

NATIONAL BRIEFS



Urbanworld Film Festival debuts black movies

NEW YORK (IPS) - The annual Urbanworld Film Festival, billed as the "biggest and best" of all the festivals featuring black actors, wrapped up recently with general agreement that the future is bright for nonwhite movies.

More than 23 feature films, 20 short films, eight documentaries and 10 other films in a special Latin American section were shown at this year's festival.

The event opened with high glitz in the form of "Introducing Dorothy Dandridge," a feature movie about the tragic life and death of the first African American woman to receive a Hollywood Oscar nomination for Best Actress. It starred Halle Berry and was bankrolled by HBO.

Attention-grabbers also included Columbia Pictures' "Blue Streak," starring Martin Lawrence as a jewel thief disguised as a cop, and the Dimension Productions film "In Too Deep" with Omar Epps, LL Cool J and Pam Grier.

In the past, "Urbanworld" has been responsible for launching such U.S. studio-backed hits as "Soul Food," "How Stella Got Her Groove Back," "Why Do Fools Fall In Love" and independent films like "Down in The Delta."

"Our mission is to expose independent minority films and entertainment to the widest audience possible," said founder Stacey Spikes, a former marketing executive with Miramax and October Films. - *Leslie Goffe*

Texas worst polluter in North America

OTTAWA, Canada (IPS) - A study based on the North American Free Trade Agreement statistics shows that Texas remains at the top of North American polluters.

Ontario, Canada's second-largest and most populous province, has moved from third to second place in the pollution rankings. Louisiana and Ohio are in third and fourth positions, respectively.

Environmentalists are blaming Ontario's neo-conservative government, which virtually has dismantled its environment department since 1995, for the increase in pollution problems in the province.

The study by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation says that half of Canada's top 50 facilities for pollutant releases are in Ontario and two companies - Co-Steel Lasco in Whitby and Inco in Sudbury - are listed among the 25 biggest polluters. - *Mark Bourrie*

U.S.-UAE arms deal finalized

WASHINGTON, D.C. (IPS) - The United States is on the verge of finalizing an \$8 billion arms sale - the biggest single deal in nearly two decades - to one of the world's major oil producing nations: the United Arab Emirates, according to an authoritative trade source.

"We expect an announcement by the end of this year," said Tom Cardamone, editor of the Washington-based Arms Trade News.

The proposed sale includes about 80 F-16 combat aircraft - one of the frontline fighter planes currently in service with the U.S. Air Force - along with a staggering array of sophisticated missiles and radar and electronic systems, Cardamone said.

Unlike the massive \$20 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia after the 1991 Gulf War - described as the largest in U.S. history - the UAE arms deal is steeped in controversy because the Gulf emirate was insisting on access to computer source codes that run all of the F-16's electronics systems.

The Clinton administration has backed the proposed deal, not only because the UAE is a strong political and military ally of the United States, but also because the sale would help boost the sagging post-Cold War U.S. defense industry, said Cardamone. - *Thalif Deen*

INTERNATIONAL

Peacekeepers leave Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (IPS) - A contingent of Malian troops, who arrived in Sierra Leone six months ago as part of the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG, have pulled out at a time when many here say their services are needed most. Their decision to pull out comes one month after the July 10 peace deal between the rebels and Sierra Leone's government.

The contingent of 428 troops bid farewell to President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah before attending a reception organized by the ECOMOG High Command in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone.

During the farewell meeting, Kabbah thanked the Malians, who completed their withdrawal this week, for joining ECOMOG operations "at a very crucial time and for their exemplary performance in their area of operations."

"On behalf of my government and people, I wish to thank you for your brotherly support, in helping bring peace to our country. I hope and pray that this fraternal solidarity will continue," Kabbah said. - *Lansana Fofana*

Peacekeepers overpaid millions

WASHINGTON, D.C. (IPS) - The United Nations has written off more than \$5.4 million through "overpayments" in salary allowances to U.N. military observers assigned to a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East.

After a series of investigations, which began in 1996, the Secretariat decided to write off the loss - suffered by the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission - and declare the money non-recoverable. The only amount the Secretariat managed to retrieve from military observers was about \$122,573.

The decision to write off the overpayments still must be approved by

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This Week In Black History...

