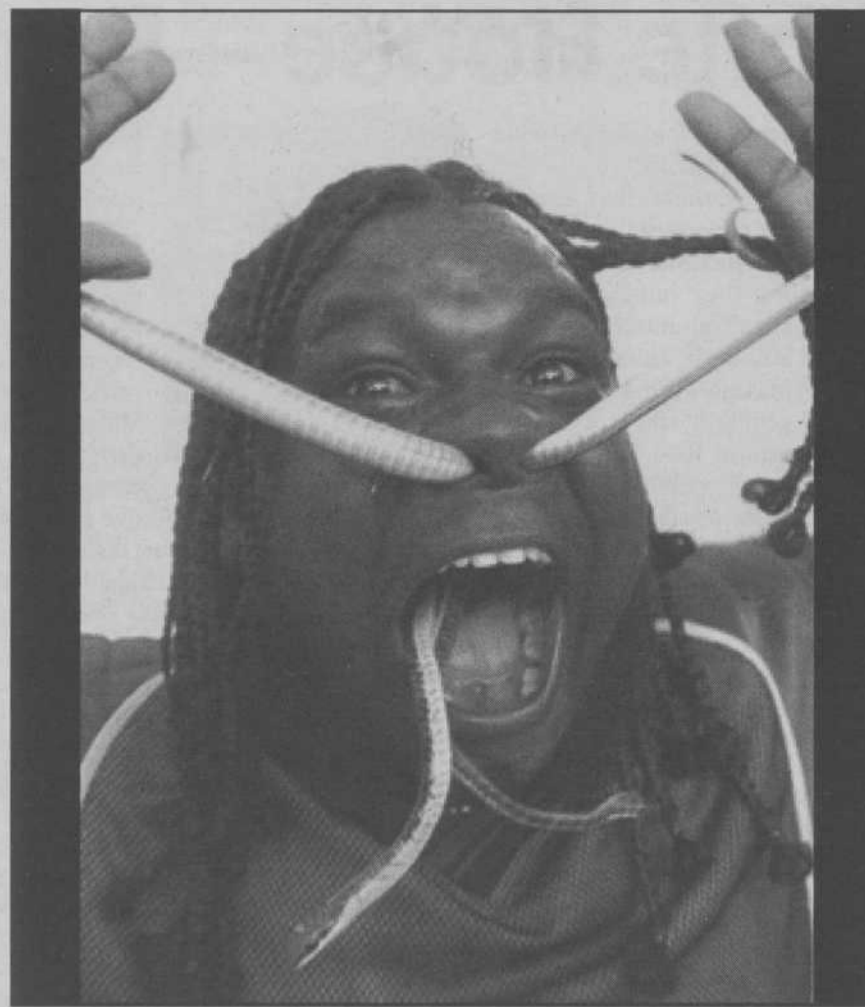
tri-state area to show up in Baton Rouge for the opening session to express, first, our unity and, then, our demand for respect and justice," informed Walter Umrani Muhammad, the New Orleans spokesperson for the Millions More Movement.

Organizers have issued a call to action for supporters of the People's Hurricane Relief Fund's and provide contact information for the governor and the LRA's executive director:

Gov. Kathleen Blanco, P.O. Box 94004, Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004, Telephone: (866) 366-1121, Fax: (225) 342-7099

Louisiana Recovery Authority, Andy Kopplin, Executive Director, 150 Third Street Suite 200, Baton Rouge, LA 70801, Telephone: (225) 342-1700, Fax: (225) 342-0002

Jesse Muhammad writes for the Final Call.



SLITHERICIOUS

Manoharan, known as Snake Manu, 30, practises with two brown tree snakes by running it through his nasals and mouth in Chennai, India. Manoharan is awaiting a sponsor for a chance to make a performance for the Guinness Book jury.

Your Horoscope Says... Dec. 21-Dec. 27

ARIES

A positive, alert attitude will draw opportunities to you this week. You'll see more of the big picture if you take a mental step backward. You'll hear exactly what you need to hear if you take the time to listen.

Soul Affirmation: Jewelry reflects the beauty of my feelings about myself.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 21, 39

TAURUS

Don't waste time thinking about the past. Sure, they were wrong, but what does it matter now? Enjoy the present. Find something good to do for the rest of the week. Avoid conflict. Nothing is so important that it needs to be resolved this week.

Soul Affirmation: I find comfort in the familiar.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 16, 37

GEMINI

You face a big challenge that allows you to take big steps toward your career goals. It'll be on your mind for the next few weeks. Spend some time planning. Life is not always for fun and games. Games are not your biggest satisfaction anyway.

Soul Affirmation: The key to my happiness lies in my sympathy for others.

Lucky Numbers: 42, 46, 54

CANCER

Reconsider a business offer. It might be a good one. You've got time, so sit down and weigh the pros and cons. Doing it alone is not best. Make a phone call. Talk to someone who knows you well. Get an objective opinion.

Soul Affirmation: I graciously anticipate joy, and this gives me the ability to give.

Lucky Numbers: 13, 31, 40

LEO

Your intuition is very high this week. You see where things are going even before they start. This will keep you from making false moves. Be careful not to let your suspicions keep you from making the moves that are definitely called for.

Soul Affirmation: My mood is created by the company I keep.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 44, 51

VIRGO

Beware of financial pitfalls. Your thinking on money matters is not as clear as it could be this week. Someone will try to catch you off guard. This week your luck turns for the better, so spend it with the one you love or want to love!

Soul Affirmation: A slowing of pace is just what I need this week.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 41, 49

LIBRA

Your mate has a sweet surprise. He or she might be a little timid about revealing it unless you present a very receptive mood. Choose your words carefully. You will receive good news about a loan or financial investment.

Soul Affirmation: I look to distant horizons to find truth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 2, 16

SCORPIO

You and your mate should start saving for a joint project. It will make you feel closer to each other. It'll give you something with which to bind the relationship. Otherwise, you might feel that you are drifting apart.

Soul Affirmation: Self confidence is the key to my success this week.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 37, 45

SAGITTARIUS

Challenges will be ever present for

you this week. Work at it calmly knowing that you are getting some things out of the way. Tackle tasks using your famous self-control rather than your passion. Use your passion on the weekends. Let loose! Be free!

Soul Affirmation: The sunlight of my spirit shines in the land beyond the horizon.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 34, 51

CAPRICORN

Harmonious communications are part of your charm, and you'll get far this week by speaking your word in an easygoing way. You'll find that your domestic arrangements are very comfortable to you.

Soul Affirmation: I let my words reveal the not-so-hidden truth about my being.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 4, 12

AQUARIUS

This week is a good week to get in touch with your emotional self. You will respond well to what people close to you will ask from you. Your loved ones will appreciate your kindness when they find out how highly sensitive you are to their needs.

Soul Affirmation: My life itself is my greatest creation.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 19, 54

PISCES

You know what you want, and you have the ability to make it happen. Step into action at work this week and you will get a lot done. You can get what you want without being too demanding. Enjoy the time you have with your family. True rewards come from those who are related to you by blood.

Soul Affirmation: Truth is revealed in the smallest grain of sand.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 4, 6