

NATIONAL BRIEFS



\$50 million to be used to reduce class size

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Education has been given \$50.1 million to hire about 1,289 teachers this fall to reduce class size in early grades across the nation.

"These funds will enable schools to lower class sizes immediately," said U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley.

President Clinton has requested an increase in funds to continue this program for the next six years. Over that time he wants to hire a total of 100,000 teachers to reduce class size nationwide to 18 students in first through third grades.

A 1998 Department of Education report, "Reducing Class Size: What Do We Do?" stated that research proved that reduced class size is related to increased student learning. - *The Chicago Defender*

Black buying power up 72.9 percent

ATHENS, Ga. - African-American consumers have had a 72.9 percent increase in buying power since 1990, according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth, a public service unit of the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

In a detailed report released last month, the center estimates that the buying power of African Americans will reach \$533 billion this year, up from \$308 billion in 1990. This number can be compared with the 56.7 percent increase projected for overall national buying power for the same period. - *Tri-State Defender*

BK honored by 100 Black Men

NNPA - 100 Black Men of America, a national alliance of African American male mentors who help black youths, recently named Burger King the "Corporation of the Year" during its national convention in Detroit.

"Burger King has set a standard for community involvement, diversity and inclusion for other corporations to emulate," said Thomas Dortch Jr., the association's president.

"We are honored to have been selected as 'Corporation of the Year' by the 100 Black Men of America," said Burger King CEO Dennis Malamatinas. "Burger King Corporation is an employer of choice for people from all backgrounds. We will continue to make diversity a part of our core business values." - *Carib News*

INTERNATIONAL

Thousands mourn Nkomo

HARARE, Zimbabwe (IPS) - Zimbabwe's vice president, Joshua Nkomo, was buried July 5 in the capital of Harare at a ceremony attended by thousands of mourners.

Nkomo, who died on July 1 at age 82, was laid to rest at the Heroes Acre cemetery on the outskirts of Harare.

Nkomo, the founder of modern-day Zimbabwe, entered politics in 1947 when he was elected president of the African National Congress.

During his political career, spanning more than 50 years, Nkomo fought for equality in this southern African country of 12.5 million people.

"Nkomo fought for the oneness of our people," President Robert Mugabe told mourners. - *Lewis Machipisa*

WHO: Water, population density root of disease

WASHINGTON, D.C. (IPS) - Health and environmental experts are urging policy makers to heed the impact of population density and fresh-water scarcity on the spread of disease.

"Where water is scarce, institutions weak and population growth rapid, the risks for disease are especially acute," said Robert Engelman, director of the Population and Environment Program at Population Action International, a Washington-based research and advocacy group.

The warning comes on the heels of a World Health Organization report stating that infectious diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, diarrhea and tuberculosis are the world's major killers of children and young adults.

Water serves as a vehicle for the spread of cholera, giardia and cryptosporidium, according to Mary Wilson, assistant professor at the Harvard Medical School of Public Health.

"Shortages of fresh water, crowding and poor sanitation can lead to an increase in water-borne infections," said Wilson, who recently briefed U.S. lawmakers on the issue. - *Danielle Knight*

Africa Lagging Behind In Telecommunications

HARARE, Zimbabwe (IPS) - Making a phone call or surfing the Internet has become a central feature of everyday life the world over except in Africa.

However a recent \$600 million project to install a submarine cable connecting the continent with the rest of the world is one of many projects that are set to revolutionize African communications into the new millennium, industry experts hope.

South Africa has seen the largest explosion in connectivity and boasts about 800,000 of the continent's 1.2 million Internet users. And unlike on the rest of the continent, South African users are both rural and urban. Virtually all of Africa has access to the Internet, but only in the urban centers and then only accessible to a small elite.

Work on the project is expected to start shortly, and the system should be operational by 2001 in line with the Independent Commission for World Wide Telecommunications Development's call for every human being to be in reach of a telephone by the early part of the next century. - *Gumaisi Mutume*

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This Week In Black History...

July 15, 1968 - Actress Ellen Holly integrates daytime television when she appears on ABC soap opera "One Life to Live." Holly plays a young woman "passing" for white.

July 18, 1963 - The legendary 54th Massachusetts Volunteers charge Fort Wagner in South Carolina. The all-black company was immortalized on the silver screen in the Oscar-winning film "Glory."

July 20, 1967 - The first National Conference of Black Power opens in Newark, N.J. More than 1,000 African Americans attend the four-day event. - *From "I, Too, Sing America."*

NAACP, AT&T to create tech centers

By PAUL SHEPARD
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - To help bridge the "digital divide" - the gap between white people and blacks and Hispanics in access to the Internet - the NAACP and AT&T will partner to create technology centers in 20 cities that will provide computer training and Internet seminars.

"The technological segregation known as the digital divide must be narrowed," NAACP President Kweisi Mfume said Monday.

Toward that end, Mfume announced that through the program AT&T will provide hardware, software and on-site support for technology in the centers.

"The centers will be open after the school doors close so parents and children can learn computer usage together," Mfume said. "The old and the young learning together will help reduce that divide."

AT&T spokesman Burke Stinson said that sites for the centers will include Baltimore, Dallas, Miami, New York, Philadelphia and Seattle.

