

Chris Rock and wife have first child, baby girl named Lola Simone



Rock

NEW YORK - Chris Rock has something to smile about - the actor-comedian is the proud father of a baby girl.

Rock's wife, Malaak Compton-Rock, gave birth in New York on June 27, Rock's publicist said. The couple named the girl Lola Simone - not Holiday, the name that Rock had touted before the baby's birth.

It is the first child for both Rock, 36, and his wife, 32.

Rock's latest movie is the comedy thriller "Bad Company" with Anthony Hopkins. Compton-Rock is the executive director of the charity Style Works.

Monticello honors slaves' cemetery

Two permanent monuments will honor an African-American slave cemetery discovered last year on the grounds of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

"They will produce a fitting tribute to Monticello's enslaved community," said Sara Bon-Harper, the historic site's archaeological research manager and head of the design-selection committee.

The two design concepts - one submitted by architect Lance Hosey of Charlottesville, Va., and the other by the landscape architects Katherine A. Towson of Watertown, Mass., and Roger C. Sherry of Charlottesville - were selected from 120 designs.

The three each received a \$1,000 honorarium. The burial ground was identified at Monticello in the winter of 2000 after an archaeological investigation which found graves of 20 adults and children. The graves were not disturbed.

The monuments are a ring of stone pillars and a path of stones, which were representative of where the slaves would gather in secret. Hosey said stone circles go back to the beginning of man and were used in West Africa, where many of Virginia's slaves were born.

At least 40 graves may be on the small site, which is surrounded by a parking lot for Monticello visitors. The cemetery is about 2,000 feet from the main house. The cemetery was the first slave cemetery to be identified at Monticello. It was dedicated at a commemorative ceremony Oct. 6, 2001. The burial ground is now enclosed by a split-rail fence and marked by an interpretive sign.

Lyons seeking alimony from wife

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. - The Rev. Henry J. Lyons, serving prison time on racketeering and theft charges, is seeking alimony from the wife he is suing for divorce.

The 60-year-old St. Petersburg preacher also said his wife, Deborah Lyons, should take responsibility for part of the \$6-million debt a judge ordered Lyons to pay for his thievery as president of the National Baptist Convention USA.

Lyons, who filed for divorce last year, did not indicate how much alimony he seeks or how much of the debt he thinks his wife should assume in the court papers filed last month.

Lyons' attorney, Richard McKinley, said that the minister decided to seek alimony in reaction to Deborah Lyons' seeking alimony from him.

A Florida circuit judge will ultimately decide the issue at a trial that is not yet scheduled.

Lyons, once the leader of the nation's largest black church organization, is entering the final third of a 5 1/2-year sentence for racketeering and theft. He's due for release in January 2004.



Lyons

First black Air Force general dies

WASHINGTON - Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the leader of the famed all-black Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and the first black general in the Air Force, has died.

Davis, who was 89 and suffered from Alzheimer's disease, died last Thursday at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington.

Davis, a native of Washington, began his military career during the era of segregation and led a unit of airmen that was credited with a major role in bringing about the postwar integration of the armed services.

Davis and the Airmen, officially known as the 332nd Fighter Group, escorted bombers on 200 air combat missions over Europe during World War II and were said to have never lost any of the planes which depended on them for support.

He was base commander at Lockbourne Air Force Base, near Columbus, Ohio, where the Airmen were stationed after the war. His responsibilities included supervising a group of white civil servants in what was viewed as a situation unique for its time.

Davis attended Cleveland's Central High School while his father, Benjamin O. Davis Sr., who rose to brigadier general in the Army, taught in Ohio. He graduated first in his class in 1929 and attended Western Reserve University in Cleveland for two years.

He was a 1936 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy.

Davis left the Air Force as a lieutenant general with three stars and was the senior black officer in the armed forces. President Clinton advanced Davis to full general in 1998, awarding him a fourth star. A Cleveland public school named in his honor, Benjamin O. Davis Aviation High School near Burke Lakefront Airport, was believed to have the nation's only aviation mechanics course until it closed in 1996. Davis, whose wife, Agatha, died this year, leaves a sister.

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Byrd's son fights for life of killer

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON - The son of the East Texas dragging death victim is now fighting for the killer's life by leading a prayer vigil and fast on his behalf.

