

News at a Glance

Crist first governor to appear at state NAACP convention

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — In the first appearance by a Florida governor in the 64 years the Florida Conference of the NAACP has held its annual convention, Gov. Charlie Crist on Saturday praised the organization as leaders in fairness and described several civil rights leaders who inspired him.

Crist was the keynote speaker at the closing banquet of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's convention, where he addressed a crowd of about 550. He described the impact several civil rights leaders had on his life, including Verle Davis, his high school principal and the first African American principal at St. Petersburg High School.

The governor also mentioned his father, a member of the Pinellas County School Board who served as team doctor for St. Petersburg's Gibbs High School all-black football team in the 1960s.

Crist said his father insisted on bringing him to the games, where he sat in on locker-room pep talks and prayed with the team before the game.

"It taught me a lot at a very early age that we're all the same," Crist said. "We all have the same hopes, the same dreams, the same aspirations."

Crist praised the organization as leaders in "doing unto others," a rule he said drives his administration.

"I'm proud to be a lifetime member of the NAACP," he said.

Bowie donates to Jena 6 defense fund

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — David Bowie has donated \$10,000 to a legal defense fund for six black teens charged in an alleged attack on a white classmate in the tiny central Louisiana town of Jena.

The British rocker's donation to the Jena Six Legal Defense Fund was announced by the NAACP as thousands of protesters attended a march through Jena last Thursday in defense of Mychal Bell and five other teens. The group has become known as the Jena Six.

"There is clearly a separate and unequal judicial process going on in the town of Jena," Bowie said in an e-mail statement. "A donation to the Jena Six Legal Defense Fund is my small gesture indicating my belief that a wrongful charge and sentence should be prevented."

Bell was found guilty on second-degree battery charges June 28 by a six-member, all-white jury. Before the case was overturned by the state 3rd Circuit Court of Appeal.

The court said Bell, who was 16 at the time of the alleged December 2006 beating, shouldn't have been tried as an adult.

"We are gratified that rock star David Bowie was moved to donate to the NAACP's Jena campaign," National Board of Directors Chairman Julian Bond of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, said in a statement. "We hope others will join him."

Former Bengal Holifield to head Cleveland's Urban League

CLEVELAND (AP) — Lawyer and former Cincinnati Bengals running back Jonathan Holifield has been picked to lead the Urban League of Greater Cleveland, a civil rights agency and community development organization.

Holifield, who most recently ran the parks department in Buffalo, N.Y., will replace Myron Robinson as chief executive officer, who announced his retirement last September after 16 years.

"He's a great choice. He's been a fighter for a long time," said Robinson, who helped choose his successor for the 90-year-old Cleveland institution, which is known for its focus on job training in the black community.

In a prepared statement, Holifield said he was humbled to join a flagship affiliate of the Urban League movement.

Holifield, 43, was chosen after a nationwide search and will begin as CEO on Dec. 1. He will help oversee the Urban League's annual \$3 million budget.

The one-time NFL running back was a 1987 draft choice of the Bengals. He played in the league for two years and went on to earn a master's degree in education and a law degree from the University of Cincinnati. Holifield also served as vice president of the Cincinnati NAACP and the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce.

Freedmen issue on detour to Capitol Hill

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — A dispute involving race and tribal identity that was supposed to play out in the courts now seems headed for Capitol Hill, where some lawmakers want the country's second-largest Indian tribe stripped of \$300 million in federal money.

U.S. Rep. Diane Watson, a California Democrat who claims Indian blood and ties to Oklahoma, is demanding the Cherokee Nation reinstate 2,800 descendants of the tribe's former black slaves, known as freedmen. She calls a March election that booted the freedmen descendants from the tribe "ethnic cleansing" and doesn't want to wait on the courts to decide the matter, a process that could take years.

The tribe is digging in to fight the legislation, and its chief, Chad Smith, has called Watson's bill a "scorched-earth" policy aimed at hurting the poorest and sickest of the nation's 270,000 members.

Neither side shows signs of giving up ground as lawmakers are expected to have a hearing on the matter this week in Washington.

At stake are millions of federal dollars for health clinics, Head Start programs, elderly care and housing assistance for the Tahlequah-based tribe. More than 6,000 nation employees could lose their jobs, touching off a ripple effect that would economically devastate northeastern Oklahoma. Health care to 126,000 patients would be axed.

Leaders applaud Jena response

BY HAZEL TRICE EDNEY
NNPA EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WASHINGTON — The rousing response to unequal justice involving six Black teens in Jena, La., amounts to "a wake up call" to the level of racism remaining in America, says civil rights icon the Rev. Joseph Lowery and six other legendary Black leaders.

