

News at a Glance

Perry, writers announce agreement

ATLANTA – Tyler Perry Studios and the Writers Guild of America West announced last week that they have come to an agreement following more than five months of negotiations. Several writers on the Perry-produced shows "House of Payne" and "Meet the Browns" were reportedly fired after unionizing. Those writers will not be re-hired under the agreement.

Vic Bulluck, executive director of the NAACP Hollywood Bureau, was instrumental in bringing the two parties together.

"We are pleased to have come to a resolution with the WGA, and thank the NAACP for their support during negotiations. We look forward to many years working with the talented writers who are members of the Guild," stated Perry.

Writers Guild of America West President Patric M. Verrone said: "At a time when true independent producers like Mr. Perry are rare in this business, we congratulate him on his success and welcome his decision to become signatory to a WGA contract. I also would like to thank Ben Jealous, NAACP national president and CEO, Vic Bulluck, executive director NAACP Hollywood Bureau, and Clayola Brown, national president of the A. Philip Randolph Institute, for their help during this negotiation."



Perry

Police sued for detaining man

NEW LONDON, Conn. (AP) – A federal judge has rejected the city of New London's request to throw out a lawsuit accusing city police officers of illegally detaining a man for seven minutes last year because he is black.

James F. Wrighten, who is in his 60s, is suing the police department in U.S. District Court in New Haven over a January 2007 search for a "suspicious" person by city officers, who are not named in the lawsuit.

Wrighten claims police would not have considered him suspicious if he was white, and alleges that New London officers routinely harass black and Hispanic men.

According to Wrighten, a police officer blocked his car while he was waiting for his wife to come out of a convenience store. As other police cruisers arrived, he said the officer demanded his driver's license and ran a computer check of him before allowing him to leave.

Wrighten, who was not arrested, said he felt threatened and intimidated during the incident.

The city's attorney said in court filings that police who were called to the area on a report of a suspicious person were entitled to conduct "a brief investigatory stop" of Wrighten.

The attorney, Patrick Day, also insisted there was no merit to Wrighten's claim that police routinely violate that rights of black and Hispanic people. A police spokesman said the department does not comment on pending lawsuits.

The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits police from conducting unreasonable searches and seizures, but allows police to stop and search a person if there is reasonable suspicion the person is involved in a crime.

Asa Hilliard honor goes to educator

Road Scholar/Elderhostel presented the Asa Grant Hilliard III Road Scholar Award for Lifelong Learning to Patricia Payne, director of the Indianapolis Public Schools Crispus Attucks Center, during the NABSE Annual Conference recently held in Atlanta.



Payne

The \$5,000 travel award is named in honor of the late Dr. Asa Grant Hilliard III, a world-renowned Pan-Africanist, educator, historian and psychologist.

Patsy Jo Hilliard, widow and life partner of Dr. Hilliard, made the presentation along with Kathy Taylor, Associate Vice President of Community Development at Elderhostel.

With 47 years of service to the Indianapolis Public Schools, Payne has taught in the city's elementary schools and currently serves as the director of the Crispus Attucks Center, which comprises the Office of Multicultural Education and the Crispus Attucks Museum.

Road Scholar will award this scholarship annually to an educator with at least 10 years of experience in education, who is a member of the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE); a member of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH); is on the faculty of a Historically Black College or University (HBCU); or is a professor of African American studies. The scholarship provides an opportunity to experience a Road Scholar or Elderhostel program anywhere in the world.

Launched in 2004, Road Scholar is an initiative of Elderhostel (www.elderhostel.org), the world's largest not-for-profit educational travel organization for adults.

Chuck D receives prestigious award

(GIN/NNPA) – Artist and humanitarian Chuck D has received the Pan-African Lifetime Achievement Award – along with Zwelinzima Vavi, of South Africa's trade union group COSATU – from the Washington, DC-based TransAfrica Forum.

TransAfrica is the oldest and largest African American human rights and social justice advocacy organization promoting diversity and equity in the foreign policy arena and justice for the African World. The awards were presented Dec. 3 at the group's Progressive Vision in Action Awards Benefit Gala celebrating activism through art and culture.

Other honorees and special guests were to include Danny Glover, Wynton Marsalis, Susan L. Taylor, and Congress members Donald Payne and Maxine Waters.

IS GAY THE NEW BLACK?

Marriage ban spurs debate

BY JESSE WASHINGTON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK – Gay is the new black, say the protest signs and magazine covers, casting the gay marriage battle as the last frontier of equal rights for all.

