

News at a Glance

Despite uproar, Cedric the Entertainer will host upcoming Image Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The NAACP chose Cedric the Entertainer to host its upcoming Image Awards show despite his jokes in the film "Barbershop" that angered some black leaders. His character made mocking remarks in the film about civil rights icons the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, sparking complaints upon its release in September from the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.



Cedric

Kweisi Mfume, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said the uproar was "overblown." He noted that other characters in the film shouted down the remarks that Cedric's character made.

Mfume said recently he hoped choosing the comedian as host would help put the controversy to rest.

"Some people, and it's their right, will object and say it's not the right choice, but thank God this is America, where people can do that," he said. "We're not a monolithic community, African-Americans — never have been and never will be."

"Barbershop," about friendships forged at a hair salon in a black neighborhood of Chicago, has five Image Award nominations, including best picture and best supporting actor for Cedric.

Cedric has had four consecutive Image Awards — presented by the NAACP to people of color for their work in literature, television, film and music — for comedic supporting TV actor for "The Steve Harvey Show." He also stars in his own Fox variety show, "Cedric the Entertainer Presents."

Show-business professionals and NAACP officials from across the country choose the Image Award winners. The 34th annual ceremony is set for March 8 at the Universal Amphitheatre, and Fox will broadcast a tape of the program on March 13.

Basketball coach fired for using racial slur toward players on MLK Day

SILVER CITY, N.M. (AP) — Western New Mexico fired men's basketball coach Joe Mondragon on Saturday after investigating a complaint that he used a racial slur toward black players on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

"In the investigation itself, it was determined that there was a statement made with the n-word being used," athletic director Scott Woodard said.

"The university and the department can't have tolerance of those kinds of matters. In the best interest of the institution, that was the decision we needed to move forward with," he said.

Junior guard David Harris said Mondragon used the slur on the team bus after a loss at Adams State in Alamosa, Colo., on Monday night. Harris has quit the team.

Harris said Mondragon ordered the four non-black players, a trainer and an assistant off the bus. Harris said he was one of six black players who stayed and were addressed by Mondragon.

After directing the slur at the players, the coach added: "On Martin Luther King's birthday, this is how you're acting. He wouldn't want you to act like that, but that's how you're acting," Harris said.

Other black players signed a statement saying they won't play if the school didn't fire Mondragon, he said.

Mondragon told The Associated Press that he did not feel he had made improper comments.

"I do not have a prejudiced bone in my body," he said. "I've coached umpteen black kids. ... I have tried to work with every one of these kids."

Mondragon said he did not use the phrase as Harris alleged. Mondragon said he did use the offensive word during his comments to the black players, but used it to explain that "this was not perception and a behavior that we are going to give."

Paige calls for race-neutral admissions

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige on Friday voiced strong opposition to racial quotas in higher education and announced new efforts to publicize race-neutral alternatives.

Paige cited as an example a University of Texas policy that grants automatic admission to any Texas high school student who graduated in the top 10 percent of his or her class.

Paige, former head of Houston's public school district, made his remarks at a regional conference of the National Center for Educational Accountability in Austin.

"Let me be clear: It is not right to fight discrimination with discrimination," he said in support of President Bush's opposition to an affirmative action program at the University of Michigan.

Paige has been the most vocal of top-ranking black officials in his support of the administration's stance in the dispute, which is now before the Supreme Court.

Secretary of State Colin Powell has supported the University of Michigan's program.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice backed Bush's decision to step into the case but said race can be a factor in some circumstances.

Paige said he would direct his department's civil rights office to produce a report providing ideas about ways to diversify the country's colleges and universities. He also called for a national conference on the same subject.

Paige said the No Child Left Behind Act, which the President signed into law one year ago, has the potential to nullify diversity concerns in higher education. It requires states to devise math and reading tests for every child each year in grades three through eight, beginning in fall 2005. Under current law, states are required to test students in reading and math three times during their K-12 years.



