

# Steele resigns, Clay gets interim SCLC presidency

**By Jennifer Bihm**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
 LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) officials announced the resignation of their president Charles Steele Jr. last week and immediately afterwards a groundswell of rumors focused on Rev. Eric Lee of the Greater Los Angeles Chapter as his replacement.

Citing his desire to make "a career change decision," Steele, 62, said, "the time is right to bring on new leadership."

However, he announced, he would still be a consultant to the civil rights organization co-founded by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Steele held the position since 2004, a time when SCLC was headed for bankruptcy, it was reported. He was able to turn things around financially and he also oversaw the building of conflict resolution centers overseas and a new site for the national headquarters.

SCLC Vice President

Byron Clay will serve as president until a replacement for Steele is found, officials said.

Rev. Eric P. Lee is President/CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Los Angeles and Chairman/President of the California Christian Leadership Conference, the parent organization for seven of the California SCLC Chapters.

Lee has been instrumental in increasing membership and managing the largest financial budget of any chapter outside of the national headquarters.

"There is no other person that I can think of to lead the national SCLC into the new millennium than Eric Lee," stated Los Angeles City Councilman Bernard Parks.

A Diversity Task Force member, Lee has been working to reintegrate African-Americans into the hotel and restaurant industries in California. He's a founding member of the Alliance for Equal Opportunity in Education, a

collaboration of organizations in Los Angeles leading the fight against UCLA's admission policies for Black students. In addition, he is a co-founder of the Knowledge Transfer Summit, an African-American Leadership Forum.

Lee has a B.S. in Political Economics of Industrial Societies from UC Berkeley and a Masters in Pastoral Studies from Azusa Pacific University. He is an affiliate member of the Black Business Association, Recycling Black Dollars, 100 Black Men of Los Angeles, and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

"At this time my primary focus is on the chapter that I have been selected to lead, but my commitment for the SCLC would not prevent me from doing whatever I'm asked of on any level," Lee said.

Treasurer of the Los Angeles SCLC Board Danny J. Bakewell Jr. suggested that, "Eric Lee is certainly qualified because the Los Angeles" (See SCLC, Page 11)

## Chris Brown

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Brown was arrested Sunday night after surrendering to police, who sought the 19-year-old singer when a woman identified him as the attacker during a fight the night before. Numerous media outlets, citing sources and police officials who were not named, have identified the woman as 20-year-old Rihanna, Brown's longtime girlfriend.

Though an initial police news release indicated that they were investigating a battery on a woman who was injured, Brown was booked only on suspicion of making a criminal threat, a felony. Police have said that prosecutors would determine what charges, if any, were warranted.

The district attorney's kicking the case back to police could signal that prosecutors are seeking to build stronger charges against Brown; or it could mean the current evidence is too flimsy or has holes that would drop it to a misdemeanor or make it go away altogether, Loyola University law professor Stan Goldman said.

"Sending it back certainly isn't the death penalty," Goldman said.

"If you're Chris Brown," he added, "it's both bad and good."

A police spokeswoman said the department had no comment about the district attorney's decision.

The department has said it was alerted to the incident in the upscale Hancock Park neighborhood by a 911 call, but have provided few official details beyond the initial

report. Brown's attorney and spokesman have not returned multiple calls and e-mails seeking comment since Sunday.

Brown remains free on \$50,000 bail.

The allegations have at least momentarily tarnished Brown's squeaky-clean image. At least one major sponsor, Wrigley, has suspended ad campaigns featuring the singer, who has scored with hits such as 2005's "Run It!" and a Grammy-nominated duet with Jordin Sparks, "No Air."

