

News at a Glance

Blair Underwood will appear on HBO's 'Sex and the City'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Blair Underwood is joining "Sex and the City" for four episodes, but producers and his publicist won't say which of the characters he'll romance.

Underwood, 38, will make his first appearance around the ninth of 12 episodes airing this summer. Daily Variety reported Tuesday. Another eight episodes of the HBO comedy, now in its final season, are set to air early next year.

"Sex and the City," starring Sarah Jessica Parker, tracks the romances of four New York City women. Chris Noth, John Corbett, Ron Livingston and Kyle MacLachlan are among the actors who've appeared on the show as love interests.

Underwood co-starred last summer in the Steven Soderbergh film "Full Frontal" and in the 1980s TV series "L.A. Law."

Rastas to meet in Jamaica

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — Rastafarians from around the globe will gather next week to discuss issues central to their faith, including the use of marijuana and repatriation to Africa, organizers said Friday.

Hundreds of followers from the United States, the Caribbean, England and Africa will attend the July 16-24 conference at the University of the West Indies in the capital of Kingston, organizer Mitzie Williams said.

Rastafarianism emerged in Jamaica and spread throughout the Caribbean in the 1930s. The movement was largely fueled by descendants of slaves and the anger they felt over the colonial oppression of blacks.

The movement's message of social justice and African unity was popularized in the 1970s by reggae artists Bob Marley and Peter Tosh.

On the agenda at this year's conference is how to unify the faith's many sects and repatriation to Africa, a tenet of Rastafarianism. Followers also will talk about the religion's most enduring debate — the right to use marijuana for religious purposes.

Though illegal throughout the Caribbean, marijuana is openly used by many Rastas, who believe smoking the herb brings them closer to God.

Rastas, who wear their hair in matted strands called dreadlocks, also will discuss ways to overcome discrimination in conservative Caribbean societies, where they have been blamed for crime and shunned for their use of marijuana, also called ganja in the Caribbean.

Los Angeles City Council's 'slavery' disclosure passes another hurdle

LOS ANGELES (L.A. Sentinel/NPPA) — Making it clear that no business will be held responsible for what it did years ago, Councilman Nate Holden recently received tentative approval of his proposal requiring companies that do business with Los Angeles to reveal if they ever profited from slavery.

The ordinance was expected to be brought back before the council for a "second reading," where it will need eight votes to go into effect.

"What we're doing is (the companies) a check of their records and acknowledging the fact that these problems did occur and (that) they did, in fact, benefit from free labor, slave labor then," said Holden, who proposed the motion.

In 2000, California required insurance companies doing business with the state to list any policies they issued to slaveholders. Since then, municipalities across the nation have taken up the issue. Last fall, Chicago passed an ordinance similar to the one under consideration by the Los Angeles City Council. New York, Detroit and Cleveland are considering similar ordinances.

"We've had a history of acknowledging a variety of terrible incidents, whether it's the Holocaust, Armenian genocide... For some reason what has been in our history as it relates to slavery often goes unnoticed, or many people believe that things have changed to where we no longer need to think about it," said Councilman Bernard Parks.

The measure received an 11-0 vote for the proposal, with three council members absent.

Holden aide Steve Ongele said the dealings in the motion could include insuring slaveholders, investing in slavery or otherwise profiting from it. The proposal, he said, is expected to have little practical effect on companies that do business with the city. But Holden said the city would be understanding of companies that lack records dating back to the time of slavery.

Sharpton facing tax audit

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic presidential hopeful Al Sharpton is the subject of a federal tax audit, a new financial disclosure report shows.

The report, filed with the Federal Election Commission last Thursday by Sharpton attorney Michael Hardy, said Sharpton is facing a civil audit. The Internal Revenue Service audit covers several years in the 1990s, Hardy said.

"We don't know what the result will be. They could owe me," Sharpton, a New York-based civil rights activist, said Friday in a telephone interview. Hardy said he didn't know what prompted the audit.

Sharpton's report to the FEC also shows that he earned at least \$381,900 last year through various enterprises, including \$120,000 from Rev. Al Productions for speeches and sermons; \$78,000 from the National Action Network, his nonprofit social justice organization; \$75,000 from Kensington Publishing for his book, "Al on America"; and \$25,000 from PepsiCo. for his work as a member of the company's black advisory board.

