

Not a Note

Washington, D.C. fire station to be named for first black chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — D.C. fire officials and community leaders are celebrating the naming of a fire station in honor of the city's first African American fire chief.

Burton Johnson was fire chief from 1973 to 1978. He first joined the department in 1943 and was originally assigned to Engine Company 4. At the time, it was an all-black station in a segregated department.

Engine 4 is now located on Sherman Avenue in northwest Washington and it will be named in his honor on Saturday. Fire Chief Dennis Rubin, Johnson's relatives and community leaders are expected to attend the noon ceremony.



Johnson

Mementos of Jackson buried at storied Detroit cemetery

DETROIT (AP) — Woodlawn Cemetery is the final resting place for civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks and many of the Motor City's musical elite, including members of the Four Tops and living legend Diana Ross also has a site reserved.

Michael Jackson is among them — in spirit, at least. Hundreds of stuffed animals — some wearing a single white glove — and other memorabilia left outside the Motown Historical Museum in memory of the man whose career started at Motown Records were buried Friday in two vaults at the cemetery. Police led two hearses filled with the items and seven cars with funeral flags flying in a procession from the museum to the ceremony.

The cemetery had two donated plots, and private companies provided the free vaults and a granite headstone engraved with a tribute to Jackson. About 40 people attended the ceremony.

Mason said the hundreds of people offering flowers, letters, cards, photos and other items to a temporary memorial outside the Motown museum wanted to share "pieces of our love for Michael."

The 50-year-old Jackson died June 25 in California. He signed to Motown Records in the late 1960s with his brothers as the Jackson 5.

Billie Holiday statue rededicated in Baltimore

BALTIMORE (AP) — A Baltimore statue of Billie Holiday now bears images evoking the anti-racism message of a song recorded by the jazz icon in the 1930s, just as the sculptor intended.



Holiday

Two panels at the statue's base — one of a lynched man and another of a newborn baby — were part of the design, but weren't included when the piece was erected in 1985 in a West Baltimore neighborhood.

At a rededication ceremony last Friday on the 50th anniversary of Holiday's death, Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon said people should view the statue and the panels as a depiction

of "raw" history.

Holiday, who lived in Baltimore as a child, recorded "Strange Fruit," a jazz ballad condemning lynchings of blacks. It was considered one of the first anti-racism songs in American popular music.

Boston offers loan to black paper

BOSTON (AP) — Boston Mayor Tom Menino says the city is willing to offer a \$200,000 loan to prevent the city's financially struggling African-American weekly newspaper from shutting down permanently.

The 44-year-old Bay State Banner suspended publication and laid off 12 employees this month, blaming a steep drop in advertising.

Menino tells The Boston Globe that the loan will come from the Boston Local Development Corp., a private nonprofit administered by the Boston Redevelopment Authority that provides cash to struggling small businesses.

The free paper has often been critical of Menino, but the mayor says the loan is not an attempt to curry favor, but to help a business that's important to the minority community. The Banner's executive editor had no comment on the loan.

Obama chooses Berrien for EEOC

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is choosing an NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund lawyer to chair the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

The White House announced Obama's decision to nominate Jacqueline Berrien last Thursday.

She has been the fund's associate director-counsel since September 2004.

The Harvard Law School graduate also has worked for the Ford Foundation's Peace and Social Justice Program, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and the American Civil Liberties Union.

In a statement, Obama notes Berrien's "passion and leadership" and says he's confident she will make sure the EEOC lives up to its mission of eliminating discrimination in the workplace.



Berrien

Many older whites stayed home for election in 2008

BY HOPE YEN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — For all the attention generated by Barack Obama's candidacy, the share of eligible voters who actually cast ballots in November declined for the first time in a dozen years. The reason: Older whites with little interest in backing either Barack Obama or John McCain stayed home.

Census figures released Monday show about 63.6 percent of the nation's eligible voters, or 131.1 million people, voted last November.

Although that represented an increase of 5 million voters — virtually all of them minorities — the turnout relative to the population of eligible voters was a decrease from 63.8 percent in 2004.

Ohio and Pennsylvania were among those showing declines in white voters, helping Obama carry those battleground states.

"While the significance of minority votes for Obama is clearly key, it cannot be overlooked that reduced white support for a Republican candidate allowed minorities to tip the balance in many slow-growing 'purple' states," said William H. Frey, a demographer for Brookings Institution, referring to key battleground states that don't notably tilt Democrat or Republican.

"The question I would ask is if a continuing stagnating economy could change that," he said.

According to census data, 66 percent of whites voted last November, down 1 percentage point from 2004. Blacks increased their turnout by 5



KRT Photo

The Obamas celebrate victory last November.

percentage points to 65 percent, nearly matching whites. Hispanics improved turnout by 3 percentage points, and Asians by 3.5 percentage points, each reaching a turnout of nearly 50 percent. In all, minorities made up nearly 1 in 4 voters in 2008, the most diverse electorate ever.

