

News at a glance

Philly to require African history class for all high school students

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - City high school students will be required to take a class in African and African-American history to graduate, a move that education experts believe is unique in the nation.

The requirement in the 185,000-student district, which is about two-thirds black, will begin with September's freshman class. The Philadelphia Inquirer reported last Thursday.

The yearlong course covers subjects including classical African civilizations, civil rights and black nationalism, said Gregory Thornton, the district's chief academic officer. The other social studies requirements are American history, geography and world history. Thornton was previously an assistant superintendent in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System.



Thornton

Michael Casserly, executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, an advocacy group for big city school districts, said Philadelphia appeared to be in the forefront with such a requirement.

"Courses on the subjects are offered as electives in other cities," he said.

Some parents opposed requiring the course, including Miriam Foltz, president of the Home and School Association at Baldi Middle School.

"There are other races in this city," said Foltz, who is white. "There are other cultures that will be very offended by this. How can you just mandate a course like this?"

Helms apologetic on AIDS, not segregation

RALEIGH (AP) - In his upcoming memoir, former Sen. Jesse Helms acknowledges he was wrong about the AIDS epidemic but believes integration was forced before its time by "outside agitators who had their own agendas."

"Here's Where I Stand," to be published in September by Random House, contains Helms' first extended comments on national affairs since the Republican retired from the Senate in 2003 after five terms. Advance proofs were described in last Thursday's editions of The News & Observer of Raleigh.

Helms, 83, was one of the state's leading voices of segregation as a TV commentator in Raleigh in the 1960s and opposed nearly every civil rights bill while in the Senate. He has never retracted his views on race or said segregation was wrong.

In the book, Helms suggests he believed voluntary racial integration would come about without pressure from the federal government or from civil rights protests that he said sharpened racial antagonisms.

"We will never know how integration might have been achieved in neighborhoods across our land, because the opportunity was snatched away by outside agitators who had their own agendas to advance," according to the uncorrected proof.

Police arrest killer cow

LAGOS, Nigeria (Reuters) - Nigerian police have arrested a cow that killed a bus driver who was urinating on a highway, a police spokesman said last Thursday.

The horned African cow, which was wandering stray in the Ojo district of Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos, also injured several bystanders after killing the man.

"The cow went mad, ran into a bus driver, and knocked him down. Efforts to revive him were fruitless," said Lagos police spokesman Olubode Ojajumi.

Some people suggested the animal be shot, but the district police officer ordered it to be taken alive.

"You know what it will take to arrest a mad cow?" one newspaper quoted a policeman as saying. "We applied ingenuity and arrested the cow, which is now being detained at the station," he said without going into details.

Ojajumi said police were seeking the cow's owner to press charges for failing to keep it under control.

AIDS cases reach a million

ATLANTA (AP) - The United States has reached an AIDS milestone, but not the one the government intended.

This was to be the year that federal health officials slashed the country's annual rate of 40,000 new HIV infections in half. Instead, the government said Monday the infection rate has remained the same and that for the first time since the height of the epidemic in the 1980s there are 1 million Americans living with HIV.

In part, it's a testament to the powerful medicines keeping so many people alive. After nearly a quarter-century of battling AIDS, much more is known about the disease than ever before - and how to treat it.

But U.S. health officials face problems similar to the early days of the epidemic, including a new generation of Americans who engage in risky, unprotected sex and the inability of a government to curb the spread of the virus.

Health officials say HIV and sexually transmitted diseases have recently spread through outbreaks in major cities as many gay and bisexual men have let down their guard after enduring years of safe-sex messages. The new estimates indicate that, as in recent years, blacks still account for a disproportionately high share of the cases - about 47 percent.

"We have not halved the rates of new infections. But we do think we are making progress," said Dr. Ronald Valdiserri, deputy director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, as the National HIV Prevention Conference got under way.



Valdiserri

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Widow puts out book about Evers

BY EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON, Miss. - Myrlie Evers-Williams believes her late husband, Medgar Evers, deserves more than a fleeting reference in history books as a slain civil rights leader.

She hopes "The Autobiography of Medgar Evers," the new book she edited with Columbia University history professor Manning Marable, will provide a comprehensive picture of the work Evers performed as the first field secretary for the Mississippi NAACP. The World War II veteran held the job from November 1954 until his death.

Evers-Williams especially wants younger generations of Americans to know about her husband's part in breaking down the Jim Crow system in what was one of the most staunchly segregated states in the nation.

The book was released May 31, and Evers-Williams has been on a promotional tour in Chicago, San Francisco and New York.

"The response has been really very good to the book. I'm very pleased that people are saying it's a book that has been needed for a very long time," Evers-Williams said during a phone interview last week between appearances in New York.

Sunday marked 42 years since Evers was assassinated in the driveway of his family's Jackson home. His wife and their three children were inside when the shots rang out just



Zonia Press Photo

Myrlie Evers-Williams holds the book she edited about her late husband. The book, "The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed Through His Writings, Letters and Speeches," was recently released.

hours after President Kennedy gave a televised speech on civil rights.

Fertilizer salesman Byron de la Beckwith was tried twice on murder charges in 1964, but all-white juries deadlocked. Prosecutors reopened an investigation in 1989, and a mixed-race jury

convicted Beckwith in February 1994. The avowed white supremacist died in prison in January 2001.

Evers-Williams, who now lives in Bend, Ore., said she reread her husband's letters and speeches to prepare the book, she felt emotions she thought

"had been boxed up and put away." She recalled the work of other Mississippians who challenged racial injustice.

The couple's youngest son, Van, sorted through hundreds of pictures and documents, including Evers' driver's license.

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Gordon poised to be NAACP president

BY MAKEBBA M. ANDERSON
NNPA CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - A special NAACP search committee has recommended that former President and CEO Kweisi Mfume be succeeded by Bruce Gordon, a former senior executive at Verizon.

The full board is expected to accept the recommendation when it meets June 25 in Atlanta.

"I think this is an excellent choice. I think it's the best choice the NAACP has made since they had (Benjamin L.) Hooks," said Harry Alford, president of the National Black Chamber of Commerce. "Gordon has good corporate executive experience, but he's also been in charge of diversity over at Verizon, so he knows how and what a major corporation can do."

The selection of Gordon caught even some board members, by surprise. Acting President Dennis Hayes did not learn of the selection until the story was broken last Friday by April Ryan on

American Urban Radio Network.

An unknown in the Civil Rights Movement, Gordon's impending confirmation is expected to alter some of the friction that previously existed - but was publicly denied - between the association's president and Board Chairman Julian Bond.

It also means that Bond will serve as the primary face and voice of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization while Gordon assumes a less pub-

lic role, applying his management skills to improve the NAACP.

Although Mfume had good business sense, Alford, who has worked closely with Gordon, says that his leverage will allow the NAACP to tap into new resources.

"Civil rights is about equal opportunity for all," Alford said. "Now the NAACP can go to IBM, and go to GM and others and say, 'I've been there, I know how to do it.'"

After a successful 35-year career, Gordon retired from Verizon in December 2003 after serving as president of retail markets in Verizon's domestic telecom unit. As head of retail markets, he was responsible for the company's consumer and small-business sales.

According to some, Board Chairman Julian Bond wanted someone with excellent fund-raising abilities and unquestioned business savvy.

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