Ameritech Corp. and the National Urban League announced last week they will spend \$350,000 to build five new Internet community centers in Aurora, Ill., Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis and Milwaukee. And 3Com Corp. said it will spend \$1 million in donated equipment and training in 10 cities to help teach students to be computer network engineers.

Last week, a Commerce Department report, "Falling Through the Net," said the disparity on the Internet between whites and black and Hispanic Americans is growing.

The report found about 47 percent of all whites own computers, but fewer than half as many blacks do. About 25.5 percent of Hispanics own computers, but 55 percent of Asian Americans do. Asian families also are most likely to have Internet access, with 36 percent online.

The report also found a child in a low-income white family is three times as likely to have Internet access



Photo by Richard Drew/The Associated Press
Kweisi Mfume, left, president and CEO of the NAACP, pauses during his keynote speech to acknowledge applause from the audience, which included Julian Bond, chairman of the NAACP board of directors, at the 90th annual convention in New York Monday.

as a child in a comparable black family, and four times as likely as a Hispanic child.

Most troubling for government experts were indications these disparities can't be blamed solely on differences in income. Among families earning \$15,000 to \$35,000, for example, more than 33 percent of whites owned computers, but only 19 percent of blacks did. That gap has widened nearly 62 percent since 1994 despite plunging computer prices.

Mfume also announced a new national campaign that could involve lawsuits against entertainment industry giants to end the scarcity of black characters on television shows.

The newly formed NAACP Television & Film Industry Diversity Ini-

tiative will monitor how well the entertainment industry reflects America's multicultural base.

Aside from calling for congressional and Federal Communications Commission hearings on licensing and ownership of networks, the campaign could initiate lawsuits and boycotts of advertisers, Mfume said.

"Apparently color does not sell in the minds of some executives," Mfume said Monday on ABC's "Good Morning America." "We have consumer dollars and we really want to flex consumer power."

Using the dearth of minorities in upcoming fall shows as a touchstone, Mfume said the NAACP is studying whether or not to file suit against the four major networks for violating the Communications Act of 1934.

The act says the airwaves belong

to the public, and Mfume argued there is a "virtual whitewash" in new programming because none of the 26 new shows slated for the upcoming fall season have minorities in featured roles.

"This glaring omission is an outrage and a shameful display by network executives who are either clueless, careless or both," Mfume said.

CBS President Leslie Moonves called the NAACP's concerns "relevant and extremely important." Moonves said in a statement that 11 of the network's 19 entertainment series broadcast this fall would have minority characters "in a primary role." Network spokesman Chris Ender said one new show this fall, "Now and Again," a drama, would feature a "Waiting to Exhale" star, Dennis Haysbert.

Farmer

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North Carolina.

Mr. Farmer used to say that "the NAACP is the Justice Department, the Urban League is the State Department and we are the nonviolent Marines." This was the organization he mobilized for the Freedom Ride in 1961. The idea, Mr. Farmer explained, was to have an interracial group ride through the South, whites in the back of the bus, blacks in front, all refusing to move when ordered.

Mr. Farmer was confident the response would force a showdown. A mob attacked the riders and burned a bus soon after they entered Alabama. In Montgomery, Ala., a mob threatened to break into a church where the Freedom Riders were meeting.

King, who had come to offer support, described the situation to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. Kennedy suggested a "cooling-off" period. Mr. Farmer was outraged. He remarked: "We have been cooling off for 350 years. If we cool off any more, we will be in a deep freeze. The Freedom Ride will go on."

King relayed this to Kennedy, who then persuaded Alabama and Mississippi authorities to provide protection, and the ride went on.

In Jackson, Miss., the protesters were arrested as they entered a segregated restaurant in the terminal. Refusing to make bond, they spent the next 40 days at the Parchman Prison Farm. Over the summer, hundreds of volunteers tried to integrate the same restaurant and were also arrested.

By the time the federal government banned racially designated travel facilities, the civil rights movement had gained momentum that carried over to areas such as voter registration.

Although based in New York, Mr. Farmer frequently returned to the front lines in the South. In the summer of 1963, he was jailed in Plaquemine, La., after leading a demonstration against police brutality. Released, he was surrounded by a mob. Warned that he would be killed if he showed himself, he took refuge in a mortuary and escaped by hiding in the back of a hearse. The episode kept him from the famous 1963 March on Washington.

In 1964, three volunteers in a CORE-sponsored voter registration drive in Mississippi, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, both white New Yorkers, and James Chaney, a black from Mississippi, were murdered by Ku Klux Klansmen.

"If any man says that he had no fear in the action of the sixties," he is a liar. Or without imagination," Mr. Farmer wrote in his autobiography.

By the end of 1965, Mr. Farmer had decided to step down as nation-

al-director of CORE. He believed that passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 largely completed the guaranteeing of the legal rights of citizenship to blacks.

Another reason was that CORE, like other civil rights groups, was increasingly under the sway of

younger black separatists, and whites were being purged from CORE chapters despite its tradition of inclusion.

Mr. Farmer sensed the waning of his influence. While believing that many activities of CORE chapters in the Northern ghettos would alienate

rather than attract, he could do little to stop them. Some CORE members called him insufficiently "black," noting that his wife, the former Lula A. Peterson, was white.

Mr. Farmer believed his views cost him a place as a leading spokesman for African Americans.

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