

News at a Glance

Obama campaign seeks to distance itself from his wife's comments

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The campaign of Democrat Barack Obama moved quickly last Thursday to dampen any expectations raised by Michelle Obama who said this week that her husband has to win Iowa.

Most polls in Iowa show the Illinois senator in a tight race with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and John Edwards. During a visit to Davenport, Iowa, Michelle Obama commented on the importance of a strong showing in the caucuses.



Michelle Obama

"Iowa will make the difference," she said. "If Barack doesn't win Iowa, it is just a dream. If we win Iowa then we can move to the world as it should be. And we need your help in making that happen."

Typically, meeting expectations in Iowa is nearly as important as who actually wins, so candidates are careful about their public comments on the importance they place on a victory.

Obama's campaign made it clear that they were optimistic about their chances in Iowa but didn't consider it essential that they win.

"Every campaign has said it's important to do well in Iowa, and that's our goal," said Tommy Vietor, a spokesman for Obama's Iowa campaign.

Vietor said the campaign will continue, regardless of his showing in Iowa.

Spokesmen for Clinton and Edwards also declined to predict how their candidates would do.

North Carolina black households lag behind in income, employment

RALEIGH (AP) — Black households make 40 percent less money than their white counterparts in North Carolina and have nearly twice the unemployment rate, according to census data released last Thursday.

Median household income for blacks was just over \$29,000 in 2006, according to the Census Bureau. That's 12 percent less than Hispanic households, 40 percent less than whites and slightly less than American Indians.

Unemployment among blacks increased to 7.5 percent compared to the state average of 4.2 percent.

"When you look at the number of businesses owned, who runs our major corporations, who makes most of the hiring decisions, it's still vastly white," said Keith Sutton, president of the Triangle Urban League, an advocacy group for blacks.

Others say that illegal immigration and an influx of cheap Hispanic workers is hurting the job prospects for blacks.

Economists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found in a 2006 study that a rising number of Hispanic workers had depressed wages and displaced some black workers. But John Kasarda, one of the study's authors, said blacks reported in interviews that they were unwilling to take the jobs Hispanics do — at any wage.

Eastwood to direct Mandela biopic

(GIN/NNPA) — "The Human Factor: Nelson Mandela and the Game That Changed the World," is about to become a movie directed by Oscar-winner Clint Eastwood.

Based on a book by a British journalist, the movie is set after the fall of apartheid, when South Africa was host to the 1995 Rugby World Cup. Mandela was in his first term as South African president, and he used the event as a way to end decades of mistrust and hatred between whites and Blacks.

Warner Brothers Studios is in talks to finance the picture. Morgan Freeman will take the role of Mandela, joining a lineup of stars including Danny Glover and Sidney Poitier, who have played the former president in other films.

Freeman said: "We know everything there is to know around Nelson Mandela, but we don't know him. You know all the events but you don't know him. What we want to do is make a movie about him."



Mandela

Grambling investigating noose pictures

GRAMBLING, La. (AP) — The Grambling State University president is investigating a case in which adults at the university-run elementary school on campus put a noose around at least one child's neck and the school newspaper's publication of photographs of it.

Kindergarten and first-grade students at Alma J. Brown Elementary School were being taught why nooses are a symbol of racism, an article from the historically black university's student newspaper said.

The article said the children also were being taught about the "Jena Six" — black high-school students who are accused of beating a white schoolmate.

The date of the Grambling incident was not clear and the article and the photos had been removed from the site.

University President Horace Judson said he ordered photos removed from the Web site as soon as his secretary called him to describe them. At the time, he said, he was driving to Dallas for Saturday's football game against Prairie View.

Judson told The News Star of Monroe and the Ruston Daily Leader on Friday that he was starting an investigation immediately, and would meet Monday morning with everyone involved.

It is at least the second time this year The Gramblinite has tangled with school administrators.

