

# News at a Glance

## Thomas feels black leaders have maligned him for being different

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court's only black justice said last week that he has been wrongly maligned for not embracing the views of black civil rights leaders.

Justice Clarence Thomas told a group of students, most of them black, that he believes the death penalty is constitutional and that there's more to diversity than skin color.



Thomas

And he told the students at Benjamin Banneker High School in Washington that they don't have to base their beliefs on being black although "we've reached a point where people are very comfortable telling blacks what they ought to believe."

Asked about his disagreements with civil rights leaders, Thomas said: "I think they're struggling with me. I'm not struggling with anybody."

"I have my own opinions and my ideas. They're mine," he said. "I won't tell you you must believe certain things because of your skin color or because you're bad for not agreeing with me. That's all I can see, is that people are upset because I disagree with them."

Thomas talked about his unlikely rise from poverty in rural Georgia to his nomination to the Supreme Court in 1991 during the first Bush administration.

"I was a little nappy-headed little kid. That's what they called me 'nappy-headed little kid,' running around barefoot in Pinpoint (Ga.). Who would have known what was in there? Nobody knew," said Thomas, who considered becoming a Catholic priest before picking law as a career.

## City rejects Million Youth March

NEW YORK (AP) — People involved in organizing the Million Youth March said they will fight the Bloomberg administration's rejection of a planned 11-block street fair and demonstration scheduled for Sept. 6.

Organizers accused the administration of denying the group's right to free speech and "using Sept. 11 as an excuse to rob people of their First Amendment rights," the group's lawyer, Malik Zulu Shabazz, told Newsday.

The city rejected the Million Youth March application for the event on May 14, citing anti-terrorism efforts have made it too costly to provide security.

The Giuliani administration attempted to block the event when it was held in 1998, but a court allowed it. The march has not been held since the death of original organizer Khalid Muhammad in 2001.

Shabazz said he would appeal the decision and vowed that the march would take place.

Jonathan Greenspan, commissioner of the mayor's community assistance unit said the city also has rejected 48 other fair applications in order to scale back security spending.

"We're not singling anybody out," Greenspan said. "But we've got to do what we can for the city."

## While in S.C., Lee tells students to boycott businesses that display flag

COLUMBIA, South Carolina (AP) — Filmmaker Spike Lee extolled the virtues of a college education during a speech to the Black Expo here.

Lee also told black parents in the audience to steer their children toward real role models and away from rappers. He said violent images from rappers such as 50 Cent are damaging the next generation.



Lee

"Forget about the beat," he said Saturday. "Let's talk about the lyrical content."

Lee, a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, said education was the path to success. He lamented that young black scholars sometimes are ridiculed as fakes who are "acting white."

"But if you're on a corner, holding a 40, smoking a blunt and holding your privates, then you're real."

The 46-year-old director of such films as "Do the Right Thing" and "Malcolm X" also urged his audience to boycott businesses that display the Confederate flag, which opponents see as a symbol of the U.S. South's past ties to slavery.

The flag flies at a Civil War monument on Statehouse grounds in Columbia. The NAACP is continuing a boycott of the state until the flag is removed.

"The rest of the world is in 2003," Lee said. "I don't know what's happening in South Carolina."

## U.S. reps to discuss black colleges

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Eleven members of Congress are expected to gather here next month for a forum on the state of America's historically black colleges.

U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., is organizing the June 6 conference, where participants will discuss budget cuts and accreditation, student recruitment, housing, faculty and fund raising.

Clyburn is a graduate of South Carolina State University, and seven of the state's eight historically black colleges are in his district.

He was a key supporter of a congressional bill that recently set aside \$10 million a year for six years to pay for building preservation and restoration at historically black schools.

However, the schools must come up with a 30 percent match at a time when budgets are tight.

Representatives of philanthropic groups, including the Duke Endowment and the Getty Foundation, also are expected to attend the conference at the Medical University of South Carolina.

