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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Byrd's death haunts town

JASPER, Texas (AP) — Ten years after James Byrd Jr. was dragged to death down a three-mile stretch of country road simply because he was Black, some things have changed in Jasper.

Black and White teenagers can be seen playing basketball together at James Byrd Jr. Memorial Park. Blacks now make up a majority on the City Council. And an iron fence no longer separates the graves of Whites and Blacks in the 171-year-old cemetery where Byrd is buried.

But Byrd's murder, which jolted the nation with its utter brutality and unvarnished racism, still casts a shadow over this timber town in deep East Texas. And many folks here think it always will.

"It is something we have to live with the rest of our lives," said Walter Diggles, a Black civic leader and executive director of the Deep East Texas Council of Governments. "It is similar to Dallas, when people think of the JFK assassination, or Memphis, when people think of Martin Luther King's murder."

Ever since three White men beat the 49-year-old Byrd, chained him by the ankles to the bumper of a Ford pickup truck, then pulled him down Huff Creek Road in the early hours of June 7, 1998, Jasper has been almost synonymous with the horrors of racism.

Byrd's remains were found scattered in 75 places along the twisting path that cuts through a pine forest. His head and right arm were discovered about a mile from his mangled torso.

(See Byrd, Page 4)

Mayweather quits again

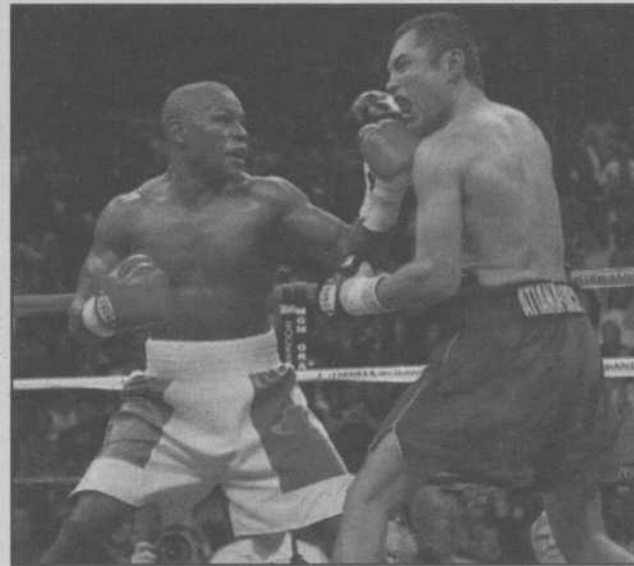
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Although Floyd Mayweather Jr. has retired at least twice before, boxing's pound-for-pound king says he's really taking off his crown this time.

Mayweather abruptly retired Friday at the peak of his athletic skill and earning power, releasing a six-paragraph letter in which the unbeaten five-division champion said he no longer feels the passion that propelled him to the top of the family business.

Mayweather, a 31-year-old former Olympic bronze medalist, is calling it quits at the close of a remarkable 18-month stretch in which he beat Oscar De La Hoya and Ricky Hatton, made more than \$50 million in the ring and became a bankable celebrity outside it.

"This decision was not an easy one for me to make, as boxing is all I have done since I was a child," said Mayweather, the son and nephew of three former fighters who all became top train-



Welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather Jr. has decided to call it quits once again, citing contentment with his career.

ers. "However, these past few years have been extremely difficult for me to find the desire and joy to continue in the sport."

The WBC welterweight champ (39-0, 25 KOs) hasn't fought since knocking out Hatton last December, but was widely expected to take on De La Hoya in September in a rematch of their May 2007 bout, the richest fight in boxing history. Instead,

Mayweather's retirement clears De La Hoya's schedule and opens a vacancy at the top of boxing just when it's undergoing a revival built partly on Mayweather's brilliance and showmanship.

Mayweather also made less-convincing retirement announcements after each of his last three bouts, but his letter somberly described his reasons to "permanently retire from boxing."

"I loved competing and winning and also wanted to continue my career for the fans, knowing they were there for me and enjoyed watching me fight," Mayweather said. "However, after many sleepless nights and intense soul-searching, I realized I could no longer base my decision on anything but my own personal happiness, which I no longer could find."

Though Mayweather cashed two huge paychecks in 2007, he has lately seemed much more interested in fame than fighting. In the last few years, he evolved from the endearingly cocky "Pretty Boy" to the wealth-obsessed "Money May" who was estranged from his father, De La Hoya trainer Floyd Sr., and uninterested in all but the most lucrative bouts.

In the past year alone, Mayweather has appeared on "Dancing With the Stars," worked on his record label, served as the honorary starter (See Mayweather, Page 11)

Black voters strain to hear candidates talk

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

— The day after presumptive Democratic nominee Barack Obama announced his historic victory, the monthly jobs report showed the African-American jobless rate as being once again higher than all other racial groups.

At 9.7 percent, Black unemployment is almost five points above the Black rate of 4.4 percent; three points above the Hispanic-American rate of 6.9 percent, and more than four points above the national average of 5.5 percent.

From joblessness to the overall economy to dilapidated and failing schools to the criminal justice system to healthcare, now that the pri-

maries are over and Sen. Hillary Clinton has thrown her support behind Obama, African-Americans across the nation are looking to hear from Obama and Republican presidential nominee John McCain exactly how they will change the disparate social impacts on the Black community.

Some say they're not speaking loud enough about those issues that impact African-Americans.

"They've got to talk about job creation," said Bill Spriggs, chairman of the Economics Department at Howard University. "The big problem is that [industries are] not hiring... And the first set of folks that they're not hiring, of course, is us."

And once policy is set

concerning job creation, then policy must also deal with discrimination that holds African-Americans back, Spriggs said. "America is like a train and we're the caboose. If you're in the caboose, it means you're going forward, but you're still the last car."

Spriggs said it will be difficult for either candidate to speak about the discriminatory aspects of the jobless rate during the campaign except from a policy standpoint. "That's why it's important who is around the candidate," he says, stressing the need for policy-oriented staffers on any campaign.

Obama this week launched a tour to travel the country talking to people (See Candidates, Page 3)



STYLIST UNDER THE STARS Sentinel-Voice photo by Dianna Saffold
Make-up artist Deborah Crockett puts the finishing touches on Tiffany's Paradise of Hair & Nails model Tammie Cherry for Sunday's hair show at Cashman Field Theatre. The annual hair show highlights some of the latest hair designers and stylist in Las Vegas. Ebony Hodges took home first place prize for his fantasy hair style.