- Sept. 2, 1902** - "In Dahomey" premieres at the Old Globe Theater in Boston, Mass. With music by Will Marion Cook and lyrics by Paul Laurence Dunbar, the musical is the most successful of its day.
- Sept. 4, 1908** - Richard Wright, who will become the author of best-selling "Native Son" and "Black Boy" was born in Natchez, Miss.
- Sept. 6, 1988** - Lee Roy Young becomes the first African American Texas Ranger.

Judge rules for Million Youth March

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - A judge ruled Tuesday that the Million Youth March can go forward in Harlem this weekend over the city's objections because the First Amendment protects even offensive speech.

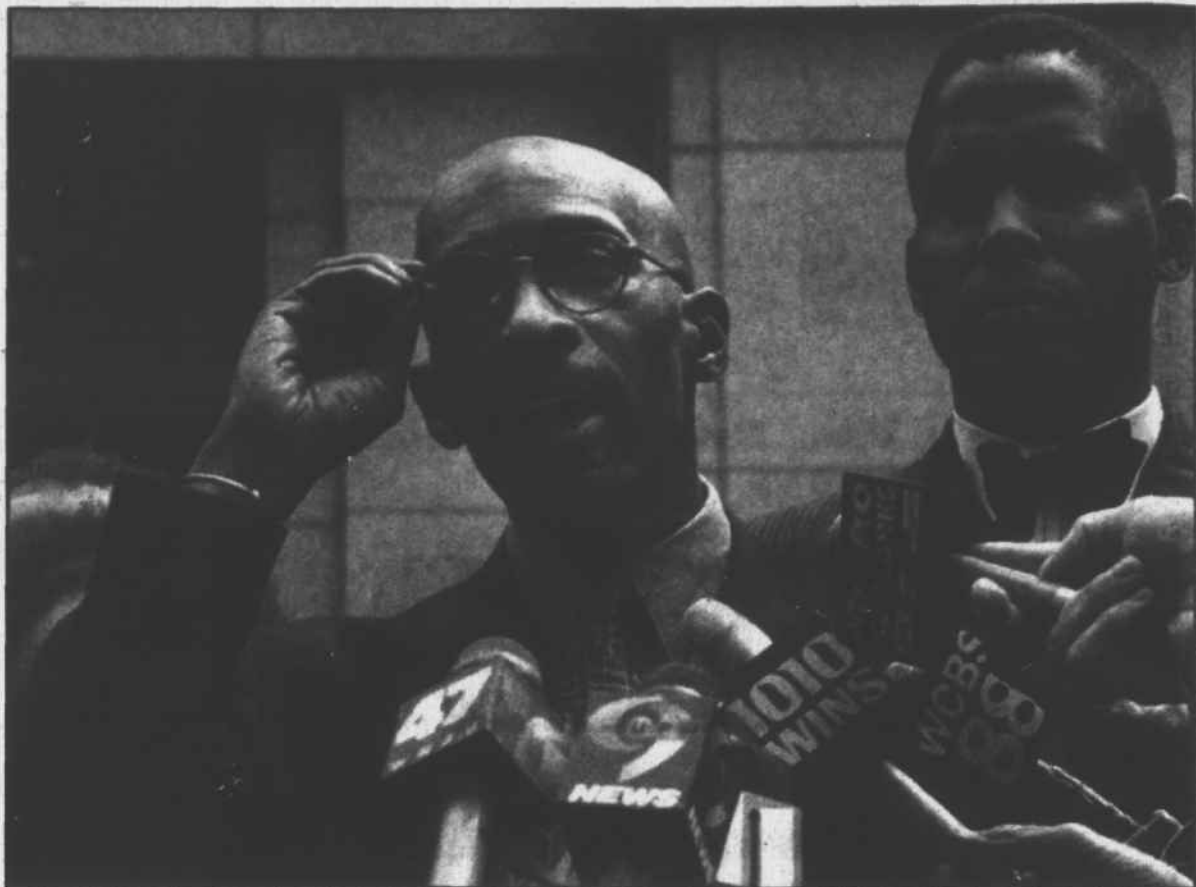
U.S. District Judge Denny Chin said that many statements made by the event's organizers, including Khalid Abdul Muhammad, were "bigoted, hateful, violent and frightening." But he said that did not justify denying a permit for the rally.

The right to free speech "applies not only to politically correct statements but also to statements with which we may disagree and, indeed, abhor," he wrote.

