

Not a piece

Texas jury awards black man \$9 million in beating case

LINDEN, Texas (AP) — An East Texas jury has awarded \$9 million to a mentally disabled black man who was taunted, beaten and dumped in a field by four white men.



Dees

Billy Ray Johnson, 46, remains in a nursing home after suffering permanent and severe brain injuries in the 2003 beating. The men accused of assaulting him were fined and sentenced to probation and jail time, but none served more than 60 days behind bars.

But in a four-day civil trial that ended Friday, jurors found James Cory Hicks and Christopher Colt Amox responsible for Johnson's injuries.

The jury of 11 whites and one black member deliberated less than four hours before returning a unanimous verdict at the Cass County District Court, according to attorneys for the Southern Poverty Law Center, which brought the lawsuit on behalf of Johnson.

"The jury told all of Texas and, indeed, the entire country, that Billy Ray is a human being who deserves to be treated with dignity — that the life of each of us, rich or poor, black or white, abled or disabled, is truly precious," said Morris Dees, founder and chief trial attorney for the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The two other defendants, Dallas Chadwick Stone and John Wesley Owens, previously reached confidential settlements, the center said in a statement.

Black caucus leader unveils slavery apology in final hour

ATLANTA (AP) — The Georgia Legislature's black leaders had been promising throughout the legislative session they were going to introduce a proposal to ask the state to apologize for its role in slavery.

In final hour of the 40-day session, which came to an end on Friday, they made good on their word. The four-page resolution would have the Georgia House express "its profound regret" for slavery.

"The members of this body hereby support the fair and accurate education of Georgia citizens about the inhumanity of slavery in order to foster a respect for the fundamental dignity of human life," read the proposal.

It also traces the history of slavery in Georgia, including the state's purchase of slaves to build and maintain state roads.

State Rep. Al Williams, D-Midway, said the proposal lacks the support from the chamber's Republican leaders.

"We don't have consensus," said Williams, chairman of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, said. "But I want to spend the summer building it."

In March, the Georgia arm of the NAACP called on the Legislature to take a cue from Virginia, where a resolution passed unanimously in February expressing "profound regret" over slavery. Lawmakers in Maryland and North Carolina have since adopted similar proposals.

House leaders have been skeptical about the need for an official statement of contrition.

Court will hear Abu-Jamal case

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A federal appeals court said Friday it will not step down from the death-row case of former Black Panther and radio reporter Mumia Abu-Jamal, paving the way for a key hearing next month.



Abu-Jamal

Abu-Jamal, a popular figure among activists who say he is the victim of a racist U.S. justice system, has been on death row for a quarter-century for the 1981 slaying of white Philadelphia police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

Prosecutors had asked outside judges to hear the case because the husband of 3rd U.S. Circuit Judge Marjorie O. Rendell was district attorney during Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial. They said that created the appearance of a conflict.

Judge Rendell, who is married to Gov. Ed Rendell, and three colleagues on the Philadelphia-based 3rd Circuit instead recused themselves for reasons not disclosed in the two-page ruling.

The removal of those four judges leaves many others to serve on the three-judge panel hearing the case, the order said. The panel members have not been announced.

In Abu-Jamal's appeal, he argues that city prosecutors routinely removed qualified blacks from juries.

Wal-Mart diversity figures show small change in management makeup

SPRINGFIELD, Missouri (AP) — Management ranks at Wal-Mart Stores Inc. saw modest increases last year in women and minorities, even though they are more abundant in the retailer's work force than in the population at large, according to figures the company released Friday.

This is just the second year that Wal-Mart, which faces the largest discrimination class-action lawsuit in U.S. history, has publicized its report to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and therefore the first time any changes can be seen.

Compared to the report on 2005, the 2006 numbers showed small increases in the overall presence of minorities and women among Wal-Mart's 1.35 million U.S. employees.

Women made up 60.9 percent of Wal-Mart's employees last year, compared to 60.5 percent the year before. Minorities were 33.1 percent versus 31.8 percent, including blacks at 17.5 percent, up from 16.8 percent.

Hispanics accounted for 11.4 percent, compared to 11.2 percent in 2005. The rate for Asians was 3.1 percent versus 2.7 percent in 2005. Native Americans were barely changed at 1.2 percent after 1.1 percent the year before.

