

News at a Glance

Movie about racial killing to wrap filming

SHELBY (AP) – The movie version of “Blood Done Sign My Name” wraps up filming in North Carolina this week with “pick-up” shots being filmed in Shelby.

Pick-up shots refer to extraneous shots not included in the initial schedule. Filming began May 5 in Shelby and was scheduled to finish there Monday. It was shot mostly in the Shelby, Monroe and Gastonia areas.

The movie is based on the book by Timothy Tyson about the public slaying of black man in Oxford in 1970. Tyson was 10 years old at the time, and his father, a progressive white minister in the Methodist Church, was forced to resign.

The two white men charged in the case were acquitted, provoking riots in Oxford.

Rick Schroder (“NYPD Blue”) plays Tyson’s father, the Rev. Vernon Tyson, and Nate Parker (“The Great Debaters”) plays Ben Chavis, who went on to become executive director and CEO of the NAACP.

The director is Jeb Stuart, best known as the screenwriter for action films such as “Die Hard” and “The Fugitive.”



Parker

Prince George’s group seeks another NAACP chapter

UPPER MARLBORO, Md. (AP) – Activists in Prince George’s County say they are frustrated with the local NAACP and want to start a second chapter.

The Maryland NAACP recently rejected the group’s application, but statewide organization President Gerald Stansbury says he is open to reconsidering another charter.

The activists call themselves the Greater Beltway Coalition. They are critical of what they call the complacency of the local NAACP and want an organization that is more focused on improving the county’s image and addressing issues such as education and economic empowerment.

Members of the existing Prince George’s chapter oppose a new branch. They say those who are unhappy should become active in the local organization.

Ramsey Lewis to compose work on Abraham Lincoln

HIGHLAND PARK, Ill. (AP) – Add a musical composition to all the tributes at next year’s 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln’s birth.



Lewis

Ramsey Lewis has been commissioned to compose a new work inspired by Lincoln’s life. It’s being commissioned by the Ravinia Festival, a musical festival north of Chicago. Ravinia has already asked choreographer Bill T. Jones to create a dance theater work as part of the seasonlong celebration of Lincoln.

In announcing the jazz pianist’s new untitled work, Ravinia said it will present programs focusing on Lincoln’s life and musicians of his day.

The 73-year-old Lewis, Ravinia’s artistic director for jazz, said he was pleased that the Lincoln celebration will feature the works of two black people – Jones and himself.

“I think it’s extraordinary that in this year when an African-American has a viable shot at the White House that Ravinia would bookend its Lincoln celebration with the works from the black perspective,” he said in a statement.

Lewis also said it is appropriate that Lincoln’s story should be told through the “purely American music” of jazz.

Hampton will be site for Virginia Education Policy Fellowship Program

HAMPTON, Va. – Hampton University’s College of Education and Continuing Studies has been named the state site for the Virginia Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP). Sponsored by the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, D.C., the program is a 10-month professional development program for emerging leaders in education and related fields.

The goal for Virginia’s EPFP is to develop strategic, executive leaders in public and private organizations who have the capacity to create and implement sound public policy to improve educational outcomes for children, youth and adults.

Along with the national EPFP program strands of leadership, public policy and professional networking, the Virginia EPFP curriculum has a unique focus addressing the nexus of ethics, diversity and educational empowerment. Across a 10-month program, from September through June, Fellows will meet once per month for approximately four hours.

“This program is to help train and advance individuals into key roles,” stated Dr. Cassandra Herring, dean of the HU College of Education and Continuing Studies. “These really are the people that will shape education policy.”

Dr. Maurice Berube, eminent scholar emeritus of educational leadership and counseling for Old Dominion University, has been named the site coordinator for Virginia’s EPFP.

EPFP was created in 1964 with funding from the Ford Foundation in anticipation of the explosive growth of the federal role in education under the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and related Great Society legislation. In total, EPFP operates at 19 sites throughout the United States and organizes two annual conferences – the Leadership Forum and the Washington Policy Seminar. More than 6,400 EPFP alumni now work and lead in all sectors of American life: K-12 and higher education organizations; local, state, and federal government agencies; public policy groups; foundations and nonprofits; and corporations.

CEO says discrimination suit settled

BY JOANNE VIVIANO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – The grocery chain Kroger Co. has agreed to pay \$16 million to settle a race discrimination lawsuit brought by 12 current and former employees, according to a memo from the chain’s chairman and chief executive.