Paige

Poll: Racial relations may be improving

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Attitudes about race continue to improve, says a new poll that also shows blacks and whites still have dramatically different views of how far the United States has come in improving racial relations.

While most whites think blacks have an equal chance to get good jobs, affordable housing and fair treatment from merchants, fewer than half of blacks think they get an equal shot at these things, according to an ABC News-Washington Post poll.

Pollster Gary Langer of ABC said the survey suggests social contacts between blacks and whites continue to rise, but perceptions of racial relations remain dramatically different.

"We see higher ratings of race relations among blacks and whites alike," Langer said. "At the same time, there are very strikingly different perceptions of racial discrimination between blacks and whites."

In the poll, 54 percent of whites think racial relations are good, and 44 percent of blacks feel that way. Those numbers are 20 points higher for each group than in a 1997 ABC-Post poll. Ratings are more positive locally, with eight in 10 whites and seven in 10 blacks saying racial rela-



Social contacts between blacks and whites is on the rise, according to a new survey.

tions in their own community are good.

The number of whites who say they have a fairly close friend who's black has grown from 54 percent in 1981 to 75 percent now. And 83 percent of blacks say they have a white friend, up from 69 percent 22 years ago.

A majority of Americans, 54 percent, said they have brought someone of the opposite race home for dinner in recent years, up from 20 percent three decades ago.

The poll also measured personal experience of discrimination among blacks. The poll found:

- 27 percent of blacks said they had been denied housing they could afford.
- 34 percent said they had been denied a job for which were qualified.
- 41 percent said they had been stopped by the police because of their race.
- 61 percent said they have been made to feel unwelcome in a store.

Half of blacks, 52 percent, said they had been discriminated against because of race, while 11 percent of whites felt they had faced discrimination.

The poll was conducted among 1,133 adults, including an oversample of 211 blacks, from Jan. 16-20 and has an error margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Tubbs Jones makes history on committee

BY GILBERT PRICE
THE CALL AND POST

COLUMBUS, Ohio (NNPA) — There have been a number of influential black women who have paved the way for Stephanie Tubbs Jones in Congress.

Shirley Chisholm of New York was the first African-American woman to serve in Congress. Yvonne Braithwaite Burke of California was a key member of Congress for years. Maxine Waters was the first woman to head the Congressional Black Caucus and remains a potent voice for African-Americans in Congress.

But in her fourth term in Congress, Stephanie Tubbs Jones has done something these talented, influential women — and all the other African-American women who served in Congress — had never done before: gain a seat at the table where the tax pie is divvied up.

Tubbs Jones was appointed to the House Ways and Means Committee, where she will immediately be looking at President Bush's proposed \$674 billion tax cut. The Ways and Means Committee is responsible for shaping the nation's tax code. It is considered one of the most powerful committees in the House.

"I am pleased, proud, privileged and humbled that I have an opportunity to serve on Ways and Means," Tubbs Jones said in an interview with The Call and Post.

Tubbs Jones' selection caps a two-year bid to gain access to the committee, which has long been a preserve of men. Now, even though she is one of four African-American members of the committee, Tubbs Jones is the only Democratic female member.

Tubbs Jones' selection to the panel was not without controversy. Originally, she and Max Sandlin of Texas were proposed by the Democratic Steering Committee to serve on the committee. But Republican leaders, who control the House, proposed the reduction of the committee by eliminating one Democrat and one Republican, and Jones was the odd person out.

Some in Washington had said that House Majority

Leader Tom DeLay of Texas — who is viewed as the power behind the throne of House Speaker Dennis Hastert — was pushing for Tubbs Jones' elimination from the committee, allegedly in order to reduce committee sizes.

But a fierce political battle ensued that held up floor discussion on other issues for several hours, until the Republicans relented and kept the committee the same size.



Ohio Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones has a seat on the powerful House Ways and Means Committee.

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