

Family of slain NY man begins a 50-day vigil

NEW YORK - The family of Sean Bell, the groom fatally shot by police on his wedding day late last year, began a 24-hour, 50-day vigil Monday in front of a police precinct to call attention to the lack of indictments in the case, their attorney said.

Bell's mother, Valerie, began the vigil at 4:56 a.m. — approximately the same time that her son was killed in a barrage of police gunfire outside a strip club — at the 103rd New York Police Department precinct at 168-02 P.O. Edward Pyrne Ave. in Queens.

Bell's family members will take turns covering the vigil site, where a 12-foot banner was unfurled, depicting the slain groom and the

message "NEVER AGAIN." His portrait was surrounded by 50 illustrated "bullet holes."

A statement from the Bell family to call attention to the lack of any indictment in the case by Queens District Attorney Richard Brown and the need for a special prosecutor to be appointed by Gov. Eliot Spitzer.

The vigil also is meant to highlight the "devaluation of the lives of young Black men" in the city, the statement from the family's attorney stated.

When 23-year-old Sean Bell was killed by police on Nov. 25, 2006, after celebrating his last night of bachelorhood at Kalua Cabaret, it set off an uproar against the

NYPD for its use of deadly force, undercover tactics and treatment of minorities.

Two friends were also wounded in the rain of 50 bullets from a group of plainclothes detectives who police later said were staking out the strip club because of alleged criminal activity at the seedy venue. Bell and his friends were unarmed.

The group of detectives involved in the shooting were of mixed ethnicity — Black, White and Latino. Bell was Black, as are his two friends, now recovering from their injuries.

While the city has denied any element of race involved in the incident, family and civil rights activists have claimed otherwise.

Cheap laptop could transform learning

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) - Forget windows, folders and boxes that pop up with text. When students in Thailand, Libya and other developing countries get their \$150 computers from the One Laptop Per Child project in 2007, their experience will be unlike anything on standard PCs.

For most of these children the XO machine, as it's called, likely will be the first computer they've ever used. Because the students have no expectations for what PCs should be like, the laptop's creators started from scratch in designing a user interface they figured would be intuitive for children.

The result is as unusual as — but possibly even riskier than — other much-debated aspects of the machine, such as its economics and distinctive hand-pulled mechanism for charging its battery. (XO

Mayor

(Continued from Page 3) Washington in Westlake.

Washington was elected to lead the 4,500-population town of Westlake, which is 80 percent White. The three-term city councilman was supposed to have taken office Tuesday as the town's first new mayor in 24 years.

The city council has 10 days to appoint an interim mayor. If it fails to meet that deadline, the governor could appoint someone to lead the town, according to Mayor

has been known as the \$100 laptop because of the ultra-low cost its creators eventually hope to achieve through mass production.)

For example, students who turn on the small green-and-white computers will be greeted by a basic home screen with a stick-figure icon at the center, surrounded by a white ring. The entire desktop has a black frame with more icons.

This runic setup signifies the student at the middle. The ring contains programs the student is running, which can be launched by clicking the appropriate icon in the black frame.

When the student opts to view the entire "neighborhood" — the XO's preferred term instead of "desktop" — other stick figures in different colors might appear on the screen. Those indicate schoolmates who are nearby,

Dudley Dixon, who is retiring.

Washington, a retired refinery worker, easily won election in September. He had 696 votes — nearly 69 percent of the vote — to 318 for social worker Paula Johnson.

"Mr. Washington is going to be missed by all the people of Westlake," Dixon said. "It's one of the most tragic things I've heard in a long time. He would be a good mayor."

as detected by the computers' built-in wireless networking capability.

Moving the PC's cursor over the classmates' icons will pull up their names or photos. With further clicks the students can chat with each other or collaborate on things — an art project, say, or a music program on the computer, which has built-in speakers.

The design partly reflects a clever attempt to get the most from the machine's limited horsepower. To keep costs and power demands low, XO uses a slim version of the Linux operating system. (See Laptop, Page 10)

Mich. rule targeted

By Diane Bukowski
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) - Civil rights advocates are optimistic that the voter-approved affirmative action ban will eventually be completely rescinded. To delay the implementation of Proposition 2 at three major state universities is considered a win.