The workers claimed in the 2001 federal lawsuit that Kroger blocked promotions of black employees and paid them less than whites.

A judge hasn’t yet approved any agreement in the suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Louisville, Ky., in 2001 by employees in six states on behalf of blacks working for Kroger nationwide since 1998.

Chairman and Chief Executive David Dillon said in a memo to about 1,500 employees Tuesday that the money – minus attorney fees and administration costs – will be placed in a fund and disbursed among black employees who meet certain criteria.

“We take our commitment to inclusion and our policies against discrimination very seriously,” Dillon wrote. “The plaintiffs ... obviously felt strongly that the company was not treating them fairly or respectfully. No one in our company should feel this way.”

The lawsuit seeks to change Kroger’s hiring, promotion and compensation practices. The workers also requested back pay,

preferential consideration for jobs and damages for lost pay and benefits.

Dillon said there has been no finding that the Cincinnati-based Kroger engaged in discrimination.

An attorney for the plaintiffs, Joseph Sellers, said he would have no comment unless an agreement is finalized.

“There is no agreement unless and until the court approves it,” he said.

Kroger spokeswoman Meghan Glynn also declined to comment.

The lawsuit named plaintiffs who worked at Kroger stores in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Texas but said the claims applied to “all stores and geographic areas.”

“Kroger follows a policy and practice of restricting black employees’ employment opportunities to lower job classifications and compensation levels,” the suit says. “The systemic means of accomplishing such racial discrimination include, but are not limited to, Kroger’s promotion, selection and compensation procedures.”

Dillon’s memo points out steps taken in an effort to improve policies, including the appointment of a diversity officer to focus on recruiting and retaining a diverse work force and the implementation of training and communication devices to improve diversity.



CBC asks Bush to save youth program

BY HAZEL TRICE EDNEY
NNPA EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WASHINGTON – The Congressional Black Caucus has appealed to President George W. Bush on behalf of the National Urban League’s Urban Youth Empowerment Program set to be slashed from the budget of the Department of Labor next week.

“It is our understanding that the funding, which enables the program to provide much-needed services to young people to reduce recidivism, to complete their high school education and to find jobs is to be terminated on June 30, 2008. We urge you not to end this vital program,” states a letter to Bush, signed by 37 members of the CBC and released exclusively to the NNPA News Service. “Now is not the time for the Department of Labor to turn its back on young people who are trying to turn their lives around. These young people will be kicked out of the program unless you intervene.”

The letter asks that the federal government at least allocate \$4 million to allow 800 youth enrollees to complete the training that they have already begun through 2008.

“At a time when incarceration rates are at an all-time high in the nation, and unemployment among young people is steadily increasing, the program serves as a valuable resource to underserved communities around the country,” the letter states. “The program has a demonstrated record of effectiveness in assisting at-risk youth in educational opportunities, job training and placement, and the support needed to make a successful transition into the workplace.”

As of Monday morning, the Caucus had not yet gotten a White House response to the letter.

NUL President/CEO Marc Morial also laments that the cutting of the Urban Youth Empowerment Program comes at a time when no substantial federal funding exists for general summer jobs for youth across the nation.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for Black teens ages 16-19 is 32.3 percent, twice the rate of the 16.4 percent of White teens in the same age group; and nearly twice the rate of Latino teens, 17.5 percent.

“You have a lot of idle teenagers who are out of school and who want to work,

who want opportunities, careers, and a chance to earn a living,” says Morial. “It’s a tragedy that Congress has not moved on summer jobs because the teen unemployment rate is as high as it’s been in 50 years.”


The cutting of the UYEP will only exacerbate the occupational void when it is needed most, the CBC letter states. It lists at least 27 high crime cities where the program has been highly effective, including Baltimore, Birmingham, Charlotte, Columbus, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Louisville, New Orleans,

Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Sacramento and Washington, D.C.

“The program represents the best that our communities have to offer by providing educational and training assistance to at-risk youth in ways that encourage partnerships with local businesses, faith organizations and employers,” the letter states. “These collaborative partnerships and intense support for at-risk youth ultimately achieve improved outcomes for individual participants, healthier communities and a better-equipped workforce.”




National Urban League chief Marc Morial.




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