

News at a Glance

Jefferson says feds didn't want black jury

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. William Jefferson accused the Justice Department of bringing corruption charges against him in Virginia to reduce the chance of drawing black jurors.



Jefferson

Jefferson, a Louisiana Democrat who has been charged in an international bribery case, made the argument Friday in federal court documents seeking to move the case to Washington.

"The court has an obligation to ensure that the forum selection in this case was not tainted by racially discriminatory motive," Jefferson's attorney, Robert P. Trout wrote.

Jefferson, who is black, argued that the government's case focuses on his Washington office, not Virginia. He accused the FBI of using a cooperating witness to steer the case to Virginia.

The federal court in Alexandria, Va., where Jefferson is charged, draws jurors from about 2 million people in surrounding counties. Blacks represent about 11 percent of that population, according to the U.S. Census. In Washington, blacks make up about 57 percent of the city's 515,000 residents.

Justice Department spokesman Dean Boyd said Jefferson's indictment had sufficient ties to Virginia to warrant prosecution there. He said government attorneys would respond in writing and noted that others in the case have pleaded guilty in Virginia.

EEOC: Police biased against black officer

ROCKVILLE, Md. (AP) — A black police officer was discriminated against and subjected to retaliation by Montgomery County police, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has found.

Nolan Williams claimed that his former sergeant, who is white, cited him frequently for things that white officers were not disciplined for.

A police department spokeswoman said the allegations were "without merit."

The EEOC's decision was issued July 31. The police department and Williams will try to settle the case out of court. Tiffany Alston, Williams' attorney, said.

Williams is a 13-year veteran of the department. Last year, he filed an EEOC complaint alleging that his former supervisor, Sgt. Nancy Hudson, harassed him as the only black member of her squad in the Wheaton police district.

Hudson has since been promoted to lieutenant. She criticized Williams, but not white officers, for wearing a gray rather than white T-shirt under his uniform, repeatedly questioned his report writing and ordered him to shave, even though he had a medical condition that made it painful, according to his complaint.

Police spokeswoman Lucille Baur said she could not discuss the issue because it is a personnel matter. "However," Baur said, "the department intends to vigorously defend itself against these charges, which we believe are without merit."

Student starts effort to help people in his African homeland

MURRAY, Ky. (AP) — When Gabriel Akech Kwai graduates from Murray State University in December, he'll have more than a finance degree. He's also learned how to help his troubled African homeland.

Kwai, who has lived in the United States for six years, has established the Women's Educational Empowerment Project for Southern Sudan to help educate and empower women there. The goal is to bridge the educational gap between the northern and southern regions of the war-torn nation.

"This is where my dreams lie," Kwai said in a recent interview with the Murray Ledger & Times. "... I learned that children learn a lot from their mothers, and if we educate the women of Sudan, then we help her entire family."

Kwai, who was born in 1979, was 7 years old when his father was killed in northern Sudan. His homeland was divided by civil war that eventually forced him to travel with the 33,000 other "Lost Boys of Sudan" to Ethiopia and later to a Kenyan refugee camp.

He lived in Ethiopia from 1987 until 1991, when that government ordered the refugees to leave the country within 24 hours. Kwai spent the next nine years at the Kenyan refugee camp. There he received his elementary and high school education. It was in 1997 that he received hope when U.S. officials visited the camp, beginning the long process that led to 4,000 of the boys being able to settle in the United States in 2001.

His short-term goals are to sponsor 10 young women to attend high school in surrounding countries.



Kwai

Councilors want police chief removed

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — Two members of the city council want the mayor to remove the newly chosen police chief from duty and choose someone else.

City councilors Jack Henderson and Roscoe Turner want Police Chief Ron Palmer out. Henderson said Palmer's service "would set back race relations in the city by 50 years" at a news conference last Thursday.

Palmer was on the job last week after being selected by Mayor Kathy Taylor.

He previously served as Tulsa's chief from 1992-2002, during which the city was sued for discrimination by a group of black officers. That led to a federal consent decree that requires continued monitoring and training.

Palmer said he plans to stay put and that it was a "bit of a surprise" to be asked to be removed from office on his second day on the job. At a news conference, he said he was sensitive to race relations and is already reaching out to members of the black community.

"I have to prove myself to everyone that the police department is in fact concerned about racial issues," Palmer said. "We are not an entity unto ourselves. It's a new day, a new dawning."

Experts: Black church can better address domestic violence

BY ERRIN HAINES
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Historically, the black church has been the rock of the black community, a place of refuge where important issues are addressed. But domestic violence has long been left off the agenda, ignored in a largely patriarchal system, even justified by scripture.

Now that one of the nation's most visible female evangelists has taken up the mantle of domestic violence, the black church has an opportunity to do something it has been criticized for not doing before: speak out on the issue and figure out how to help.



