

NATIONAL BRIEFS



Byrd remembered

AUSTIN, Texas - Two dozen protesters Monday marked the one-year anniversary of the dragging death of a black man by praying at the Capitol and demanding a special session of the Legislature to enact a tougher law against hate crimes.

The James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Act, which would have toughened Texas' hate crimes law, died in the state Senate earlier this year. The demonstrators were particularly critical of Gov. George W. Bush for not taking a position on the bill.

White supremacist John William King, 24, was convicted earlier this year and sentenced to death. The other defendants are awaiting trial.

Democratic lawmakers have pointed to Bush's own White House ambitions as one reason the hate-crimes bill failed.

Bush spokesman Scott McClellan noted that Texas already has a hate-crimes law and added, "Those who commit violent, heinous crimes in Texas will be held accountable."

New Hampshire approves King Day

CONCORD, N.H. - The son of Martin Luther King Jr. stood next to the New Hampshire governor on Monday as she ended the state's distinction as the only one without a holiday named for the slain civil rights leader.

Martin Luther King III said it was fitting that Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, New Hampshire's first female governor, was the one to sign the legislation.

"My father believed that democracy ought to be inclusive of everyone, and I think your signature on this bill signifies the progress we've made," he said.

Martin Luther King Jr. Civil Rights Day will be officially observed for the first time in New Hampshire on Jan. 17, 2000.

The change, approved by the state House and Senate last month, ends 20 years of attempts to put his name on the holiday, which had been celebrated as Civil Rights Day under a compromise passed in 1991.

Opponents had argued that singling out King would detract from other American heroes such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

Clayton introduces Agriculture Credit Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congresswoman Eva M. Clayton, D-N.C., recently introduced a bill to relieve a debt forgiveness restriction enacted by the 1996 Farm Bill. That law made anyone who had ever received any kind of debt forgiveness ineligible to receive another loan from the United States Department of Agriculture.

The proposed bill, the Agriculture Credit Act of 1998, will allow farmers to remain eligible for USDA loans in three instances: 1. following a loan consolidation, rescheduling, reamortization, or deferral of a loan; 2. following a loan write-down due to a financial problem related to a natural disaster or medical condition of the borrower or an immediate family member of the borrower; and 3. following a loan write-down provided as a part of a resolution of a discrimination complaint against the secretary of the USDA.

"The changes made in 1996 placed an unfair and unreasonable burden on farmers who must seek help from the USDA," Clayton said. "This bill will restore fairness, and perhaps help to restore the confidence of farmers in the USDA loan programs."

CBC urges FCC to link poor schools to Web

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congresswoman Julia Carson, D-Ind., recently joined with other members of the Congressional Black Caucus in strongly urging the Federal Communications Commission to fully fund the E-rate program.

"Every child in America must have the opportunity to log on to the information superhighway," Carson said. "The E-rate will ensure that even schools with tight budgets will be able to afford the basic telecommunications services needed to link to the Internet."

In response to basic wiring needed by inner city and rural schools to access the Internet, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 included provisions for a discounted E-rate to allow schools and libraries to install improved telecommunications infrastructure for Internet links.

The E-rate is financed by changes in existing telecommunication regulatory fees. Under the program, eligible schools and libraries can receive discounts ranging from 20 to 90 percent.

The FCC recently approved \$2.25 billion for the E-rate, nearly \$1 billion more than the current funding.

Former Sudanese president to meet with rebel officials

KHARTOUM, Sudan - The former military ruler of Sudan, Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri, has announced plans to hold talks with Sudanese combatants in an attempt to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the northeast African country that has claimed more than 2 million lives during the past 16 years.

Nimeiri returned home from exile on May 22 after spending 14 years in Cairo, Egypt.

"I am ready to risk my life because I was the cause of half the problems in the Sudan," he told supporters recently in the capital of Khartoum. "I will contact government officials, opposition leaders and the (Sudan People's Liberation Army) to try to find a peaceful solution to the conflict." - Nihal Bol for IPS

Army worm invades Somalia's main crop

NAIROBI, Kenya - Army worms, which since last month have devastated parts of East and Central Africa, have now invaded Somalia, worsening the precarious food situation in the Horn of African country.

An assessment report says an outbreak of the African army worm, a

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Five years later, Simpson struggles with infamy

By LINDA DEUTSCH
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - O.J. Simpson would rather not mark the fifth anniversary of his ex-wife's slaying, but he says, "The media won't let it go." Neither will the American public, still fascinated by a man acquitted in court but convicted in the minds of many.

Forget the glory days of his gridiron triumphs, the Hertz commercials and the movies that endeared him to millions. Now the defining event in Simpson's life is the case that many called the Trial of the Century - a legacy that leaves him dismayed with both the media and a public he sees as morbidly attached to the crime and its aftermath.