"This means two things that can take on epic proportions," says Lowery, 85, co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1957. "One is that it's a wake up call to the nation as a whole that racism is as alive and as sick as ever in this country and that there are places that are as isolated and as remote that are just like Jena," says Lowery. "The second thing is that there's a real awakening, a long prayed for awakening among our youth. No matter how much adults try to take credit for organizing and doing this, this came up out of the bosom and the belly of our youth. And I say thank God. And it can take on eternal significance if there's a continuum because this incident is not isolated. It'll happen again."

Lowery's sentiments reflect those of many who participated in the march and



Evers-Williams



Photo by José M. Osorio/Chicago Tribune/MCT

A girl waves flags as the sun rises at the LaSalle Parish Courthouse in Jena, La.

those who watched from afar. Civil rights

giants asked to interpret the meaning of the Jena Six injustices and protests, involving a so-called "White Tree" and nooses, all say the matter is indicative of racism that has been entrenched since slavery. But, moreover, the tremendous response by youth revealed a readiness to continue the struggle.

"With all the gains that we made in America, the fight is not over, period," says Myrtle Evers-Williams, former NAACP chairwoman, whose civil rights leader husband, Medgar Evers, was assassinated in

See Jena on A4

African-American women take charge in Baltimore

BY SEAN YOES
THE AFRO-AMERICAN
NEWSPAPERS

BALTIMORE (NNPA) — Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon, City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Comptroller Joan Pratt completed a historic political trifecta recently, holding on to the top three seats in Baltimore City government.

Add Patricia Jessamy, the city's State's Attorney, and you have four Black women occupying the four most important offices in the city — perhaps an unprecedented scenario in American history.

"I think it's phenomenal, I think it's extraordinary," said Mayor Dixon during a phone interview as she traveled by automobile. "When you look at the City Council, when I first came in women were in the minority, African-Americans were in the minority," the mayor remembered.

One of the mayor's childhood friends, Debra Hall, who was volunteering for Dixon on Election Day, says she was probably destined to run the city.

"Sheila and I, the mayor were elementary, junior high school friends ... in classes in junior high school she always said to us that one day she would be our boss," said Hall with a laugh.

"I don't really remember saying that," said Mayor Dixon. "But, I do remember always having a focus on achievement and helping other people."

Baltimore City Comptroller Joan Pratt's strong record of fiscal responsibility and independence on the Board of Estimates dissuaded competitors for her office as she ran unopposed.

"I think the citizens believe I'm doing a great job being fiscally responsible," said Pratt. "I think I do the best job for the citizens, for the taxpayers," added Pratt who like Dixon is excited about the city's history-making leadership.

"It's a great day in Baltimore City. It feels great. I think women bring a different perspective to leadership," said Pratt who as Comptroller actually oversees the municipal post office, municipal telephone exchange, the department of audits and the department of real estate.

"What I would like to see happen in this new administration is the department of real estate and the department of housing work together to eradicate some of these vacant houses," said Pratt who, about to begin her fourth term, isn't resting on what is widely acknowledged as a highly accomplished career.

"What I would like to do is perform more financial and performance audits to be sure that the city does not expend more funds than it should," she said.

Just a couple of days after her victory, Mayor Dixon is already signaling an urgency in city government that there will be more of an emphasis on accountability.

"We really have to look at city agencies. Either they have to step up their game or I'm going to have to clean house," said the Mayor.



Mayor Dixon

See Baltimore on A6

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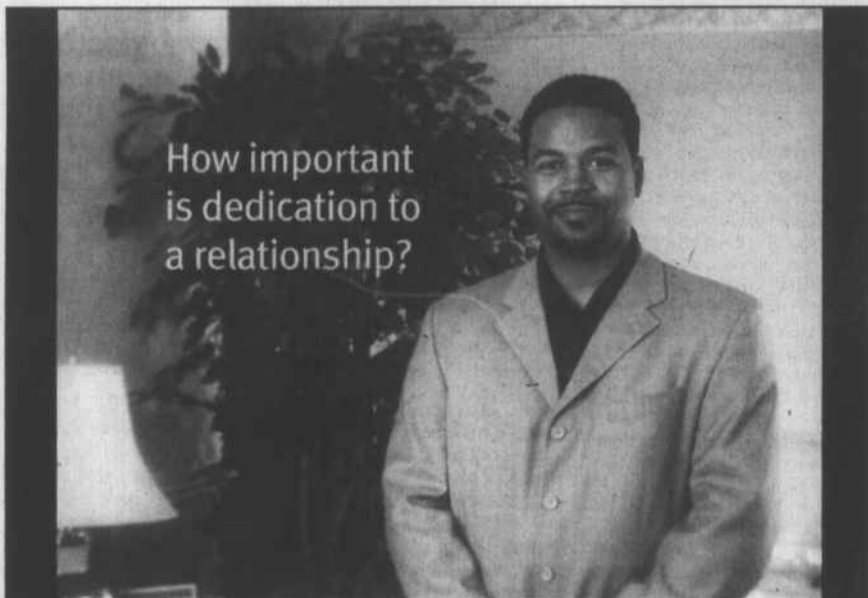
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