Williams

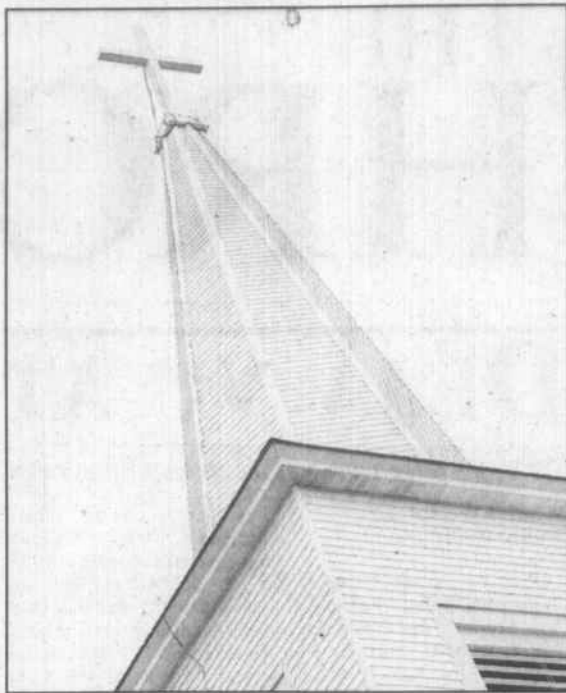
With the rates of nonfatal intimate partner violence on the rise among black females, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, the need could not be more urgent.

"It used to be that many ministers would say, 'Go home and pray for them,' said Oliver Joseph Williams, executive director for the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community at the University of Minnesota.

"They'd tell her, 'Go back and be a good woman, be nice and make peace with him,' rather than saying, 'You deserve to be in a safe place. What he's doing is absolutely wrong,'" Williams said.

Atlanta-based televangelist Juanita Bynum has gone public with allegations of domestic violence against her husband, minister Thomas W. Weeks III, who faces charges of aggravated assault and making terroristic threats.

Bynum, 48, has said she intends to file for divorce and



plans to draft federal legislation pushing for tougher punishments for abusers.

According to a report titled "Intimate Partner Violence in the United States" released by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics, while the rates of nonfatal intimate partner violence decreased for black females between 1990 and 2003, the rate increased from 3.8 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 or older in 2003 to 6.6 per 1,000 in 2004. Black females are victimized at a higher rate than white females, and black females report such incidents at a higher rate than white females — 68.4 percent compared to 53.5 percent.

For many black women who choose to seek help in the black community, experts say that the black church — instead of a shelter or hotline — may be their first stop. But women are not always

met with the help they need, said Sherry Turner, vice president of student affairs at Spelman College and an ordained minister.

"Very often, for those of us who are members of conservative communities of faith, there are sacred texts and passages that are being used to justify the oppression of women," Turner said, speaking at a forum on domestic violence and religious institutions held recently at the historically black women's college.

One of the most popular examples of such texts is in the Bible's book of Ephesians, said Williams. The verses read: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands

in everything."

Williams said the passage is taken out of context, using the Bible to show that the man is the head of the household.

"People can read in male dominance," he said.

The Rev. T.D. Jakes, pastor of The Potter's House in Dallas, Tex., wrote a statement condemning domestic violence in the wake of the Bynum-Weeks incident, which he called "a teaching opportunity."

"The church is the place where people can find redemption even when they have made bad choices or been victims by those who did," Jakes wrote, but said that the church must do more than offer a place of refuge.

"We must be prepared to get the victim out of harm's way even while we are working for a solution," he wrote. "However, what the Church cannot do is to say to the victim, 'Go home and believe that God will make things better.' Or lead them in prayer and leave them in danger."

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Effi Barry dies of cancer

BY JAMES WRIGHT
AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Former District first lady Effi Barry died Sept. 6 from complications of leukemia at Anne Arundel Medical Center at the age of 63.

Barry was married to now D.C. City Councilman Marion Barry (D-Ward 8) during his first, second and third terms as mayor. She played a high profile role as the city's first lady, arranging activities ranging from helping the poor to representing the city when luminaries such as the pope and various world leaders visited the city.

Barry was also a study in dignity during her husband's drug trial in 1990, sitting quietly in the court room knitting when it was revealed that then-Mayor Marion Barry had sex with model Rasheeda Moore and smoked crack cocaine. Marion Barry was sentenced to prison while Effi Barry stayed in the city to raise her son, Christopher.

After Marion Barry served his time, the couple divorced. She and Christopher moved to Hampton, Va., where she accepted a position as an instructor at Hampton University in its physical and health education department.

Marion Barry, in a statement, said his ex-wife was a wonderful, caring person.

"Effi was my cherished friend, a wonderful mother to my only son, Christopher, and a beautiful human being," the statement said. "Effi was born to serve and help others, but long after her service to this city was done, as first lady, she continued to give even more of herself in an effort to help those who could not help themselves."

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