"Everyone used this as their cause, and I've learned to live with it," Simpson said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It isn't about me anymore. It's about having a scapegoat."

"People need something to argue about," he says. "I listen to these talk shows and I think our country is bored. How else can they keep these stories going for so long? I guess we can't deal with our lives, so we sit around talking about someone else's life."

In a moment of reflection, Simpson adds, "The O.J. case evidently has become part of people's lives."

On June 12, 1994, Simpson's ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, was slashed to death along with a friend, Ronald Goldman. Their bodies were found in a river of blood outside her Brentwood condominium. Simpson, tried for the murders, was acquitted in 1995 and released from jail to begin his life anew amid a backlash from those who believed he got away with murder.

Both victims' families sued him in civil court and won judgments of \$33.5 million in damages in 1997 from a jury which held him liable under a different standard of proof. That verdict is still on appeal.

Afterward, Simpson successfully challenged paying the award and lives well today on a hefty pension plan he set up when he was making millions. Such pensions are exempt



O.J. Simpson, center, flanked by famed defense team F. Lee Bailey, left, and Johnnie Cochran Jr., reacts as he is found not guilty in the sensational murder trial of his wife and her friend Ronald Goldman. In the five years that have passed since the double murder, Simpson says he has become a "scapegoat."

from civil court judgments, although any money Simpson earns would be seized immediately by the court.

His life today is shaped by those boundaries. But Simpson, who exudes a cheerful personality, has a different take: He refuses to acknowledge that his life is not the life he would have chosen.

"My premature retirement is not as bad as it's cracked up to be," he says. "But the years of his superstardom are a dim memory. 'I play golf. I raise two kids. I don't go out. I live the simplest, most regulated life, not the life I imagined for myself. But I find it rewarding,' he says. 'I have two terrific kids. I have friends.'"

There is a girlfriend named Christie, but he avoids discussing the relationship. His priority now, he says, is caring for Justin, 10, and Sydney, 13. He drives them to and

from school and attends their athletic events. The children live with him while his in-laws, Lou and Juditha Brown, battle for custody. Recent reports have indicated an amicable settlement is near, but neither side wants to comment.

Simpson, whose Brentwood home was sold in foreclosure and torn down by the buyer, rents a Pacific Palisades home for \$6,000 a month, drawing \$25,000 a month on his \$4 million pension. In another spectacle last February, lawyers for the Goldmans and Browns auctioned personal property seized from the home, garnering \$430,000, more than half of it from a man who bought Simpson's Heisman trophy to impress his girlfriend.

His older children, Jason and Arnelle, visit frequently and his sister, Shirley Baker, spends large amounts of time with him and the children. His longtime housekeeper and secretary remain loyal employees.

Simpson adamantly maintains he did not kill his ex-wife and her friend, and he insists that the case will be solved eventually.

Asked about the likelihood of

someone else being arrested, Simpson says, "I have no doubt it's going to happen."

A few private detectives are working on their own time, he says, following leads which they occasionally bring to him.

"If one day there's a new D.A., my goal is to take this stuff to him and tell him to look into it," Simpson says.

"If tomorrow I was able to solve this case, I wouldn't spend one day at the trial of those people," he adds. "They (messed) up my life, but I don't feel the disgust people displayed toward me."

Those public displays have become rare, he says, part of what Simpson believes is the potential for a normal life. He was able to take his children to see the "Star Wars" prequel at a local theater.

"I signed about 100 autographs," he says. "People were hugging me. They very nice except for one guy who yelled something. I know if the media was there that's all they would have reported."

A golfing enthusiast, Simpson is forced to play on public courses because the exclusive country clubs

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Making an Impact




As a former teacher, it's no surprise Lozelle De Luz, Ph.D., helps prepare neighborhood students for college. Although she owns three McDonald's in Wilmington, Delaware, she also finds time to get involved in the community on a state and national level. Lozelle mentors minority student athletes for college and helps to feed the homeless through annual programs she helped establish as External Vice President of the National Black McDonald's Operators Association. Her faith in the potential of every person makes a difference in the lives of everyone Lozelle touches.

Reggie Webb makes a world of difference in people's lives everyday. As President of the National Black McDonald's Operators Association, he helps get minority vendors into the McDonald's system, helping African-American businesses to succeed. Owning five McDonald's in southern California keeps Reggie busy, too; but he's never too busy to help someone else achieve their dream of success.

did somebody say ?

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This Week In Black History...

June 10, 1794 - Richard Allen founds Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first AME church in the U.S.

June 15, 1971 - The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the constitutionality of closing Jackson, Miss., pools rather than integrating them.