

# Rastafarian can sue over hair

BOSTON (AP) — A Rastafarian man who refused to shave off his beard or cut his hair to comply with a Jiffy Lube employee grooming policy can take his religious discrimination case to trial, Massachusetts' highest court ruled Tuesday.

The Supreme Judicial Court reversed a decision by a Superior Court judge who had dismissed Bobby T. Brown's lawsuit against a Jiffy Lube franchisee before a trial.

Brown worked as a technician at a Hadley Jiffy Lube business owned by F.L. Roberts & Co. Inc.

In 2002, after a new grooming policy was put in place requiring employees who worked with customers to be clean-shaven, Brown told management that his religion does not permit him to shave or cut his hair. Managers then said Brown could work only in lower bays where he did not have contact with customers.

Brown filed a discrimina-



**Bob Marley popularized a hair style preferred by Rastas.** tion lawsuit in state court in 2006. A Superior Court judge agreed with the company that it had the right to control its public image and found that it would be an undue hardship on the company to grant Brown an exemption from the grooming policy.

But the Supreme Judicial Court disagreed, saying the company had not proven that no other accommodation was possible for Brown without imposing an undue hardship on the company. "Here... because the defendant did not discuss alternatives with the plaintiff, the defendant cannot show conclusively, on this record, that a total exemption from the grooming policy was the only possible accommoda-

tion," Justice Roderick Ireland wrote for the court.

Brown's attorney, Joel Feldman, praised the ruling. He said Brown no longer works for the company, but will take the case to trial because he believes the grooming policy discriminated against him based on his religion and that he is entitled to damages.

But a lawyer for F.L. Roberts said that after the grooming policy was implemented, the company continued to employ Brown and gave him merit raises.

"The policy was not aimed at an individual's religion. What the policy said was if you want to continue to have customer contact, then you must be clean-shaven and have neatly trimmed hair," she said. "Otherwise we are still going to maintain your employment... but you can't have customer contact."

The Rastafarian faith urges followers to let their hair grow unbridled. Many grow their hair into long, matted strands called dreadlocks to express a oneness with nature.

# Rights coin gets okay from Bush

WASHINGTON (AP) — President George W. Bush has signed legislation to mint a commemorative silver dollar marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act.

Sponsors of the measure include President-elect Barack Obama, and Rep. John Lewis, a veteran of the civil rights movement from Atlanta.

The Civil Rights Act, signed by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2, 1964, barred restaurants, hotels and other public places from denying service to Blacks and outlawed employment discrimination against women and minorities.

Congress, which approves up to two commemorative coins per year, signed off on the coin last month. Bush signed the bill Tuesday.

The U.S. Mint is slated to produce 350,000 of the \$1 coins in 2014, which will be 50 years after the Civil Rights Act was signed. Proceeds would cover the cost of production and generate an expected \$2 million to \$3 million to be donated to the United Negro College Fund.

"It is only fitting that we pass this legislation weeks after the election of our nation's first African-American president," said Rep. Deborah Pryce of Ohio, who joined Lewis and Obama in spearheading the effort along with Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan. "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 remains one of the most effective, influential pieces of legislation passed by the U.S. Congress in the last century, and is the bedrock for the America we know today."

Past commemorative coins have celebrated Civil War battlefields, various Olympic games, the 1994 World Cup soccer tournament and the Statue of Liberty. Last year, the U.S. Mint began selling a coin marking the 50th anniversary of the 1957 desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Ark.

# Black pastors employing Jesus name in U.S. bailout

By Bankole Thompson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) — The Council of Baptist Pastors of Detroit and Vicinity is the latest group to add its voice to calls for Congress to grant the \$25 billion loan to General Motors, Chrysler and Ford.

The group, along with the United Auto Workers and the Association of Minority Suppliers and dealers held a press conference Dec. 2 at Corinthian Baptist Church in Hamtramck to convey a united message to the com-

munity about the financial crisis facing the Big Three.

The group is also calling for minority suppliers to be paid on time.

"We support the loan request of the auto industry presently before Congress. The auto industry is the core of the manufacturing sector of the American economy," said Rev. Oscar King III, president of the religious group. "One out of every 10 jobs in the U.S. economy has some connection to the auto industry. Hundreds of thousands of households depend

on the automotive industry to care for their families."

King said many churches, charities and non-profit groups that provide desperately needed support for the poor and disadvantaged are able to do so because of "working families who make their living in the auto industry directly or through the cadre of minority suppliers."

According to King, a Harvard trained economist, the assistance provided to the banking and insurance industry was necessary to sustain (See Pastors, Page 10)

# Jackson

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Jackson said Wednesday: "I did not initiate nor authorize anyone, at any time, to promise anything to Gov. Blagojevich on my behalf. I never sent a message or an emissary to the governor to make an offer or to propose a deal about the U.S. Senate seat."

He said he would fully cooperate with the investigation. Jackson's Chicago-based lawyer, James D. Montgomery Sr., said, "Politicians and fundraisers do some very strange things from time to time. I wouldn't put it past someone to be purporting to represent Jesse without authority."

Jackson said he met with Blagojevich on Monday in Chicago for 90 minutes to discuss the Senate vacancy. It was their first meeting in about four years, he said.

"I presented my record, my qualifications and my vision," Jackson said. "Despite what

he may have been looking for, that's all I had to offer."

The federal complaint cites an intercepted Blagojevich conversation on Dec. 4. In it, the complaint alleges, the governor told an unidentified adviser "that he was giving Senate Candidate 5 greater consideration for the Senate seat because, among other reasons, if Rod Blagojevich ran for re-election, Senate Candidate 5 would 'raise money' for him."

It alleges that Blagojevich said he might get some money "up front, maybe" from the Senate hopeful "to ensure Senate Candidate 5 kept his promise about raising money" for the governor.

On Wednesday, Jackson called on Blagojevich to resign and said he was appalled "by the pay-to-play schemes hatched at the highest levels of Illinois state government."

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