

News at a Glance

Rapper C-Murder accused of killing teen fan after beating inside nightclub

GRETNA, La. (AP) — Rapper C-Murder and about five other men were "beating the tar out of" a devoted 16-year-old fan when the performer pulled a gun and killed the boy inside a nightclub last year, a prosecutor said at the opening of the rapper's murder trial last week.

The rapper, whose real name is Corey Miller, was in an argument with the victim, Steve Thomas, on the dance floor of the suburban New Orleans nightclub in January 2002 when Thomas was shot, the prosecutor said.

The victim had dreams of becoming a rapper and had posters of the defendant on the walls of his bedroom.

Ronald J. Rokosky, Miller's defense lawyer, said investigators have not recovered the murder weapon and have no evidence tying Miller to the crime. The only witness accusing Miller of firing, a bouncer at the club, has lied to police and never actually saw a gun in Miller's hand, Rokosky said.

Rokosky told the jury of 10 whites and two blacks that the nightclub was crowded, dark, lights were flashing and music was pounding. He described it as a confusing atmosphere.

Miller is charged with second-degree murder. Judge Martha Sasonne said the trial is expected to last three weeks.

Police have said the victim used a fake ID to get into the now-defunct Club Platinum.

The C-Murder persona, as well as the lyrics of his recordings, have become elements of the trial, with defense lawyers asking potential jurors their views about rap.



C-Murder

Umpires file discrimination complaints

NEW YORK (AP) — Two tennis umpires have filed discrimination complaints against the sport's international and national governing organizations, saying they faced retaliation after complaining that blacks and females were not treated fairly in that job.

The complaints against the International Tennis Federation and the U.S. Tennis Association were filed with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission by Cecil Holland, 47, a 17-year veteran umpire, and Sande French, 47. The filing is required before a discrimination lawsuit can be brought in federal court.

The umpires said in their complaints that tennis had minimized the roles of blacks and women in officiating. In her complaint, French said no woman has ever been permitted to officiate a significant men's match in a Grand Slam or Davis Cup.

Holland, who first aired his allegations before the 2002 U.S. Open, said in a complaint that he rose steadily through the ranks, eventually achieving the status of gold badge umpire, held by 20 to 25 of about 2,000 tennis umpires worldwide.

In his complaint against the USTA, Holland said one of its employees used a racial epithet toward him and told him to "get off the court" as he hit tennis balls with another black umpire during the early rounds of the U.S. Open in 1998.

He said he complained about it and was demoted repeatedly and received fewer and fewer assignments.

Chris Widmaier, a USTA spokesman, said: "We find the claims to be without merit."

Gary E. Ireland, a lawyer for both umpires, said they were hoping for support from tennis players, who "seem to understand there's a problem and it needs to be solved."

Lee: Americans need to lay off the fluff

REDLANDS, Calif. (AP) — Spike Lee, whose movies often have a political edge, said Americans need to think more about important issues and lay off the fluff.



Lee

"We as a people are more concerned with J.Lo and Ben Affleck than these so-called weapons of mass destruction," he told 750 people who gathered recently night at the University of Redlands.

The director of "Do the Right Thing" and "Malcolm X" also criticized the U.S. intervention in Iraq.

North Korea poses a greater threat to the United States, "but they don't have resources" the country wants, he said. "We've got all the rice we need. We don't have oil."

Lee also took aim at what he called the stereotypical roles blacks have played in recent films such as "Bringing Down the House," which starred Steve Martin and Queen Latifah.

In such films, "the uptight white person is shown humanity by someone from the 'hood,'" the 46-year-old director said.

Administrator on paid leave after 'Sambo' reference

LONGVIEW, Texas (AP) — A white high school administrator who used the term "Little Sambo" while leading a teachers' workshop last month was placed on paid leave for about a week before returning to Longview High School.

Debby Deck, director of career and technology education at Longview High School, was leading an Aug. 11 in-service session when the discussion turned to gaining respect from students.

According to letters from two high school staff members, Deck said, "How can you stand up here and teach when you have a Little Sambo sitting in the back of the room pulling up pictures of naked people?"

Deck was placed on leave Aug. 13 and returned about a week later, officials said.

The day after the incident, Deck sent a letter of apology to all who were present.

"It was brought to my attention that inadvertently I have offended some of you by a name I used in an example yesterday," Deck wrote. "In no way would I ever intentionally hurt your feelings or be disrespectful to anyone's culture. I am asking you to forgive me for such a grave mistake."