Provost Robert Dixon ordered the newspaper on Jan. 17 to stop publication, a move criticized as censorship by alumni, the Student Press Law Center in Arlington, Va. and Gramblinite editor Darryl Smith.

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Hardaway now embraced by some gays



Tim Hardaway during his days with the Miami Heat in 2001.

BY TIM REYNOLDS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — The topic was finding ways to keep transgender children safe, and someone asked for volunteers to share an idea.

Tim Hardaway was the first to raise his hand.

"He was so genuine," said Martha Fugate, the director of the YES Institute, a children's advocacy group based in South Miami which hosted that discussion. "He gave the perfect answer."

Seven months ago, that simply wouldn't have happened.

Hardaway would have made a joke or said something hurtful, like his infamous "I hate gay people" answer when a radio host asked him how he'd respond to having a gay teammate. Hardaway's remarks came days after former NBA star John Ekwugha Amaechi revealed that he is gay. Hardaway's remarks led to the former star point guard's banishment from NBA All-Star weekend and dealt his reputation an embarrassing blow.

Yet there he was, in a classroom with about 40 people, mostly strangers and some of them gay, talking about the importance of education and awareness — pointing to himself as the perfect example of how attitudes can be reshaped with a little bit of knowledge.

"I just wanted to go in and get educated, that's all. Get educated on what I said and

why I said those things," Hardaway said Thursday in an interview with The Associated Press. "I'm working on understanding it now. I'm not really trying to make amends. I've been there trying to get help."

Hardaway has declined many interview requests in recent months, saying he didn't want to make his work with advocacy groups seem like a publicity stunt or a quick-fix to an image problem.

"I had no idea how much I hurt people," said Hardaway, who spent most of his NBA career with the Golden State Warriors and Miami Heat, and still makes his home in South Florida. "A lot of people."

In the weeks that followed his Feb. 14 comments, stories circled that Hardaway's home was in foreclosure (he denies it) and that a car wash he owned was unable to pay its bills (he denies that, too).

Neighbors even asked about rumors that his wife and children were leaving him, which never happened.

For Hardaway, it was all a



Amaechi

See Hardaway on A12

Troubled Watts High School is turned over to private firm

BY GENE C. JOHNSON JR.
THE WAVE

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) — In what both sides agreed was a historic moment, the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education recently approved a controversial petition, effectively handing control of Locke High School over to the Green Dot Public School charter organization for at least five years.



Vladovic

Effective July 1, 2008, the move marks the first time a public school will be run by a private entity in the LAUSD. Some high schools within the district, such as those in Granada Hills and in the Palisades, have been converted into charters but are run by LAUSD teachers and administrators.

In recent years, Locke, located in Watts, has been one of the lowest-performing schools in the school district.

"Locke is what it is now and it hurts," said school board member Richard Vladovic, a one-time principal at the troubled campus who now represents the area in which it is located. "It hurts having worked there and worked in that community for four years — when you look at the test scores right now and what those youngsters are getting."

School board trustees Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte and Julie Korenstein cast the dissenting votes during the Tuesday board meeting held at school district headquarters.

"I am not clear in what the instructional program is," LaMotte said. "If a mass of kids do not want to go to Locke, then the financial encumbrance upon [the school district] is even greater. [And] what do we do about the teachers who do not want to work for anyone other than L.A.?"

Korenstein adds, "I believe that boards of education, working with superintendents and staff, should be able to resolve the problem with the teachers at this school ... I am appalled that a new board ... just said: 'Give the children away.'"

Still, the decision drew loud cheers from the sea of bright

green T-shirts in support of the conversion, which was met with red-shirted disdain by members of the United Teachers Los Angeles. The crowd jammed into the school board chambers tallied well past its 155-person

capacity.

"Please, we are imploring you, do not tell us that we are failures," said UTLA Secondary Vice President Linda Gilchrist. "Because this [conversion] will

See Watts High on A6

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