"At least as frightening as the rhetoric of Mr. Muhammad is the possibility of a society where freedom of speech is not respected and where the right to speak publicly can be denied on the basis of administrative whim, personal dislike or disapproval of anticipated content."

The city had said it would appeal any ruling that allowed the rally to go forward. It refused to grant a permit for the event, scheduled for Saturday, after organizers threatened to hold it with or without a permit.

Michael Hess, the city's chief lawyer, argued that the rally should not be protected by the First Amendment because organizers made it clear they hoped



Roger S. Wareham, a lawyer for the Million Youth March, speaks to reporters in front of Manhattan Federal Court in New York Monday after organizers of the Million Youth March filed a request for a permit to hold the rally in Harlem Sept. 4. U.S. District Judge Denny Chin upheld the group's right to hold the march Tuesday.

to incite violence.

Last year, a federal appeals court allowed a similar rally to take place but limited its size and duration. Twenty-eight people were injured, including 16 police officers, in a clash

between police and participants.

Organizers said in a lawsuit that this year's rally will push for the elimination of police brutality and misconduct. It also will call for reparations for descendants of slaves, jobs for young

people and an increase in spending on education.

Roger Wareham, a lawyer for the Million Youth March, told the judge that the rally organizers were urging peace and could

See MYM on A30

Resurgence in ethnic violence kills hundreds in Nigeria

BY GILBERT DA COSTA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ABUJA, Nigeria - Alhaji Abdulkarim Oke was driving a bus full of people when it was besieged by youths armed with cutlasses and machetes.

Oke survived the attack only to learn that his house had been burned to the ground and his younger brother killed by a roving band of young Hausas.

"That they burned my house and everything inside meant very little to me. I'm, however, in such pain over the death of my brother.

Why should they kill him? Why?" said Oke, a Yoruba who is a long-time resident of the predominantly Hausa town of Kano in northern Nigeria.

Oke's bewilderment is shared by many people in this West African country, where a resurgence of ethnic violence has killed hundreds since President Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in May 29 to end 15 years of military rule.

Just one day after Obasanjo's inauguration, fighting broke out among members of the Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw tribes in the oil-rich Niger River delta. At least 200

people died in more than a week of clashes tied to a two-year-old dispute over government favors and oil revenues.

At the end of July, fighting also flared between Ijaws and Ilajes, who have a long-running dispute over land in the marshy, southwestern region of Ondo state. Officials said at least 50 people were killed when Ilajes tried to return to homes they fled last year during ethnic fighting.

Most worrisome is the renewed conflict between Nigeria's two largest ethnic groups - the Yorubas, a mostly Christian tribe

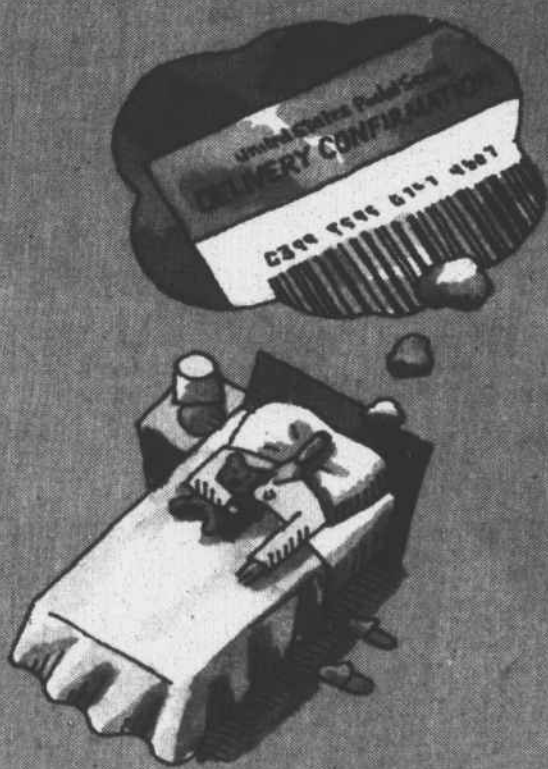
that dominates southwestern Nigeria, and the Hausas, who are northern Muslims.

Clashes began July 10 with anti-Hausa riots that killed at least 60 people in the southwestern city of Sagamu.

"I saw many people coming toward me carrying machetes," said Shehu Sanni, a Hausa who said he was working in his shop when the fighting began. "They dragged me out and began to cut me."

He escaped with deep wounds in his head and neck.

See Violence on A10



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