Ross Byrd's father was tied to the back of a pickup truck with a logging chain, then dragged and dismembered along a bumpy country road in Jasper County more than four years ago.

White supremacist John W. "Bill" King, who became the first of two white men sentenced to death for the racially motivated murder of James Byrd Jr., has almost exhausted his appeals. Byrd's son, who initially favored the sentence, has since changed his mind.

Joined by dozens of supporters and anti-death penalty advocates that included Martin Luther King III, the younger Byrd traveled to the state prison in Huntsville to lead the 24-hour fast and vigil.

"When I heard King had exhausted his appeals, I began thinking, 'How can this help me or solve my pain?' and I realized it couldn't," Byrd told the Houston Chronicle in recent editions.

Allen Richard Ellis, King's appeals attorney, learned about the prayer vigil July 3.

"It's a wonderful gesture," said Ellis. "I think it's a great example for all of us to live in a spirit of forgiveness instead of revenge."

The younger Byrd said his attitudes on the death penalty began to change as the reality of his loss set in. He said he now believes the death penalty is wrong in all cases and is hoping King's sentence will



John W. "Bill" King is escorted from a Texas courthouse in a bullet-proof vest.

be commuted to life in prison without parole.

"To want to see the men who killed my daddy die by the state is the same for me to go out and kill them myself," Byrd told reporters in Houston before leaving for Huntsville.

Throughout King's trial, Byrd had told reporters he wanted his father's killers to receive the death penalty for the gruesome 1998 killing. The black victim was tied around the ankles with a chain affixed to the truck bumper and pulled from a dirt logging road to the asphalt of Huff Creek for his three-mile dismemberment.

The younger Byrd's religious beliefs played a role in his changed attitude.

"It's the big picture we're trying to look at, and the big picture is God says, 'Thou shall not kill,'" said Byrd.

Martin Luther King III,

See Byrd on A9



Ross Byrd comforts one of his sisters soon after the trial of one of the men accused of killing their father concluded.

Florida Rep. Carrie Meek says she'll retire

BY SABRA AYRES THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI - U.S. Rep. Carrie Meek, the granddaughter of a slave who has helped bring national attention to allegations that black voters' rights were trampled in Florida during the 2000 election,



Meek

announced Sunday that she will not seek a sixth term in Congress.

Meek, 76, made the announcement at Mt. Tabor Missionary Baptist Church, the same spot she announced her entry into politics 23 years earlier.

"It has been a good fight. It's time that I come home," Meek said. "There's much more for me to do here."

Meek said she plans to create a foundation that will work with people on educational and housing issues.

Her youngest child, 35-year-old Democratic state Sen. Kendrick Meek, said he would run to succeed her in the heavily Democratic district in northern Miami-Dade County.

Meek ran unopposed in her last two elections, but she has struggled with health problems over the past few years. Her announcement Sunday comes less than two weeks before candidates have to qualify for the race for her seat.

Meek, a former administrator for Miami-Dade Community College, was elected to the state House in 1978 after the death of pioneer black legislator Gwen Cherry in an auto accident.

She became the first black woman ever elected to the Florida Senate in 1982. Ten years later, in 1992, Meek and U.S. Reps. Alcee Hastings and Corrinne Brown became the first black Floridians elected to Congress since Reconstruction.

In the aftermath of the close 2000 election, Meek spoke out about voting rights, saying voters in her district, which is about 60 percent black, had their rights trampled because of inadequate ballot instructions, alleged roadblocks preventing voters from getting to the polls and other violations.

President Bush beat Al Gore by just 537 votes in Florida that year. A U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report about Florida's election results

found that blacks had been nearly 10 times as likely as nonblacks to have their ballots rejected.

Meek said blacks are "suspect of the judicial system." "They feel that there's something rotten in Denmark,"

she said in a December interview. "They don't believe Gore has been treated fairly. They don't feel their votes have been counted."

Meek, who serves on the House Appropriations Committee, also pushed the Justice

Department to begin a preliminary inquiry into alleged police misconduct against minorities in the Miami area this year. And, with Brown and Hastings, she has been challenging the state's newly drawn political boundaries.

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