

News at a Glance

Alphas elect new leader

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BlackNews.com) – The Rev. Herman “Skip” Mason has been elected the next national president of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.

It happened at the Alphas’ 102nd annual convention in Kansas City, July 17-22. Mason is interim vice president of student services at Morehouse College and a pastor. He’s also a noted historian, author and documentary producer. Mason was nominated at the fraternity’s Orlando convention in August, 2007 along with Darryl Peal, of Columbus, Ohio. The two campaigned for the fraternity’s highest office for the past year crisscrossing the country and abroad to meet and greet fellow Alpha men.

When Mason takes the oath of office the weekend of January 23-25, 2009, he will formally become Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity’s 33rd general president, the official title of the office. The Inaugural Celebration is to take place in Downtown Atlanta’s Marriott Marquis Hotel and on the campus of Morehouse College.

“Alpha Phi Alpha has always led on the great issues of the day – in America and around the world,” said Mason. “My election as general president will provide a unique opportunity to further that part of our work and I look forward to the challenge.”

Mason, who was named national Alumni Brother of the Year in 1989, is the past president of the Atlanta chapter of the fraternity, and was elected for a four-year term. He succeeds General President Darryl Matthews Sr.

BMI to honor the Jacksons

LOS ANGELES (AP) – There’s a possibility for a Jacksons reunion of sorts – the brothers are set to be honored as BMI Icons at its annual Urban Awards next month.

So far, all the brothers, with the exception of Michael, have confirmed their attendance at the event, to be held Sept. 4 at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills, according to Broadcast Music Inc.’s publicist. An all-star tribute is planned, according to a release issued Monday.

The Jackson Five – which included Michael along with Marlon, Jackie, Tito and Jermaine – were a groundbreaking, best-selling act with classics that include “ABC” and “I Want You Back”; they have been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The group, with brother Randy replacing Jermaine, became the Jacksons after leaving Motown in 1976. They continued their multiplatinum success with hits including “Heartbreak Hotel” and “Shake Your Body (Down to the Ground).”

Both versions of the group will be honored. There have been rumblings of a possible Jacksons reunion for years. The last album that featured all of them in some form was in 1989 and they haven’t performed together in years.

The BMI Urban Awards honor R&B and hip-hop’s top hit-makers.

National Urban League unveils program to help homeowners

National Urban League President and CEO Marc Morial announced last week that the League will launch a new \$15 million initiative called “Restore Our Home,” a counseling program designed to save current home owners from foreclosure and help prospective buyers avoid some of the pitfalls associated with the current mortgage crisis.

Morial made the announcement at the opening session of the National Urban League’s Annual Conference in Orlando.

“We will be working with all 60 of our Urban League affiliates across the nation providing counseling services to individual on predatory lending, sub prime mortgages, and other aspects pertaining to not just buying a home but also staying in the home once you are an owner,” said Morial.

The \$15 million for “Restore Our Homes” will come from the new Housing Bill recently passed by Congress. This landmark legislation passage was a direct result of the aggressive work by the Urban League with both Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

“America stands at a crossroad,” said Morial. “We want a 100 day plan that deals with universal childhood education, universal housing education, and an infrastructure bank to rebuild bridges, levees, and schools. There are 7.4 million people out of work, 47 million people have no health care. 1 million students drop out of school each year, and black on black violence is a cultural and health epidemic.”

Morial added that the \$275 million spent on the war in Iraq each day should be used to improve the lives of all Americans. He said it is time to end the war and set new priorities.

Mayo Clinic renames building to honor the late Rosa Parks

ROCHESTER, Minn. (AP) – There’s another honor for the late civil-rights pioneer Rosa Parks.

The Mayo Clinic has renamed its Pavilion Building to the Rosa Parks Pavilion.

Mayo Clinic facilities administrator Craig Smoldt has said discussions to rename a clinic building started shortly after Parks died in 2005 in Detroit and it became clear what kind of lasting national impact she would have.

In 1955, Parks refused to give her bus seat to a white man in Alabama. She was arrested, leading to the Montgomery bus boycott, a defining moment in the civil rights movement.

A private dedication ceremony was held last Thursday. It was to include key civil rights leader Ozell Sutton. The metallic letters on the building were installed last Friday.

