

# At a Glance

News briefs compiled from the Associated Press

## World AIDS Day

The Rev. Kwabena Rainey Cheeks gives an emotional account of his struggles as a man and a minister in the fight against prejudice toward the HIV-infected as he spoke to an interfaith congregation observing World AIDS Day in Washington Sunday, Nov. 30. Cheeks, a gay pastor, has conducted funerals for people who died of AIDS but were rejected by parents, churches, and funeral homes.



(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)



(AP Photo/Fox News Sunday, Robert Giroux)

## Farrakhan and Hussein

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, left, answers questions from Fox News Sunday host Tony Snow Nov. 30 in Washington. Saddam Hussein is more popular in Iraq than President Clinton is in the United States, Farrakhan said Sunday as he prepared to depart on a world tour including a visit to Iraq.



(AP Photo/Lou Krasky)

## Pledge against racism

With smiles and a handshake, Ronnie Maxwell, chairman of the S.C. Democratic Party, left; Jesse Washington, executive director of the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council, center; and Henry McMaster, chairman of the S.C. Republican Party, right, seal what they called the nation's first pledge to eliminate negative racial politics in state government. The two party leaders signed the pledge during a news conference Monday, Dec. 1, in Columbia, S.C.



(AP Photo/Thom O'Connor/HO)

## Free at last

FILE — James F. Willis is shown in his New York home in this copy of a 1995 file photo. Alaska's Gov. Tony Knowles pardoned Willis, now 72, Wednesday, Nov. 26, of a 1946 manslaughter conviction that witnesses say was a racially motivated attack. The pardon will allow Willis to qualify for veterans benefits.

## Haley Tribute

Workers position a bronze statue of the late Alex Haley into place at Morningside Park in Knoxville, Tenn., Wednesday, Nov. 26, following a dedication ceremony. Haley, author of the acclaimed novel "Roots," was born in west Tennessee. In his later years, he had homes in Knoxville, Tenn., and Norris, Tenn. He died in 1992.



(AP Photo/Knoxville News-Sentinel, Clay Owen)

# Bed and breakfast a \$150 a night oasis in crime-ridden inner city

By MICHAEL PEARSON  
Associated Press Writer

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (AP) — Down the street from the Chocolate City nightclub, next door to the Family Dollar and not far from where the bullets fly, Herrett Parker and her husband are playing host.

Behind the gates and plain facade of the 85-year-old building they call home, Mrs. Parker dishes up lavish meals, draws whirlpool baths and otherwise fusses over her guests at the Parker Garden Bed & Breakfast.

That's right. A \$150 a night oasis in the midst of one of America's most crime-ridden, drug-infested towns, a place where many people would pay to get out if only they had the money.

"Even the black folk from St. Louis are leery. They read the same newspapers," Mrs. Parker said. "But when they come through that door, they don't know where they are."

The Parker Garden is

located just east of the burned-out heart of East St. Louis, a motley assemblage of sagging buildings, fast food shacks and liquor shops left for dead three decades ago when its middle class followed industry out of town. Just a few blocks away, housing projects provide the setting for almost nightly shootings.

Yet business is thriving. The Parkers opened their home to guests in June and have had paying customers nearly every weekend since, Mrs. Parker said. Bookings have already exceeded the entire first-year expectations, she said.

The Parkers are part of a small but growing class of pioneers in a \$5 billion industry that has long been dominated by white, rural innkeepers, said Pat Hardy, executive director of the Professional Association of Innkeepers International in Santa Barbara, Calif.

Where just a few years ago Hardy knew of just one black-owned inn, there are

now more than a dozen scattered throughout the country — from Anacortes, Wash. to Martha's Vineyard, Mass.

Why? For starters, resistance to black innkeepers has been slow to fade, said Doris Clark, president of the African-American Association of Innkeepers International and owner of the Twin Oaks Inn on Martha's Vineyard Island. She had to mount a three-year court battle to overcome the objections of neighbors who thought she would be better off opening in a predominantly black area.

But blacks are also spending more and more money on travel, and many prefer to stay with black-owned businesses, she said.

"As African Americans, there aren't very many places we feel comfortable staying," she said.

Most visitors to the Parker Garden are local couples, and all have been black. Unlike traditional bed and breakfasts, with their empha-

sis on Victorian charm, the Parker Garden was designed as a modern romantic retreat.

One suite features a whirlpool set into a mirrored, candle-strewn alcove. In the other, lovers can nestle in the tub watching a flickering fireplace or, in warmer weather, relax on a private balcony overlooking one of the city's rare gardens.

The Parkers say they don't need to go to great lengths to protect their guests. Gates and a watchful eye seem to do the trick. "We've lived here for 19 years and nothing has happened to us," Mrs. Parker said.

