

# News at a Glance

## UM president gratified by support

DETROIT (AP) - The hundreds of "friend of the court" briefs filed with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the University of Michigan's race-based admissions policy are "extremely gratifying," the school's president said last week.

"We believe that it demonstrates how much this principle of Bakke ... has become a part of the fabric of our nation and how much we have to lose if that Bakke principle were abandoned," Mary Sue Coleman said.



Coleman

Affirmative action is getting its biggest legal test in a quarter-century, a challenge to admissions policies at Michigan and its law school that is before the Supreme Court. The case will be argued April 1, with a decision expected by summer.

The case marks the court's first statement on racial preference programs in academic admissions since the 1978 Bakke case, which affirmative action critics and backers alike say has muddied the waters ever since.

In that case, the court voted 5-4 to outlaw racial quotas in university admissions but left room for race to be a factor considered in admissions. Michigan and many other public universities have used the ruling to design programs that can help minorities who might be rejected if only test scores and grades were considered.

The Supreme Court has granted the Bush administration time to present its case at the April 1 hearing. U.S. Solicitor General Theodore Olson will have 10 minutes to argue that the affirmative action policies are equivalent to illegal quotas.

But the court denied lawyers for minority student interveners a chance to speak.

## Chancellor delivers speech on diversity in room with Ku Klux Klan mural

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. (AP) - Indiana University's chancellor delivered a speech on campus diversity in a classroom with a controversial mural depicting a cross-burning by the Ku Klux Klan.

Sharon Brehm's speech last week fulfilled a promise the Bloomington chancellor made after she decided not to remove the mural in Woodburn Hall 100 despite protests by black students.

Brehm planned a speech on the state of diversity at IU at the start of each school year, but she postponed the speech last August after she concluded there wasn't enough new information to warrant one.

Brehm told an audience of about 200 that fewer black and minority students are entering the Bloomington campus than 10 years ago, but the percentage that remain in school and graduate has increased.

That suggests that IU needs to do better at recruiting minority students, but it is doing a good job of keeping those it does recruit. "Recruitment only works if we are successful at retention," she said.

Black students at the session had mixed reactions. Carolyn Randolph, of the IU Coalition of Black Student Organizations and Programs, said verbal support for campus diversity is "almost a cliché," but is not always matched by action.

She urged funding for groups that help retain minorities and more minority representation in student organizations. But, she said, IU needs to address not only the number of minorities but also a campus climate that some find hostile.

IU Black Student Union President Gerald Mitchell said Brehm had kept the promise she made following the dispute last spring over the mural by Thomas Hart Benton depicting the Klan's role in Indiana history.

"It's up to us to take the next step and hit the issues head-on," Mitchell said.

## NFL's blacks form first formal organization

NEW YORK (AP) - NFL minority coaches and executives have formed a group designed to ensure blacks receive equal consideration for all league job openings.

The group was organized at a meeting of 125 people at the NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis last month.

It was scheduled to be formalized Friday at a meeting in Washington to honor Bobby Mitchell, the former assistant general manager of the Redskins and the NFL's first black executive. In 1963, Mitchell became Washington's first black player, fully integrating the NFL's 12 teams.

While there has long been a loose coalition of black nonplayers in the NFL, this is the first time a formal organization has been formed.

The group will be led by Hall of Fame tight end Kellen Winslow and former Cleveland Brown guard John Wooten, and will be named the Fritz Pollard Alliance after the first black coach in the NFL.

The group will consist of one representative elected by non-playing minorities on each of the 32 teams.

The group will be the connection between blacks and the league committee on minority affairs, headed by Pittsburgh owner Dan Rooney.

It will recommend candidates for vacancies and run mentoring programs by older black coaches and executives.

Currently, there are three black coaches: Tony Dungy of Indianapolis, Herman Edwards of the New York Jets and Marvin Lewis, the new head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals.

There also are four minority football executives: general manager Ozzie Newsome of Baltimore; Rod Graves, vice president of football operations for Arizona; James Harris, vice president for player personnel in Jacksonville; and Ray Anderson, vice president and chief contract negotiator for Atlanta.



Mitchell

# Evangelist's widow strong in faith

BY BOBBY ROSS JR.  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - On weekday afternoons, 104-year-old Laura Keeble sits in her nursing home room, content to watch Oprah Winfrey on television.

But at 3 p.m. on Sundays, the widow of traveling evangelist Marshall Keeble expects someone to wheel her downstairs for worship service.

"I'm going as long as I'm able to get up," she said.

Baptized in a Mississippi creek 90 years ago, this gentle woman known as "Sister Keeble" boasts a spiritual strength that belies her wrinkles, white hair and wheelchair.

For much of her life, she lived in the shadows of her husband, who baptized an estimated 40,000 people, started more than 250 Churches of Christ - mainly black congregations - and quietly worked for integration.

But Sister Keeble, who also became "Mama" to dozens of young girls, has her own story.

Born Aug. 6, 1898, Laura Catherine Johnson was one of seven girls and three boys in her family. Her father, Luke, worked in an iron foundry. Her mother, Susan, was a nurse.

Laura attended No. 2 High School, the black school in



AP Photo/John Russell  
Laura Keeble, 104, smiles at the Lakeshore Wedgewood nursing home in Nashville, Tenn. Keeble is the widow of Marshall Keeble, a black traveling evangelist who baptized an estimated 40,000 people before he died in 1968.

Corinth, Miss. Her great-granddaughter Gwen Cummings, 52, asked her one time if she resented the segregated education.

"We weren't taught that way," Cummings recalled her saying. "We stayed busy and we stayed circled in Christianity."

When Keeble came along he was already a well-known minister. Laura was 35, working as a nanny and wondering if she might die an "old maid."