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James Cameron (in wheelchair) greets Sen. John Kerry after a 2005 press conference in the Capitol.

Black Holocaust Museum closes

BY CARRIE ANTLINGER THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILWAUKEE (AP) – Financial problems have caused the museum started by lynching survivor James Cameron – America’s Black Holocaust Museum – to close its after 20 years. The museum was slated to shut down Aug. 1.

But museum board chairman Reggie Jackson said he is certain reconfiguring the board, a new fundraising effort and increasing awareness will allow the museum to eventually open again.

“We have every intention of reopening the museum once we get a plan in place,” Jackson said.

The lagging economy, building debt, a revolving door of executive directors over the past eight years and the passing of its founder have all contributed to the museum’s state, said Bethany Criss, the museum’s interim executive director.

One of the first of its kind in the country, the museum explores the struggles of blacks in America from slavery to the present. It was founded in 1988 by

Cameron, who, in 1930, survived a lynch mob in his hometown of Marion, Ind. Cameron died in 2006 at the age of 92.

William Billingsley, executive director of the Association of African American Museums, said cultural and all small-budget museums are having financial problems, especially over the past few years. Donors would rather give to major projects, he said.

The Milwaukee museum was the first he’s heard of recently that has closed.

See Museum on A4

University gets actor’s memorabilia

BY JON NICCUM LAWRENCE JOURNAL-WORLD

LAWRENCE, Kan. (AP) – He portrayed a Harlem crime boss in “Shaft,” a legendary civil rights leader in “Ragtime” and a mystical envoy in “The NeverEnding Story.”

He earned an Emmy nomination for his work as an African chief in TV’s “Roots.” He even joined the cast of the sitcom “Good Times.”

Moses Gunn played a lot of roles. And consequently, he accumulated a lot of stuff.

The University of Kansas department of theater and film recently acquired a collection of memorabilia from the 30-year acting career of the late Gunn, an alumnus of the university. The material was bequeathed by his widow, Gwen Gunn.

“I donated his collection to the university because it was a place he had always admired and because I thought it would receive more tender care than at the Schomburg (Center) or the New York Library at Lincoln Center, both of whom are overwhelmed with the lives of actors,” Gwen Gunn says.

The performer originally came to Lawrence in 1959 as a graduate student after earning a degree at Tennessee State University, where he won a speech contest that led to a scholarship at KU.

“He got involved in the civil rights politics of the time and didn’t graduate in the ‘60s, but was able to come back and finish later (1989) with the help of Bill Kuhlke, who was by then head of the theater department and helped devise a program for him,” Gwen Gunn recalls.

The decision to offer the collection to KU was fostered through her relationship with Kevin Willmott, an associate professor of theater and film at the university who had been invited to her house to view the material. The numerous items had been stored in the attic since Moses’ death.

When Gwen had announced she was moving, Willmott helped coordinate the donation.

Currently, a portion of the Gunn items are on display in the lobby of Murphy Hall.

“We get comments all the time because part of the collection is in the lobby. We’ll have somebody come by and say, ‘Oh, that’s THAT actor,’” says John Staniunas,

chair of the theater and film department.

With the collection still

being catalogued, Staniunas hopes to have a more dedicated exhibit ready in February during Black History Month, possibly at the Spencer Museum of Art.

KU received more than 20 boxes of material at the beginning of the year. The items include posters, photographs, artwork, masks and various honors, such as his Emmy and Tony Award nomination plaques.

Signed photos by people ranging from Clint Eastwood to Lady Bird Johnson are among the spoils.

One of the most distinctive objects is a bronze bust of Gunn that Warner Bros. had made during production on

“The NeverEnding Story.”

Gunn was born in 1929 in St. Louis, the eldest of seven children. His onstage charisma was bolstered by his distinctive voice (which Staniunas describes as “a cross between James Earl Jones and Paul Winfield something very smooth and rich, and yet gentle”).

He co-founded the Negro Ensemble Company, which led to his 1962 Broadway debut in Jean Genet’s “The Blacks.” His film debut was in 1964’s “Nothing But a Man.”

Gunn died of complications from asthma at his home in Guilford, Conn., in December 1993.



Gunn

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