Acquantta Spencer of Pittsburgh opted recently to stay at the Parker Garden instead of a hotel when she came to town for a funeral. All the pampering helped her forget the bad reputation lurking outside.

"I walked in and I just fell in love," she said. "I didn't know it was supposed to be so bad here, in the city, but I would come back. You don't think about it here."

Granted, two bedrooms hidden behind wrought iron gates and red brick walls aren't likely to change East St. Louis' reputation as a haven for drugs and gangs. It's certainly nothing on the scale of the \$210 million luxury hotel being built next to the Casino Queen riverboat.

But the Parker Garden is being seized on as a symbol of renewal in the town that gave the world jazz legend Miles Davis before crumbling into chaos.

That an electrician and his wife would sink thousands of dollars of their own money into a business predicated on attracting visitors is powerful tonic for a town long steeped in despair, Mayor Gordon Bush said.

"We're moving ahead in the city with projects which are much larger," he said. "But what's unique about this is that it shows the confidence of our own residents."

"If people like us don't stay and try to make the place better, then no one's going to stay," he said.

## SLAVE SHIP

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American system of judicial appeal works, because American courts are under a lot of question and pressure now," Palmer said. "And, historically, we want to show how slaves were brought across the Middle Passage, and we want to show how the Amistad event was one of the major events that led to the Civil War."

The events are the subject of a new Steven Spielberg movie, "Amistad," which opens nationwide Dec. 12.

"I don't know whether his is going to be a historical presentation or entertainment," Palmer said.

The story of the Amistad has not been covered in many history books. Now the Spielberg film, books about the rebellion and even an Amistad Trail, part of the Connecticut Freedom Trail, are popularizing the tale.

Palmer was on his way to look up something else in a library about five years ago when he bumped into an abbreviated account of the story. It haunted him. He delved into it.

He and his wife, who have devoted their retirement years and incomes to



Juanita and E.B. Palmer operate the African-American cultural complex in Raleigh.

developing the African-American Cultural Complex on their three-acre homesite, eventually decided it was feasible for them to try to bring that piece of history back to life.

The Palmers worked with a state Department of Archives and History employee and learned about Amistad organizations across the country. They visited New England sites pertinent to the Amistad experience.

Now, the projects are in the plan-

ning stages, and the cultural center is starting to become a reality after the Palmers' efforts to raise money finally began paying off.

"I'd like for it to tell the history of the African-American people," Mrs. Palmer said.

Some preliminary work has started. A builder is enlarging one of the center's small exhibit houses to accommodate some Amistad and other exhibits, and an artist has ren-

dered plans for a three-hut village to represent Sierra Leone. Next, the amphitheater stage will be renovated. A composer is working on the pageant.

The Raleigh Arts Commission and City Council appropriated \$7,500 for the pageant and \$2,000 for a half-size replica of the ship. Board members have pledged \$400 each, totaling \$4,000. The A.J. Fletcher Foundation notified the Palmers last week that the center's request for a \$5,000 grant had been approved.

But there is a long way to go, and other grants and gifts are being sought.

Palmer estimates it will take \$150,000 to get the pageant to the point of performance. A preliminary estimate calls for about \$1.5 million to design, build, equip and operate a state-of-the-art Amistad model adjacent to the amphitheater, a figure Palmer says may be unrealistic. He thinks they can bring in an Amistad for less, but he is determined to do whatever it takes to get the little vessel on board.

"It's too big a part of American history to be buried," Palmer said. "It's going to happen. This is not a dream. It is going to happen at whatever the cost."

## TESTS

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Evaluation Systems of Amherst, Mass. It contains 50 reading questions, 50 math questions and two writing questions covering general knowledge.

The test includes such questions as:

- Math: "Tara can develop 2 rolls of film in about 18 minutes. At this rate, how long will it take for her to develop 8 rolls of film?— The answer is multiple choice, giving the test-taker a one-in-five chance of guessing correctly.

- Writing: "Most students have had some type of difficulty in one course or another. ... Write about one such situation you faced either as a student or as a teacher.

- Reading: The test asks that passages be read, then asks multiple choice questions about the passages. In one, a book index about flowers is given with 29 entries and page numbers. Two questions ask which pages

to see for information about medicinal uses of flowers and how to describe the organizational pattern of the index.

"The path of least resistance is to go with a basic math and language test," said John Dornan, director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina.

A meaningful testing program would examine teaching competency and cover at least 30 areas of teaching specialties, Dornan said.

"The issue is are the people teaching adequately? Passing or failing this test won't give you information about their teaching methods," he said. "Do you have a test for a teacher of reading at a middle school?"

State officials looked at the tests available and decided to try the CBEST version, said Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Richard Thompson.

