

# BUSINESS FOCUS

## Briefs

### Federal jury awards \$1.6 million in Marin discrimination case

**SAN FRANCISCO (AP)** — An African-American deputy probation officer in Marin County was awarded \$1.6 million in damages in a civil rights lawsuit.

Officer Lonnie Morris, 44, along with fellow officer Wilfred Broom, sued the county government in 1999, asking for \$2 million and accusing Marin County officials of maintaining a hostile work environment for racial minorities. The suit named the county, the board of supervisors, the probation department and Chief Probation Officer Ronald Baylo as defendants.

The U.S. District Court jury in San Francisco issued a verdict Friday in favor of Morris that included \$1.1 million in damages against the county and more than \$500,000 against Baylo for racial discrimination. It also found Baylo liable for \$20,000 in punitive damages, but rejected Morris' claim that he was not promoted because of racial discrimination.

During the six-week trial, Morris testified that he found a bullet on Broom's desk in January 1997, which they considered a death threat. Morris also said he was subject to racial slurs, jokes and epithets while at work.

"This is the largest verdict ever against Marin County government for one person for discrimination," Morris' lawyer, Charles Bonner, told the San Francisco Chronicle.

Since 1995, six other African Americans have filed lawsuits or administrative grievances against the county. The county settled three of the cases.

County Counsel Patrick Faulkner said that his office is considering whether to appeal the verdict.

### South African Airways appoints first black captain

**CAPE TOWN, South Africa (PANA)** — In another classic show of the end of the apartheid era, the South African Airways (SAA) has announced the appointment of its first black captain, Mpho Mamashela.

During the apartheid era, blacks were barred from taking up senior posts within the airline.

"The airline is very proud of Mpho and has the strongest confidence in his abilities as a commanding officer," said Andre Viljoen, SAA president and chief executive officer.

Mamashela, 37, who has almost 10,000 flying hours to his credit, joined SAA in 1994.

For his first flight as an SAA captain, Mamashela piloted a Boeing 737-200 to and from Durban.

"I have been most fortunate and have had great opportunities. I hope to exceed people's expectations of me," said Mamashela, who had earlier worked for Lesotho Airways and Anglo-American as a corporate pilot.

### Sony settles case regarding phony movie review case

**HARTFORD, Conn. (AP)** — Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc. has agreed to pay the state \$326,000 for using fake reviews attributed to a Connecticut newspaper in promoting its films.

Sony also has agreed to stop fabricating movie reviews, and to stop using ads in which Sony employees pose as moviegoers praising the films they have just seen. Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said Tuesday.

"These deceptive ads deserve two thumbs down — and now are getting a third from Sony itself," Blumenthal said.

The state launched an investigation last June after a reporter for Newsweek challenged the authenticity of movie blurbs in Sony print ads. The reviews, said to be from film critic "David Manning" of The Ridgefield Press, praised films including "A Knight's Tale" and "The Animal."

The Manning blurb on "The Animal" called the movie "another winner!" Another blurb praised Heath Ledger of "A Knight's Tale" as "this year's hottest new star!"

Someone at Sony concocted glowing blurbs from the fictitious reviewer, a studio spokeswoman later admitted.

Two reviews were fabricated for the "Hollow Man" and "Vertical Limit."

"What Sony did was like having a chef pose as a food critic and then give his own restaurant four stars," said James Fleming, the state's consumer protection commissioner.

The Ridgefield Press, a small weekly newspaper in Connecticut, was unaware that its name was being used in the ads.

David Manning is a real person — just not a real critic. Ridgefield's former First Selectman Sue Manning, who held the town's top office from 1987 to 1997, said a friend who works at Sony asked to use the name of her son in the ads.

After the David Manning discovery, Sony, 20th Century Fox, Artisan Entertainment and Universal Pictures admitted using employees or actors in TV commercials purporting to feature testimonials from moviegoers.

At least two moviegoers filed their own lawsuits against Sony, saying they were deceived by false advertisements into paying to see bad films.

## High-tech Partnership

### Microsoft breaks high-tech ground with Black Enterprise

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

**NEW YORK** — Black Enterprise, together with Microsoft Corp., announced recently a groundbreaking joint endeavor aimed at equipping minority-owned businesses with the latest technology and software to grow, compete and thrive in today's global market. Microsoft, the worldwide leader in software, services and Internet technologies, and Black Enterprise, the definitive source of information for and about African-American business markets and leaders, expect their efforts will open doors and yield new avenues of information technology to minority businesses across the country.