"I think this is a tremendous victory," said George Washington, attorney for the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action By Any Means Necessary. "Now we [BAMN] must mobilize to win a stay for the rest of the year and every year afterwards. We have an excellent chance of winning our lawsuit against this racist law."

The agreement with Attorney General Mike Cox was reached Dec. 18 in federal court proceedings relating to a lawsuit BAMN filed to prevent Proposition 2's implementation on constitutional grounds. U.S. District Court Judge David Lawson is hearing the case.

Attorney General Mike Cox, an ardent Proposition 2 supporter, agreed to delay its implementation at the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Wayne State University until July 1, 2007, with regard to admissions and financial aid for students entering school next fall.

He claimed the agreement as a victory for his side, saying that the three universities had agreed to withdraw their claims that Prop 2 infringed on their right to academic freedom under the First Amendment in exchange for the delay.

However, said Washington, BAMN will continue to pursue its claims on behalf of Blacks, minorities and women whom he said were victimized by systematic voter fraud.

BAMN originally sued Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm and the three universities to block implementation of Prop 2. The universities then filed a counterclaim as plaintiffs on BAMN's side, and Cox intervened as a defendant in the case.

According to Washington, the lawsuit focuses on three violations of the U.S. Constitution.

"Proposition 2 created discrimination at the heart of the political process," he said.

"A veteran, a resident, an alumni, a son of a congressman or a university administrator can still get preferential treatment at the universities, but the only people who cannot are Blacks, Latinos and other minorities, and women."

The suit also claims that testing and grading systems used to choose successful college candidates are inherently discriminatory, and that the educational systems that most Blacks and minorities attend prior to college are unequal.

Thirdly, it maintains the claim that to deny the universities the right to select their student bodies in order to achieve diversity is to violate the First Amendment.

BAMN, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, several union locals and individual citizens are also awaiting a hearing at the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals on a lawsuit that was filed to challenge the placement of Prop 2 on the ballot. The suit said that petition circulators lied, largely to Black and Latino signers, claiming that Prop 2 supported affirmative action.

Washington said he expects a hearing at the Sixth Circuit sometime in the spring on that suit.

Meanwhile, the *Lansing State Journal* reported that the City of Lansing had asked for a similar stay until July 1 on implementation of Proposition 2 in its contracting and employment programs, because it could not have complete required changes by the Dec. 23 deadline.

Others have not been so optimistic that Proposition 2 can be overturned.

The NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union reportedly plan to file a federal suit asking for a declaratory ruling on the meaning and scope of Proposition 2.

Earlier this month, Wayne State University's Board of Governors passed new admissions regulations eliminating preferences for minorities and women and replacing them with race and gender neutral preferences, such as residence in the city of Detroit.

Diane Bukowski writes for the *Michigan Citizen*.

Oprah: Charity only, unfulfilling

NEW YORK (AP) - Frustrated with just donating money to charities, Oprah Winfrey says she built a school for poor girls in South Africa because she wanted to feel closer to the people she was trying to help.

"I really became frustrated with the fact that all I did was write check after check," she told *Newsweek* magazine. "At a certain point, you want to feel that connection."

Winfrey spent five years and \$40 million to build the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls outside Johannesburg.

The school for 12- and 13-year-old girls has 28 build-



Media mogul Oprah Winfrey is joined by some of the 152 students of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls during the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the opening of the school in Meyerton, outside Johannesburg, on Tuesday.

ings on 22 lush acres.

The school includes huge fireplaces in every building, a yoga studio, indoor and outdoor theaters and a beauty salon.

People criticized her, saying the school is too lavish for such an impoverished country.

"These girls deserve to be surrounded by beauty, and beauty does inspire," she told the magazine.

"I wanted this to be a place of honor for them because these girls have never been treated with kindness. They've never been told they are pretty or have wonderful dimples. I wanted to hear those things as a child."