Keeble, the son of slaves, was a recent widower and 20 years older than Laura. His first wife, Minnie, a Fisk Uni-

versity graduate, helped teach the preacher how to read and write. In 36 years of marriage, the couple had five children, two of whom died in infancy.

"Some of you ought to find me a good wife," Keeble told friends after Minnie died from an illness. "I can't live single the rest of my life as young as I am."

A relative suggested Laura, and Keeble initiated the courtship with letters. To see a preacher "flirting around with a woman" disgusted him, he said, so he never spent more than five minutes alone with her before they married.

Keeble later said the rela-

tive "told me I'd get the best rose in the Johnson flower garden, and I think I did."

Today, though she is somewhat forgetful, Sister Keeble's love for her husband still shines through.

"Ain't he a dandy?" she says, holding a black-and-white photograph of her husband of 34 years. "He loved to dress and go preach. He'd say, 'Come on, Mama, let's go to church.'"

She chuckles as she recalls their drawn-out honeymoon: a three-month tent revival that he preached in California.

See Keeble on A5

# Army general gets prestigious award

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Brig. Gen. Ronald L. Johnson received the 2003 Black Engineer of the Year Award in the category of professional achievement in government at the 17th annual Black Engineer of the Year Conference in Baltimore.

The Black Engineer of the Year Award is presented annually by US Black Engineer & Information Technology magazine, the Council of Engineering Deans of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Lockheed Martin Corp. The award recognizes and honors the technical and professional achievements of African-American men and women involved in engineering, science and technology fields.

Awards are given in more than a dozen categories, including professional achievement, technical contribution and overall leadership.

Johnson received the award for accomplishments he has made throughout his 27 years of service as an Army engineer. He is the commanding general and division engineer, Pacific Ocean Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has its headquarters at Fort Shafter, Hawaii. He became the 23rd commander and division engineer of the Pacific Ocean Division on July 31, 2003.

"I'm honored to receive this prestigious award," Johnson said. "I find this moment humbling and rewarding."

Johnson leads a 1,700

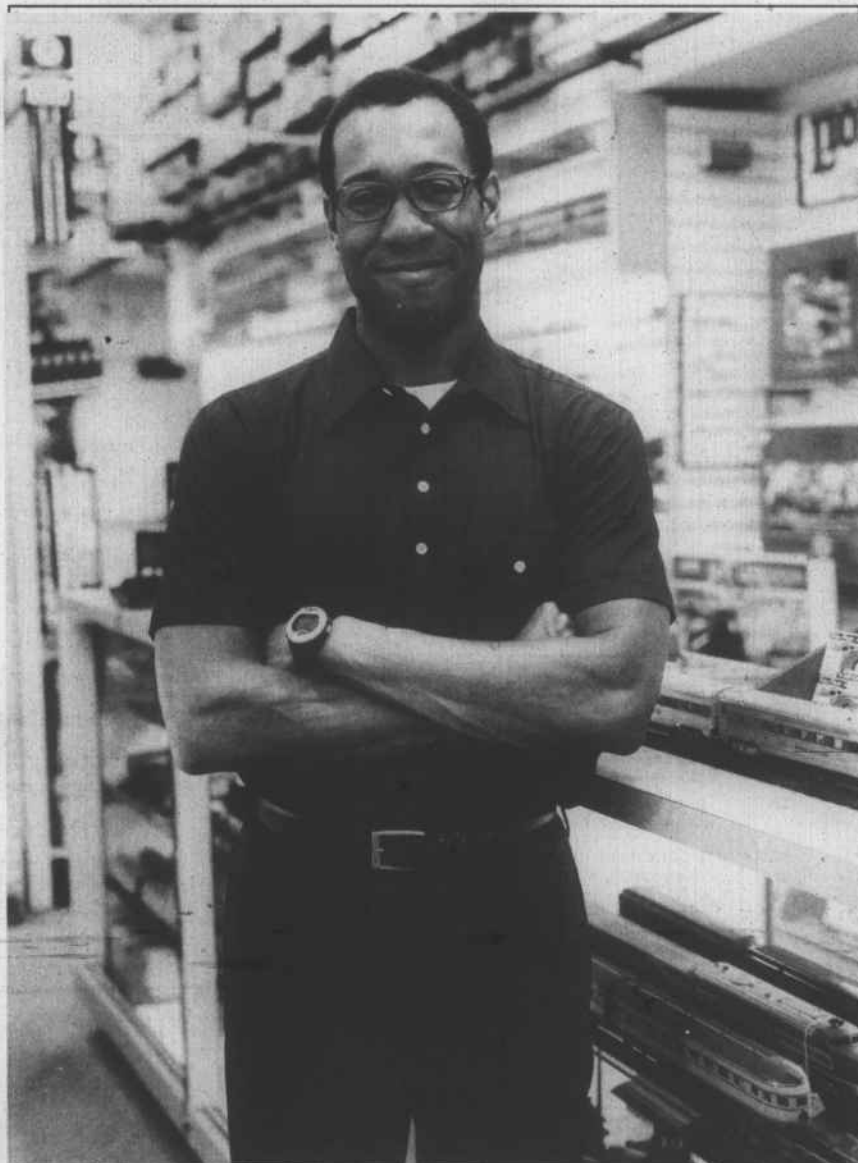
multiethnic, multicultural and multinational work force and is responsible for engineering design, construction and real estate management for the Army and Air Force in Hawaii and Alaska, as well as Department of Defense agencies in Japan, the Republic of Korea and Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

His division also administers the Corps' federal water resource development program and regulatory program, governing the work in waters and wetlands of Alaska, Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern



Submitted photo  
Brig. Gen. Ronald L. Johnson is presented his award by Lt. Gen. Robert B. Flowers.

See Johnson on A10



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