

News at a Glance

Singer/actress Brandy won't be charged in deadly crash

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles city attorney's office said Friday it will not charge Brandy in a deadly December 2006 freeway crash.

Spokesman Nick Velasquez said there is "insufficient evidence" for a jury to find the 28-year-old actress-singer guilty of misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter beyond a reasonable doubt.

The decision runs counter to a recommendation from the California Highway Patrol that Brandy, whose real name is Brandy Norwood, be charged in the Dec. 30, 2006, crash.

Brandy was driving on a Los Angeles freeway when traffic slowed and her Land Rover smashed into the back of a Honda.

That car was involved in several other collisions. The driver, 38-year-old Awatef Aboudihaj, died in the accident.



Brandy

Civil rights leader calls for hate crime inquiry into house fire

TROY, Ohio (AP) — An Atlanta-based civil rights leader said a fire that destroyed the home of a former high school basketball coach charged with sexually assaulting a minor should be treated as a hate crime.

Charles Steele, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, called last week's fire an attack on James Clay and his family.

Investigators said Clay's car was spray-painted with the words "guilty," "leave" and a racial slur. Clay, who is black, pleaded not guilty Dec. 13 to a felony charge of sexual battery involving a 15-year-old girl while he was coach of the freshman boys basketball team at Troy Christian School, about 20 miles north of Dayton.

The fire demands attention from Ohio Attorney General Marc Dann, the U.S. Justice Department and the FBI, Steele said.

"Racial slurs raised their ugly head. This has taken us back 50 years," Steele said. "We are not going to tolerate it. We want cooperation from law officials."

Clay, 41, and two of his children escaped last Friday's fire without injury. A cause of the blaze remained under investigation and no arrests had been made.

Miami County Prosecutor Gary Nasal said he had not been contacted by SCLC officials. He said he can't discuss a pending investigation, but would meet with the civil rights group if approached.

"We both want to make sure whoever is responsible for the fire is appropriately charged, and punished," Nasal said.

Clay was fired by the school in February after allegedly making inappropriate comments to staff members, Superintendent Gary Wilber has said. The firing occurred before allegations of misconduct with the minor surfaced.

First openly gay president of black Journalists group dies

NEW YORK (AP) — Thomas Morgan III, the first openly gay president of the National Association of Black Journalists and a longtime newsman at The New York Times, has died. He was 56.

The Brooklyn resident died last week, possibly of a heart attack, while visiting the family of his partner, Thomas Ciano, in Southhampton, Mass., Ciano said.

"He was a man of many different qualities and talents," Ciano said. "He cared a lot about educating young journalists and the prevention of AIDS. Working to house and care for homeless people. Pottery. Gardening. Politics. Those were his passions."

Morgan was NABJ's president from 1989 to 1991. Even though he won the election handily, it was somewhat heated, according to a 2004 profile of Morgan on the NABJ's Web site.

"It was painful," Morgan recalled. "I struggled with how to represent NABJ without embarrassing the organization but while also being true to myself. I was elected as a black journalist, not a gay one."

After graduating from the University of Missouri and completing his service with the U.S. Air Force in 1975, Morgan worked at The Miami Herald and The Washington Post.

He then joined the Times, where he rose to assistant metro editor and also received a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University in 1989.

He retired from the newspaper in 1994, "largely to concentrate on his personal fight against AIDS," according to the profile.

Patrick to stump for Obama

BOSTON (AP) — Governor Deval Patrick plans to make visits to three early presidential voting states on behalf of Democrat Barack Obama.

Patrick's political committee says the governor will deliver speeches in the coming days in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina.

Patrick was expected to be in Iowa last week, in New Hampshire on Jan. 5 - 6, and in South Carolina the weekend before the primary there.

South Carolina Democrats vote on Jan. 26. The Iowa caucuses are scheduled for today, Jan. 3. New Hampshire holds its first-in-the-nation primary Jan. 8.

Patrick announced his endorsement of Obama in October, saying the Illinois senator represents a new generation of leadership.

Patrick and Obama share Chicago roots and both were black student leaders at Harvard Law School.

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Fans, friends say goodbye to Ike Turner

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GARDENA, Calif. — Ike Turner's funeral was part memorial service, part rock concert.