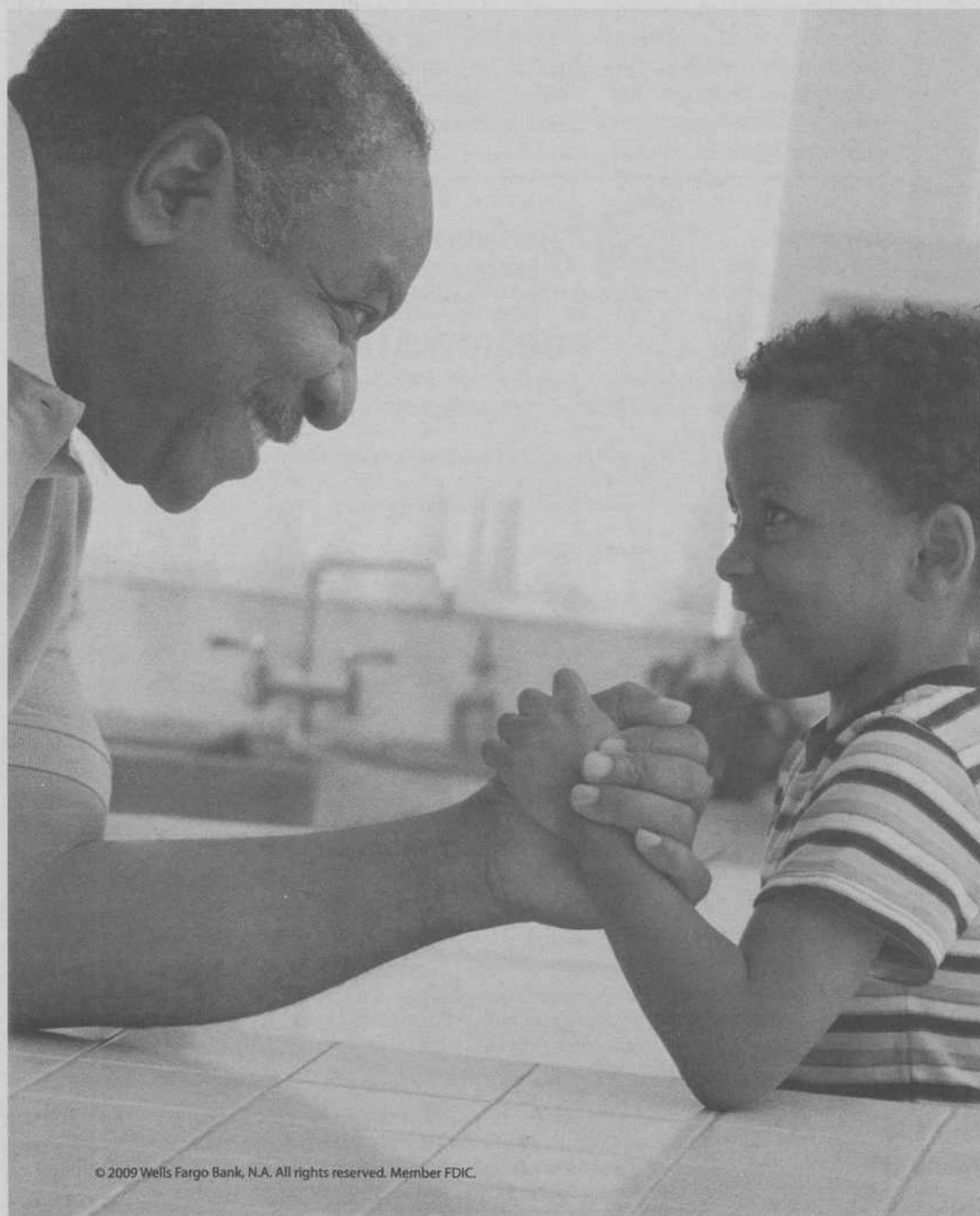
WAKS-FM, a Cleveland-area radio station has stopped playing Brown's music until the allegations are resolved after outraged listeners called to criticize the singer. Stations in Pittsburgh and Indianapolis also reportedly pulled Brown's music.

Brown has withdrawn from public appearances in Phoenix scheduled for this weekend before the NBA All-Star game. Rihanna on Tuesday postponed a planned concert in Malaysia.

Brown and Rihanna, whose real name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, skipped planned performances at Sunday's Grammy Awards, leaving fellow recording artists to try to make sense of the allegations.

Kanye West, who toured with Rihanna, said on Ryan Seacrest's morning radio show Tuesday morning that the reports of abuse were "devastating."

"I feel like, just as a person, I don't care how famous she is or even if she just worked at McDonald's, that should never happen," West said on the show, which is broadcast on KIIS-FM in Los Angeles. "It should never come to that place."



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