It comes a year after Clyburn brought members of the Congressional Black Caucus to the university for a field hearing on the health of blacks in America.

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# Ruben's win lifts city's image

BY ROYL WILLIAMS  
THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Birmingham business leaders say Ruben Studdard's win on "American Idol" has boosted the city's image and helped it overcome some lingering negative stereotypes.

Last Thursday, a day after telephone callers nationwide crowned Studdard champion of Fox Network's singing competition, Birmingham Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention Bureau officials were contemplating ways for the city to capitalize on Studdard's success.

On the TV show, Studdard wore "205" jerseys designed by Southside's 205 Flava to show the area code he represented. The jerseys and his constant expressions of love for Birmingham were positive publicity that is priceless, said chamber President David Adkisson.

"To have an African-American from this community touting Birmingham on national TV the way Ruben did, it blows away a lot of negative stereotypes about this city," Adkisson said.

An ad on the Super Bowl telecast can cost a million dollars, but it's no contest in terms of what Studdard has done for Birmingham, Adkisson said. "The positive exposure he has provided is worth



KRT Photo

Ruben Studdard, the "American Idol" winner.

millions, with even more to come," he said.

David Long, a lawyer with Sirote & Permutt, said: "It's won-

derful for people to see the new Birmingham as opposed to the images of 1963" when civil rights protests and police turning fire

hoses on young blacks made news worldwide.

Last Thursday, Studdard was in New York to tape an appearance on NBC's "Tonight Show" with Jay Leno. His schedule Friday included an appearance in New York on NBC's "Today Show," the No. 1 morning TV show.

Convention Bureau President Jim Smither said his agency each day has received more than 100 requests for information after airing a commercial during Monday's "American Idol" special. The ad touted Birmingham as a family reunion destination. Though the convention bureau halted its campaign featuring celebrity Birmingham-area natives over a year ago, Smither said, "We'd love to do one with Ruben wearing his 205 shirt touting Birmingham."

Birmingham City Councilman Bert Miller, who heads the council's cultural arts committee, said Studdard's appeal transcends racial, economic and age barriers. His belting out smooth, uplifting songs on the show gave Birmingham residents a welcome respite from the war with Iraq, Alabama's football coach's firing and Health-South's accounting scandal, Miller said.

"He (Ruben) brought all of the

See Birmingham on A10

## L.A. hires new 'eyes and ears' on police misconduct

BY GENE C. JOHNSON JR.  
WAVE NEWSPAPERS

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — In his new job as inspector general for the Los Angeles Police Commission, Andre Birotte Jr. and his staff of 35 will investigate about 4,000 complaints of police misconduct a year.

The city's third inspector general, Birotte is the first African-American named to the post permanently. His office also reviews all officer-involved shootings and reports its findings directly to the Police Commission. The post was created in 1995, a recommendation of the Christopher Commission convened in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating.

"Andre is a sharp investigator with a vast amount of experience," said Police Commission President Rick J. Caruso. "His knowledge of the law and analytical skills are a perfect match for the job of inspector general."

After graduating from Pepperdine University School of Law in 1991, Birotte became a deputy public defender here before joining the U.S. attorney's office, where he prosecuted fraud and narcotics trafficking cases. He was a unanimous selection of the Police Commission for the permanent inspector general's job.

"The commission relies heavily on the inspector general as its eyes and ears," Caruso said. "Andre has proven that he can do this job

effectively."

Birotte said his typical 11-hour work day and occasional working weekend have yet to place much strain on his six-month-old marriage. He accepted the position with full knowledge of the demanding workload. He was named acting inspector last November and was assistant inspector



Photo by Jose Emilio Flores/La Opinion

Andre Birotte Jr. was selected by the Los Angeles Police Commission as the new inspector general for the department.

See L.A. on A5

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**INDEX**

OPINION.....A6  
SPORTS.....B1  
RELIGION.....B5  
CLASSIFIEDS.....B9  
HEALTH.....C3  
ENTERTAINMENT...C7  
CALENDAR.....C9