The nearly three-hour remembrance on Dec. 21 at Greater Bethany Community Church City of Refuge in Gardena featured Turner's eight-piece band, the Kings of Rhythm, which performed rollicking renditions of some of the musician's greatest hits, including "Nutbush City Limits" and "Proud Mary." The songs brought the crowd of hundreds to its feet.

"Daddy wouldn't want any of us crying," said Turner's daughter, Mia Turner. "He would want us to throw a party."

Among those eulogizing Turner, who died Dec. 12 at age 76, were music producer Phil Spector and rock 'n' roll pioneer Little Richard, who described his friend as "one of the greatest musicians I have ever met in my life."

Richard said that Turner's breakthrough rock 'n' roll hit, "Rocket 88," "shook my soul."

"I took that same introduction and made 'Good Golly, Miss Molly,'" he said. "I took that same thing and made a huge hit."

Turner was responsible for a string of hits throughout his career, including 1959's "A Fool in Love" and 1970's "Take You Higher," but his musical legacy was forever tarnished by his image as the drug-addicted, brutally abusive former husband of Tina Turner, who did not attend Friday's funeral. When Ike Turner died, a spokeswoman for Tina said she hadn't had contact with him in 35 years and would not comment.

Ike Turner knew that his personal problems threatened to overshadow his musical accomplishments, said Rob Johnson, producer of Turner's Grammy-winning 2001 album "Here and Now."

"He understood, as a very sensitive artist, the challenge-



KRT Photo by Nancy Wegard

See Turner on A11 Ike Turner in 2001 on the streets of New York City.

Ailing Fisk University struggles to sell art

BY ERIK SCHELZIG THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Fisk University, a historically black school on the brink financially, is sitting on a lottery ticket it can't cash: a remarkable collection of 19th- and 20th-century art donated by the painter Georgia O'Keeffe.

Two years of legal battles have prevented Fisk from turning some of the valuable art into cash.

The latest battle — over Fisk's proposed deal to share the 101-piece art collection with an Arkansas museum for \$30 million — is scheduled for trial in February.

University officials acknowledge it could be years before any money changes hands, if ever. In the meantime, Fisk is struggling. The 900-student school has mortgaged all its buildings and tapped all of its endowment not restricted to specific programs. As recently as October, a Fisk lawyer told a judge that the school would probably run out of cash before the end of the year.

The crisis eased somewhat earlier this month when the Mellon Foundation announced it would give the university up to \$3 million in grants, with \$1 million of that up front. But getting others to donate to Fisk to put it on a firm permanent footing could be difficult, because it has had to be rescued several times before.

"Foundations who give serious money don't give it to poorly managed institutions," said Davis Carr, a former member of the school's board of trustees. "I'm not saying Fisk is currently poorly managed, but if they've not been able to make it work over some long period of time, that sends a signal."

At issue is a collection of art that belonged to O'Keeffe's husband, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz. It includes what is considered one of O'Keeffe's masterpieces, the 1927 oil painting "Radiator Building — Night, New York," as well as works by Picasso, Renoir, Cezanne, Marsden Hartley, Alfred Maurer and Charles Demuth.

O'Keeffe donated the art in 1949, choosing Fisk because the school, founded in 1866, educated blacks at a time when the South was segregated. She died in 1986.

To art historians, the collection has an appealing unity, because many of the American artists were part of O'Keeffe and Stieglitz's circle of friends.

In 2005, Fisk's trustees voted to sell off two signature pieces of the collection to help keep the school afloat. Those efforts became bogged down in court battles over whether the sale would violate the terms of

O'Keeffe's bequest, and no deal ever went through.

Then Fisk came up with a plan to sell a 50 percent stake in the collection to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art for \$30 million. Under the arrangement, the collection would travel back and forth between Nashville and the Bentonville, Ark., museum founded by Wal-Mart heiress Alice Walton.



O'Leary

But the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, N.M., the legal representative of the artist's estate, has asked a judge to disallow the deal, saying it was O'Keeffe's wish that the collection not be sold. Also, the museum argues that Fisk is violating a condition of gift that the collection be displayed.

Fisk put the art into storage in 2005 because the gallery

See Fisk on A4

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