

New push for school called 'real estate racism'

By Regan Toomer
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) - Kevin Johnson, pastor of Philadelphia's Bright Hope Baptist Church, is prepared to give his neighbor Temple University a fight to secure the John Wanamaker School property. "We might fight Goliath," Johnson said. "Just like David had to fight Goliath, we will have to fight Goliath and we will win."

A few days ago Bright Hope came out as the top bidder for the Wanamaker school, which, according to law, locks the church in as the

school's new owner, but there is talk that the fix is in and powers that be are trying to allow Temple back illegally in the wrestling match over the property.

Temple University officials are rumored to have overbid the \$10.75 million bid that Bright Hope made to the Philadelphia School Reform Commission and won.

Temple is said to be ready to trump that offer by putting in a \$15 million bid, after the bidding was closed, to secure the Wanamaker school, which has been closed since 2005 after a University report claimed the school had an

asbestos problem.

Johnson said the bigger picture is how Blacks are not even brought to the table in most real estate deals in North Philadelphia.

"This is about, in my opinion, Black folks not owning anything in their community," said Johnson about Temple University. "It is about economic and real estate racism. I agree with Mayor-elect Michael Nutter when he said, 'It is time to bring an end to economic apartheid.' When I look at the restrictions, the 24 months, the fact that it cannot be sold in five years, that is what my

ancestors would call the Black Tax."

Robert L. Archie, of Duane Morris LLP, is representing Brighter Hope LP, the community group of the church. Archie said that Temple is rumored to be trying to regain the property.

"It's basically rumored," Archie said. "There is no definitive statement at least from the SRC. It is rumored that they are going to make a good faith effort for the property."

Archie said that there is some ambiguity on whether the SRC will allow the bidding process to occur again.

"There is nothing official and unofficial to even entertain a negotiation of sale," Archie said.

SRC representative Heidi Gold said district officials have heard nothing about Temple trying to submit another bid after Bright Hope won the property. She said the church has 30 days to close the sale with the School Reform Commission and

then the deal is finalized in Common Pleas Court.

"As far as we know, it's done," Gold said.

Also rumored to be involved with getting Temple a higher bid for the property is Gov. Ed Rendell, a claim that the governor's office denies.

"We have gotten no involvement in this entire episode," Gold said. (See School, Page 5)

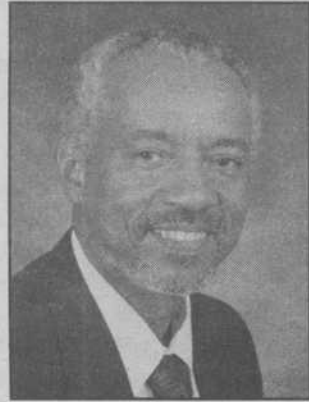
Head Start programs expand in U.S.

Special to Sentinel-Voice

(NNPA) - President Bush has signed into law a reauthorization of Head Start, the education program that gives low-income children a boost before beginning kindergarten.

The bill, sponsored by Michigan Democrat Dale Kildee and 26 other members of congress, passed both the House and Senate by wide margins, and expands the program to cover more children, provide higher salaries to teachers, and does away with a standardized testing system that Head Start officials said was cumbersome and ineffective.

"We are pleased to see that the president's thinking has evolved so far from the start of this process, when he outlined a number of steps



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— Ron Herndon
President National Head Start Association

that would have dismantled Head Start," said Ron Herndon, president of the National Head Start Association and director of Albina Head Start.

"We have certainly come a long way from those days," Herndon continued.

"We also commend members of Congress for show-

ing such significant bipartisan support for Head Start reauthorization. We see the passage of this bill as the necessary starting point for a greater focus on the domestic agenda for Congress and the next president. We hope that Congress and the president continue their support for Head Start by increasing

funding so programs have the essentials to continue to meet federal standards and add back some of the services that have been lost as flat-funding and cuts have stripped programs over the past several years."

Studies have found that Head Start expands vocabularies, develops writing skills, while improving social skills and behavior.

The reauthorization will reach out to families who were previously not eligible because of income that did not qualify them.

A family of four with an income of just \$26,800 or 130 percent of the poverty level will now be eligible for the program.

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(Continued from Page 1)

like Pelican Bay State Prison that he wanted his street soldiers to begin "cleansing" Florence-Firestone of Black gangsters, notably the East Coast Crips, and snitches.