The Chronicle (USPS 067-910) was established by Ernest H. Pitt and Ndubisi Egemonye in 1974 and is published every Thursday by Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc., 617 N. Liberty Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27101. Periodicals postage paid at Winston-Salem, N.C. Annual subscription price is \$30.72.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636 Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1636

Wilder blasts state's lax gun laws

Virginia Tech tragedy has brought issue to forefront

BY BONNIE WINSTON RICHMOND FREE PRESS

RICHMOND, Va. (NNPA) — "We allow such a high proliferation of things that cause a cessation of life handguns, bullets. Lives lost - for no reason?"



Wilder

Richmond Mayor L. Douglas Wilder, the nation's first black governor, voiced the lingering thoughts of many during a campus-community vigil at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Photo by PHILIPPE DE POULPQUET/MAX Photos

People grieve during a ceremony on the Virginia Tech campus on April 17.

The nation's worst mass shooting, carried out on the quiet campus of Virginia Tech, has fired off the latest debate about gun control, both in Virginia and the nation.

See VT on A13



Rep. Diane Watson

Cherokees, feds fight over vote

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TULSA, Okla. — A recent vote by the Cherokee Nation to revoke the membership of descendants of freed slaves might not have been legal, according to the leader of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The Tahlequah-based tribe disagrees with that assessment, however, and a tribal spokesman predicted that Congress will reject an effort by one of its members to stop the tribe from receiving federal funds, the Tulsa World reported from its Washington bureau.

The two sides are debating the tribe's right to enforce a 2003 tribal constitutional amendment and its March 3 vote to remove the descendants of the tribe's freed slaves, known as freedmen, from tribal rolls.

Carl Artman, who heads the BIA, told U.S. Rep. Diane Watson, D-Calif., in a letter that the U.S. Interior Secretary must approve the 2003 amendment before it can take legal effect. The letter also said the BIA has taken no action on the March vote.

"We are concerned about the ramifications this will have on the Freedmen of the Cherokee Nation and will continue our careful evaluation of all facets of this matter,"

See Dispute on A9

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Stephanie

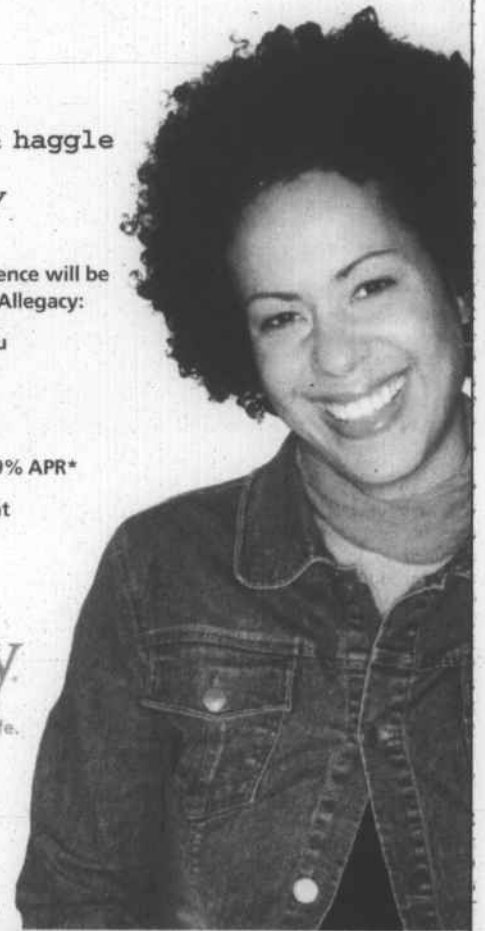
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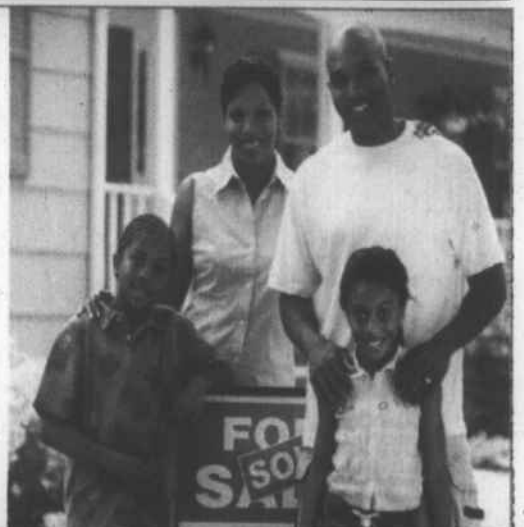
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