Presidential candidates are required to file reports with the FEC detailing their finances.

Sharpton also earned \$25,000 each from a New York-based marketing company he listed as Global Hue Inc. and the Detroit-based Hawkins Food Group for consulting work; \$30,000 from SPN Broadcasting in suburban Detroit; and at least \$3,900 from Inner City Broadcasting in New York.

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Blacks between rock and hard place as prison will mean economic boon

BY JEFFREY COLLINS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SALTERS, S.C. — In Williamsburg County, where almost one in six adults is unemployed, the shiny, 10-foot tall fence going up at the new federal prison might be the gleaming answer to the county's economic troubles.

The prison, scheduled to open at the end of the year, will bring more than 380 jobs, most paying more than double the county's average personal income of \$12,794.

"And we're just not talking new jobs from the prison. It will also create spinoff jobs," County Supervisor Richard Treme said before driving by a convenience store that recently opened just a few miles from the facility.

A hotel will be built nearby, and a developer has constructed a restaurant and small strip mall that are set to open at the same time as the prison.

But some aren't so sure the \$110 million medium-security prison, set to house about 1,150 inmates, is the best answer for Williamsburg County, which sits 60 miles inland from the Grand Strand tourist beaches.

Along with traditional fears about escaping inmates, some black leaders wonder whether a county that's more than 66 percent black should tie its future to a system that incarcerates so many members of their own



Hezekiah Pressley, right, and Harry Pringle, left, owners of the Station House Restaurant in downtown Kingstree, S.C., talk about the new federal prison.

race.

Civil rights activist the Rev. Jesse Jackson made a series of speeches across his home state of South Carolina earlier this year to address several problems he saw in black communities — including building prisons in rural, impoverished areas and calling it economic progress.

It's "all about locking up poor kids for profit," Jackson said at the time. "They are paying \$17,000 a year to incarcerate

our youth but just \$3,000 a year to educate them."

But blacks that live and work in Williamsburg County are more ambivalent.

Harry Pringle and Hezekiah Pressley recently reopened the Station House restaurant in an old railroad depot in Kingstree about 10 miles away. The eatery sits just blocks from the county courthouse, where monuments to civil rights leaders Thurgood Marshall and the Rev. Martin

Luther King Jr. sit near a memorial to Confederate soldiers.

"I think sending more blacks to prison is not a solution," said Pressley, who has lived in Kingstree since he was born in 1957. "But jobs are jobs, and economic growth is economic growth. It's got to go somewhere."

Treme said opposition to the

See Prison on A9

Mfume opens NAACP's 94th annual convention

BY CORALIE CARLSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. — The NAACP will press the United States to adopt more equitable and fair foreign policies toward African and Caribbean nations, President Kweisi Mfume said Saturday at the opening of the organization's 94th annual convention.

The seven-day convention, which comes as President Bush is wrapping up a tour of Africa, will include a Caribbean summit to be attended by officials from Barbados, the Bahamas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Haiti and the Caribbean Community, a regional organization and trade bloc.

Mfume criticized U.S. foreign policy toward African nations, saying America has neglected the continent as it suffered from wars, famine and disease.

"Our policy with respect to the continent of Africa at best has been a policy that is inconsistent and incoherent," Mfume said. "We've looked away in many instances because Africa was not politically correct or politically cute."

He said the United States should be motivated by its historical ties to Africa: "Their resources are not the only things that attract us, but the history born out of the evil institution of slavery that binds us."

Mfume also criticized the president, who returns to the United States on Saturday, for turning down an invitation to attend the convention for a third year.

"I think it's a little ironic that the president will go to Africa to

meet with black leaders, but he won't meet with black leaders here in the United States," Mfume said, adding that his requests for meetings with Bush were refused so many times that he stopped trying to see the president more than a year ago.

White House spokesman Scott Stanzel said the president receives many invitations from throughout the country, but "unfortunately his busy schedule does not allow him to accept all



Mfume

See NAACP on A9

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— Frank Lloyd Wright

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