Deck wrote that she didn't know the term Sambo was negative and thought it meant nothing more than "Joe or Suzy or Sam."

Race's role in comedy debated

BY DEBORAH KONG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Aki Aleong's stomach churned as he watched the Fox comedy game show, the one with the nerdy Asian businessman wearing thick glasses and the karate-chopping martial arts master screaming "Banzai!"

Paul Noble watched the same show but saw something else. To him, it was a fresh, funny program with great stunts, such as two men jousting while riding shopping carts. The Asian characters were just part of the backdrop.

Once, minorities like Aleong, a Chinese-American, might have silently winced about being the butt of jokes on a network program — in this case, the Fox summer show "Banzai!"

Not anymore. As minorities' numbers have grown, so has their ability to make their voices heard when they feel humor slips into insult. But that doesn't mean comedians will stop treading the line between the two.

Race in comedy "is just like race in everyday situations," said comedian D.L. Hughley. "It's always a component."

Hughley, who is black, has often joked about the differences between blacks and whites. For instance, he once observed that blacks, unlike whites, don't enjoy bungee jumping because "that's too much like lynching for us."

"There's always the chance that somebody is going to be offended," Hughley said. But "I

want people to see what I'm seeing. They don't have to agree with me, or like it, or understand it ... but if they see what I'm seeing, then chances are I'll get a laugh."

"Banzai" was only the latest in a series of recent incidents in which comedians looking for laughs got criticism instead.

In February, some Hispanics were outraged after a satirical Vanity Fair advice column counseled against learning Spanish, asking, "Who speaks it that you are really desperate to talk to? The help? Your leaf blower? Study French or German, where there are at least a few books worth reading, or, if you're American, try English."

Sikh groups demanded Miramax remove a scene in the movie "Dysfunctional Family" in which a man wearing a turban is called Osama bin Laden. And some blacks said a character who poked fun at civil rights icons in the movie "Barbershop" last year was disrespectful.

The Vanity Fair column provoked a scathing letter from Mexican-born actress Salma Hayek, who was on the magazine's cover. The National Association of Hispanic Journalists warned that "humor and satire are not safe hiding places for ignorance and bigotry."

The magazine apologized, saying the remarks of entertainer Barry Humphries, in the guise of Dame Edna, "were meant to satirize stereotypes, not reinforce



KRT photo

See Comedy on A9 Mexican beauty Salma Hayek waves to photographers.

Black wax museum on way to completion

BY RODERICK C. WILLIS
AFRO AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

BALTIMORE (NNPA) — An alley in East Baltimore leads to the 1600 block of Eareckson Place. The block is filled with deserted houses and filth, and fits the textbook description of urban decay.

The location will now give rise to a new, expanded edition of the Great Blacks in Wax Museum. Federal, state and city officials recently kicked off a celebration that will be used by the museum as a catalyst, the first step to bringing the community back to life.

African drummers and an African dancer group opened the celebration, symbolic of the community's ties to Africa and the rich history the museum seeks to preserve.

Mayor Martin O'Malley, Rep. Elijah Cummings, state Sen. Nathaniel McFadden, City Council President Sheila Dixon and a host of other community activists and African-American history enthusiasts attended the ceremony.

The underlying theme of the event was the philosophy that "community development and cultural development go hand-in-hand." This simple belief by Joanne Martin and the late Elmer P. Martin was the guiding principle on which their museum was founded.

That driving force motivated the founders to relocate the museum in 1988 to a fragile community in East Baltimore so that the institution could serve as a catalyst for community revitalization. The total cost of the expanded project is \$60 million, with the 120,000-square-foot museum project divided into three phases.

Phase I will include the three-block acquisition of properties in the 1600 block of East North Avenue, 1600 block of Eareckson Place and the 1800 block of Bethel Street. The project will create off-street parking for the museum, landscaping for the Elmer P. Martin Memorial Gardens and utilities.

Phase II includes development of the 1600 block of East North Avenue. The block will be repaved and restored with plants, street furniture and signage, resulting in a tree-lined pedestrian plaza along



Cummings



O'Malley

the length of the block. The block's facades will be restored, with a signature entrance to the museum, making a strong architectural statement of the museum's character as a repository for the African and African-American legacy.

Phase III will be the restoration of the mansion at 1649 East North Ave. and the development of a commercial area for tourist-friendly businesses in the 1500 block of East North Avenue.

See Museum on A5

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