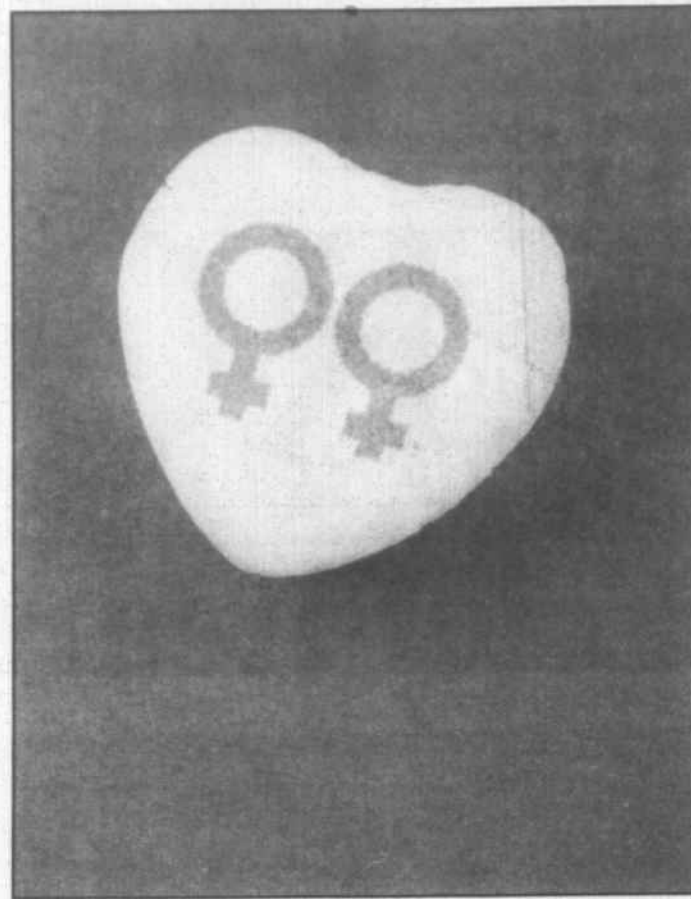
Gay marriage is not a civil right, opponents counter, insisting that minority status comes from who you are rather than what you do.

The gay rights movement entered a new era when Barack Obama was elected the first black president the same day that voters in California and Florida passed referendums to prevent gays and lesbians from marrying, while Arizonans turned down civil unions and Arkansans said no to adoptions by same-sex couples.

Racism was defanged by Obama's triumph, leaving gays as perhaps the last group of Americans claiming that their basic rights are being systematically denied.

"Black people are equal now, and gay people aren't," said Emil Wilbekin, a black gay man and the editor of Giant magazine. "I always have this discussion with my friends: What's worse, being a black man or a black gay man?"

"Civil rights have come



Emil Wilbekin

their fight to the African-American legacy. They acknowledge significant differences in the experiences of gays and blacks, ranging from slavery to the relative affluence of white gay men to the choice made by some gays to conceal their sexual orientation, which is not an option for those with darker skin.

"I believe we are very much in a modern-day civil rights struggle," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay rights organization.

"We liken some of the experiences that we have had and will have to the (black) civil rights struggle. We also are enormously respectful of the differences," he said. "What we are best served doing is when we take lessons from the civil rights experience and apply them to our work."

See New black on A4

much further than gay rights," he said. "A lot of people in the gay community have been condemned for their lifestyle and promiscuity and drugs and sex, so it's odd that when they want to conform and model themselves after straight people and have the same rights for marriage and domestic partnership and adoption, they're being blocked."

In a cover story for the Advocate magazine titled

"Gay is the New Black," Michael Joseph Gross wrote, "These past few years, we've made so much progress that we'd begun to think everybody saw us as we see our, we were faced with the reality that a majority of voters don't like us, don't think we're normal, don't believe our lives and loves count as much or are worth as much as theirs."

Yet even some gay leaders are reluctant to directly tie

President Obama changes the name game

BY DEEPTI HAJELA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK – Zenas Ackah has heard it all his life: What kind of name is that? You must not be from here. You must be foreign.

Actually, no. Born in the United States, the 22-year-old college senior with the Greek first name and the Ghanaian last name grew up in Philadelphia.

But Ackah is hopeful that change is coming, that the idea of an "American" name will expand beyond monikers like Tom and Harry and Sally and Jane and Smith and Jones. He figures he's got a strong weapon on his side – for at least the next four years, when people look to the most powerful American in the country, the "uber-American" if you will, they'll be looking at President Barack Hussein Obama.

"I think it will help people understand that people in America aren't just John, Jack, Mary," Ackah said. "They're Zenas and Barack."

Obama's name gave him his share of trouble during the campaign. He acknowledged its unfamiliarity to most Americans, and there were times when supporters of his opponent made a point of using his middle name, which was seen as an attempt to cast doubt on his background and faith.

But the next four years will ensure that his name is no longer unfamiliar.

People have already named their infants after him.

The more people hear it, the more mainstream it becomes, said Don Nilsen, a professor of English linguistics at Arizona State University and co-president of the American Name Society.

"Who is more American than the president of the United States?" he said. "There's no question it will have a ripple effect, because of the power of the position."

Names traditionally considered "American" tend to be "British-sounding stuff," said Cleveland Evans, professor of psychology at Bellevue University in Nebraska. "We are still basically an English-culture country. We really are still in many ways at our base an Anglo-Saxon culture."

He and Nilsen pointed out that immigrants have long had a history of changing their names to fit in more with the United States, or have even had others change it for them.

Obama, born in Hawaii and named after his Kenyan

father, went by Barry for some years before deciding to use his full first name.

Ackah can understand. He still finds the comments about his name irritating, along with the assumptions people make upon hearing a name they're not familiar with.

"People start talking down to you because they think you're foreign," he



Obama

said.

Electing someone named Barack Obama president reflects a shift in attitudes about names that's been going on in American society for the past few decades, says Laura Wattenberg, a name expert and author who runs the blog The Baby Name Wizard.

"As a group, American

See Name game on A4

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