"There were a very limited number of tests available that measured the reading, writing and mathematics, which is the core knowledge you would expect any teacher to have,"

Thompson said. "We keep hearing that it's probably 10th-grade level."

"This test ain't going to tell you if folks can teach geometry. It should tell you if they have the verbal skills to communicate anything. ... It will tell you if they have some core knowledge skills."

The same test is used in California to screen people seeking a teacher's license. Georgia, Arkansas and Texas used similar tests to screen licensed teachers, but dropped them shortly after starting them, according to research by the Public School Forum.

In Arkansas and Texas, the tests had "little impact on instructional practices," according to a Public School Forum report. In Georgia, test results screened poor teachers effectively and caused the state university system to focus on education colleges, the report said.

Under the North Carolina law, teachers get three chances to pass the test before being fired. Teachers who fail the first test are placed on paid leave and get remedial classes at state expense.

Thompson said state education officials will do whatever the Legislature wants if the law is changed. As the law now reads, however, the intent is to give teachers a general knowledge test at the end of the 1997-98 school year.

"If the purpose is to see if somebody can teach well, this is not the test for that," Thompson said.

"If the legislative intent is for that to be scaled up, we'll certainly correct it. We did not have the time to develop a test and validate it from scratch. You can't just give a test like that when you're talking about somebody's employment without validating it."

Dornan said the current system also doesn't address the problem of teachers who are pushed into classes out of their specialty.

"If people can't pass this test, it is a rather sad comment on the fact that they have passed a college program and gotten a teaching certificate, because the test is not very demanding," Dornan said.

## SUMMIT

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uncles can offer critical support assisting with the needs of children and single parents. "They can help folks who otherwise wouldn't realize some of their hopes, dreams and goals," she said.

Another issue that Robinson said needs to be addressed is bureaucratic obstacles to volunteers. "We have to realize that sometimes we create hindrances to people offering

their time, if you say you've got to be this kind of person or you've got to be certified and licensed," Robinson said.

In addition, there needs to be greater awareness of making services more convenient and available in communities, said Robinson, who has been with the Sickle Cell Disease Association more than 15 years. For example, providing health care for low-income people and immunizations for children should be arranged in a setting as close by as possible.

### Area delegates to the summit include the following:

- |                        |                 |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Forsyth County</b>  | Martha Adams    |
| Nan Griswold           | Karen Adams     |
| Nigel Alston           | Santes Beatty   |
| Ronald Drago           | Treana Bowling  |
| David Hudson           | Kathy Boyette   |
| Walter Marshall        | Rick Holbert    |
| Martha Martinat        | Kumar Lakahvani |
| Henry May              | Judy Mendenhall |
| Bill Moser             | Gladys Robinson |
| Barbara Pace           | Linda Sloan     |
| Maurene Rickards       | Jim Stanley     |
| Annette Scipio         | Boo Stauffer    |
| Nancy Young            | Pricilla Taylor |
|                        | Judy Wicker     |
|                        | Robert Williams |
| <b>Guilford County</b> |                 |
| Molly Keeney           |                 |

## PROTESTS

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"There needs to be a public debate so there will be a public understanding of the arguments pro and con," Hooker said. "I welcome anything that heightens the intellectual climate on campus, and any kind of debate does — as long as it's done with civility."

Protesters plan to show solidarity for affirmative action at Connerly's speech but not disrupt it, Fischer said.

## DOUGLAS

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alternative, then someone could get shot. And you have to remember, when an officer draws his weapon, that is deadly force. I'd much rather spray someone than have to shoot him."

According to Douglas, there are some things mentioned in the book that the State Bureau of Investigation won't exactly find flattering. But some stories needed to be told, he added. The purpose of the book is not to

embarrass the SBI. Nor is it to boost the author's ego, Douglas said.

"This isn't a vanity publication. I just wanted to chronicle and share my career," Douglas said, adding that he'll be giving away the proceeds from his publication.

Livingstone College in Salisbury will be the benefactor. Douglas said the school enabled him to fulfill his dream — becoming an officer of the law. So he hopes the income from his book will make that education possible for someone else who lacks the financial resources to get a college education.

Douglas earned a bachelor's degree in sociology while attending Livingstone. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy, and he attended the National Drug Enforcement Academy in Washington, D.C. Douglas spent several years assigned to the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) unit, where he was a trainer, facilitator and coordinator for the Southeastern states. He is a lifetime member of the North State Law Enforcement Officers Association.

A resident of Greensboro, Douglas is a member of the Guilford

County Area Mental Health Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Board, president of the Greensboro chapter of the Livingstone College Alumni Association, a member of Mt. Olivet AME Zion Church, and board member of Brothers Organized to Save Others (BOTS), a group that mentors young men through all facets of everyday life.

A book signing will be held at Livingstone College on Sunday.