By age, voters 18-to-24 were the only group to show a statistically significant increase in turnout, with 49 percent casting ballots, compared with 47 percent in 2004.

Blacks had the highest turnout rate among this age group — 55 percent, or an 8 percentage point jump from 2004. In contrast, turnout for whites 18-24 was basically flat at 49 percent. Asians and Hispanics in that age group increased to 41 percent and 39 percent, respectively.

Among whites 45 and older, turnout fell 1.5 percentage point to just under 72 percent.

Asked to identify their reasons for not voting, 46 percent

of all whites said they didn't like the candidates, weren't interested or had better things to do, up from 41 percent in 2004. Hispanics had similar numbers for both years.

Not surprisingly, blacks showed a sharp increase in interest.

Among the blacks who failed to vote last fall most cited problems such as illness, being out of town or transportation issues. Just 16 percent of nonvoting blacks cited

See Voting on A7

AARP's first black leader looks ahead

BY PHAROAH MARTIN
NNPA NATIONAL
CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Since taking over in April as CEO of AARP, the nation's top advocacy group for people over 50, A. Barry Rand has been asked the same question by reporters, as well as others.

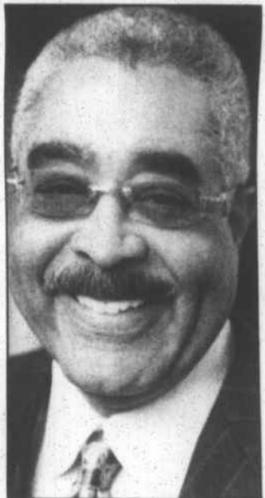
They want to know if a quintessential "grey suit" who has been long-known as a corporate America change-agent can successfully transition into somebody who can lead a non-profit group with nearly 40 million members.

"Quite frankly, I didn't understand the question when it was first asked," Rand marveled during an interview in his office at the AARP national headquarters in northwest Washington, D.C. "I never thought what professional path you took would determine in your heart what you felt society should be. I am a child of the sixties, and in the Sixties you had to be about social change."

Unlike his predecessor, Bill Novelli, who served in non-profit leadership positions, Rand has a private sector past. Before making history as the first Black CEO of AARP, the nation's largest membership organization, and before becoming one of the first African-Americans to lead any Fortune 500 company — Avis — this son of the Civil Rights era, worked for Xerox for 30 years. There, he rose through the corporate ranks and spearheaded Xerox's corporate diversity initiatives.

In fact, Rand's professional career began at 24 as Xerox's only Black sales representative in Washington, D.C., and nationally one of its top salesmen.

"When I initially grew up in Washington, D.C., it was a segregated city. So, up until the fifth grade, my color determined where I lived and where I went to school," he says about the upbringing that shaped the principles that guide his life and ultimately led him to this new position. "We were all about community building. My grandfather was a Methodist minister. My parents were all about two



AARP Photo

A. Barry Rand

things — achievement and social change. That is what you were supposed to do. And the theory was that you had a better opportunity to drive social change if you were also achieving, because people would listen to you. So I was always involved in issues of that time."

Those issues included civil rights, rights for the aging, women's rights and rights for the poor. They are issues that were intrinsic to the diversity programs Rand set up at Xerox and are issues for which he now advocates at AARP.

"It doesn't matter what you called it; we were opening doors to the American dream," reflects Rand, who also serves as volunteer chairman of the Howard University Board of Trustees.

"What you were doing professionally was only half of your brain. The other half of your brain is to what do I do to change America, and your heart was 100 percent what do I do to change America."

The tall, mild-mannered CEO smiles reflectively, sitting in his spacious office above Washington's populous downtown area. He has a direct view to the U.S. Capitol, where AARP fiercely lobbies.

Headquartered in D.C., AARP is powerful not only because of the sheer number of members that it has, but also because — at 51 years old — it represents a demographic that is one of the most active and sought after voting blocs in politics.

If AARP achieves its mission, then it will have helped achieve the American dream for millions of Americans, Rand says.

"We happen to be in a business that if we get put out

of business then America would be a better place," he smiles. "Our real challenge is demographics. If you flash forward, 40 percent of the population will be people of color. And so, we have to make sure that we are relevant and supportive. We must continue to make sure that we listen and represent the new demographics."

This is a precarious moment for Rand, AARP and its agenda. Financial security and health care — two issues that have always been central to AARP's existence — are now priorities for the President of the United States.

"Affordability and access," says Rand as he describes what he believes any viable health care bill must have if it is to be passed through Congress. "Without those, you cannot have the American dream."

With the new health care

See Rand on A7

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