To this end, Microsoft has been named title sponsor of the seventh annual Black Enterprise/Microsoft Entrepreneurs Conference to be held May 15-19 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville, Tenn. The corporation also has signed on as the title sponsor for the 2003 conference.

The Microsoft sponsorship marks the first time a pure-play technology corporation has signed on as title sponsor of the conference. "This historic pairing between the nation's leading source of innovative technology tools and the nation's leading source of business solutions for African Americans will serve to foster the growth and development of minority-owned businesses," said Earl G. Graves Jr., president and chief operating officer of BE. "Microsoft's investment in this partnership demonstrates its continued recognition of the African-American business market as critical to reaching its bottom-line objectives."

Bill Gates, chairman and chief software architect at Microsoft, hopes to narrow the digital divide. "Technology is advancing at an incredibly rapid pace, and it is crucial that the African-American community not get left behind," he said. "We must all work to ensure that everyone in America has the opportunity for equal access."

Recognizing the ongoing need to bridge this digital divide for African Americans, BE for



Bill Gates shakes hands with Earl Graves Jr. after an agreement last week.

decades has addressed the latest tech-savvy news and industry advancements through its monthly Techwatch column, special issues, book series, and participation in high-tech conferences and roundtables. The latest effort toward this goal is the Black Enterprise/Microsoft Entrepreneurs Conference titled "New Ideas, New Solutions: Strategies for Reinventing Your Business." This

event will provide the opportunity for business owners, executives, and future entrepreneurs to interface with contacts, capital financiers, and corporate franchisers. Seminars and other meetings will offer insights and advice about what it takes to run a successful business venture from established experts who understand, utilize and integrate innovative technology.

## School will help displaced workers

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

**DURHAM** — The hospitality and tourism program at N.C. Central University was awarded \$200,000 from Golden LEAF Inc. to support a program that will train displaced workers from the Greater Triangle area to work in the tourism and hospitality industries.

The program, "A Demonstration Model for Workplace Preparedness in the Hospitality and Tourism Industry," is designed to recruit and retrain a minimum of 45 new employees or existing employees in one of the training tracks — lodging operations, food service and management. Through the program, industry certified courses recognized by national associations would be available to participants.

In addition, training will be offered to accommodate full-time employees and provide support services for successful completion of the program. Priority will be given to people who once worked in the tobacco industry.

The program will be available to residents in Durham, Wake, Orange, Chatham, Person, Vance, Alamance, Granville, Johnston, Lee, Franklin, Harnett, Caswell and Warren counties.

NCCU will collaborate with Wake Technical Community College and Alamance Community College to provide food service and lodging operations training. These colleges have state-of-the-art culinary facilities and will partner with industry to provide hands-on work experiences for the participants.

The Durham Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Triangle Area Hotel and Motel Association, the local Workforce Development Committee and the Employment Security Commission offices in each of the 14 counties will assist in recruitment and placement of participants.

According to the N.C. Employment Security Commission, in June 2001 more than 32,000 people were unemployed in the 14-county area. The commission also reported that counties in the Piedmont region of the state continue to experience large layoffs because of the area's dominance in manufacturing employment.

## Club barred minorities

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**WICHITA, Kan.** — A nightclub that admitted it excluded blacks and Hispanics now must provide written explanations to patrons who are denied admission.

The Justice Department and Kansas Human Rights Commission found that owners and managers at Joe's, formerly known as Acapulco Joe's, discriminated by refusing to accept valid ID cards as proof of age, applying stricter dress code requirements to blacks and Hispanics than to

white patrons, and by telling employees to deny access to minorities.

Under a consent decree filed Friday, Joe's owners and managers admitted they discriminated. The club agreed to train employees about civil rights laws, change its dress code and change its policies for handling identification cards.

Joe's owners must post signs in English and Spanish explaining its nondiscrimination policy and identifying what forms of ID it will accept.

The nightclub also must buy advertisements explaining it does not discriminate and must pay \$5,000 to a civil rights organization to finance testing to make sure the nightclub complies with the provisions of the settlement agreement.

"No one should be denied access to a nightclub or other place of entertainment that is open to the public because of their national origin or the color of their skin," said Ralph F. Boyd Jr., assistant attorney general for civil rights.



Singer Jill Scott, left, chats with Diane Weathers, the new editor-in-chief of ESSENCE magazine, at a recent party held in Weathers' honor.