His followers eagerly obeyed, according to federal prosecutors.

In one case, F13 members came across a Black man at a bus stop, shouted "Cheese toast!" and fired. "Cheese toast" is a derogatory name for East Coast Crips, Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin S. Rosenberg said. The victim, apparently targeted only because of his skin color, survived being shot several times, Rosenberg said.

F13 isn't the only Latino gang linked to racial killings. Last year, four members of The Avenues, a gang from the Highland Park area east of downtown Los Angeles,

were convicted of hate crimes for killing a Black man in what prosecutors called a campaign to drive Blacks from that neighborhood. And last January, authorities announced a crack-down on the 204th Street gang following the killing of a 14-year-old Black girl.

The violence goes both ways, said Adam Torres, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department gang detective whose beat includes Florence-Firestone.

During a recent patrol on the east side of the neighborhood, he pointed to a cinderblock wall peppered with bullet holes. Torres said the Crips still control that area and any Hispanic there is at risk of being shot.

Despite the wave of violence, George Tita, a criminologist with the University of California, Irvine, said ra-

cially motivated gang killings are an exception. Latinos and Blacks are far more likely to be murdered by one of their own.

"You don't see these major Black-brown wars, either within the context of gangs or outside the context of gangs," Tita said.

Residents of Florence-Firestone are loath to discuss gangs, fearful they might end up as targets, but there are signs of change. Murders in the neighborhood dropped from 43 in 2005 to 19 in 2006, Baca said. For 2007, there were 19 murders as of Dec. 24.

Jose Garcia sees the difference. The security doors on the store where he works aren't covered with graffiti as often, and he hasn't heard a gunshot in two months.

"It used to be at least once or twice a week," he said.

Court to release death-case tape

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court recently said it will quickly release audio tapes after the Jan. 7 argument over the death penalty.

The death row cases of Kentucky inmates Ralph Baze and Thomas Clyde Bowling Jr. present the question of whether the mix of drugs and the way they are administered in executions in three dozen states violate the Constitution.

The last time the court considered a challenge to a method of execution was in 1879, when it upheld the use of a firing squad in Utah.

The immediate, same-day release of audio tapes following arguments in major cases started in the 2000 presidential election, when the justices decided appeals of the Florida recount controversy in favor of George W. Bush.

On Dec. 3, the court provided same-day audio from arguments over the rights of prisoners who have been detained by the U.S. military at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The court records arguments and ordinarily releases them at the end of each term. With television cameras barred from the court and reporters prohibited from using tape recorders, the availability of audio provides the public a chance to hear the justices at work.

The case is Ralph Baze and Thomas C. Bowling, Petitioners v. John D. Rees, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Corrections, et al., 07-5439.

Summit

(Continued from Page 1)

Nevada State Democratic Party; motivational speaker and life coach Elle Swan, author of "House of God: Why Changing Your Body is An Inside Job," among other business, civic and politically active women.

Invited guest Michelle Obama is expected to share with participants based on her professional experience, organizational insights and unique perspective on the political process — as the wife of a candidate vying for president of the U.S. — with the historic, first-ever, early Democratic Nevada Caucus soon-to-follow on Jan 19, organizers announced recently.

"Absolutely," Cunningham said, there will be discussions to help women understand how to participate in caucusing, as well as the general voting process. In addition, participants will learn the insides of how the caucus process allows individuals to bring issues important to them to the forefront.

Cunningham said that women often "don't know that they can bring issues to the floor."

The summit encourages problem solving from within the Black community,

along with support from agencies, small businesses, corporate and private sector alliances. Cunningham credits one such partnership for providing the summit its platform for discussing solutions to advance education, as well as solving other problems faced by Blacks.

"Nevada State College is the sponsor of the [summit]. They offered to do this as a part of their outreach to the African-American community, and the college works very hard in terms of recruiting students of color," she said. Cunningham sits on the college's diversity council.

The summit serves as a launching point for a yearlong leadership initiative for girls and for follow-up projects managed via a website where participants will stay connected online in order to network, share information, access resources and build mentoring relationships.

Community organizations supporting the summit initiatives include The Martin Luther King Committee, Victory Baptist Church, GNJ, KCEP FM 88.1, NAACP and Desert Diamonds magazine.

For sponsorship, exhibit tables, registration and information, contact 416-9293 or 360-4797.