

**ALL SUBSTANCE**

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Lina is a fresh face — and has a style to match.



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MAY 25 2004

**THE NEW AND IMPROVED STING**

Andrea Stinson leads Charlotte into WNBA season opener against Western Conference power Houston/1C



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WEEK OF MAY 20-26, 2004

## Caucus chair: Politics only focus

By Herbert L. White  
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Danielle Bess Obiorah insists the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Black Political Caucus is headed in the right direction.



Obiorah (pronounced Oh-beer-uh) was elected Sunday to succeed Franklin McCain, who was elected last year to serve the remainder of Marqz Scott's term. She said the organization will adhere to its redefined role as a political action committee, the result of sanctions handed down last month by the N.C. Board of Elections.

"We're in the process of putting together a team of folks to work on voter registration, voter education and voter motivation," she said. "We've received very positive responses so far."

Sarah Stevenson, a long-time caucus member and former Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board member, supports Obiorah.

"Danielle has the energy, commitment and background that we need to ensure this organization moves in the right direction," she said in a statement.

Also elected: Dwayne Collins (first vice chair); Andrea Huff (second vice chair); Maria Macon (third vice chair); Johnnie Tracey (treasurer); Joyce Waddell (financial secretary); Sharon Young (secretary); Ella Williams (correspondence secretary) and Vernon Herron (historian).

Obiorah, an attorney and co-founder of the firm Mason-Watson, Obiorah & Singletary, takes over a caucus that has undergone sev-

Please see CAUCUS/2A

May means motorcycles in Myrtle Beach, S.C. But allegations of mistreatment have black bikers considering alternatives.

## Uneasy riders



PHOTO:WADE NASH

Ian Grier of Charlotte prepares his motorcycle for Black Biker Week in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Some African Americans say discrimination by Myrtle Beach officials and businesses is forcing them to explore alternatives, including going to Miami for Urban Beach Week.

By Cheris F. Hodges  
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Black bikers are gearing up for a Memorial Day motorcycle rally. But some of them are bypassing the traditional Atlantic Beach site for what they consider a friendlier environment.

"I'm going to Miami because I'm tired of the police harassment and you get more riding time," said Renee Baker of Charlotte.

Baker has been a regular at the Atlantic Beach rally since 1990, but she says Myrtle Beach doesn't play fair.

"One year, my husband broke down on the side of the road and instead of the police asking if we needed help, they said we needed to move along," she recalled.

But city officials in Myrtle Beach said they haven't heard complaints like that from rally-goers.

"Our police enforce rules

(on Memorial weekend) the same way as any other time of the year," said spokesman Mark Kruea.

Baker doesn't agree. She said that she has seen footage from the Harley-Davidson Rally, which is predominately white, and she doesn't see nearly as many police officers as she has seen at the Atlantic Beach rally, commonly called Black Biker Week.

Please see BIKERS/6A



## Grassroots groups encourage voter registration

By Cheris F. Hodges  
cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com

Civic groups in Charlotte want to make sure everyone who can vote gets a chance to do so.

The NAACP has teamed with other groups, including the Urban League of Central Carolinas and Omega Psi Phi fraternity to educate voters and get absentee ballots in the hands of those who need them.

Saturday representatives from those groups went door to door in the Belmont community registering voters,

providing paper work for absentee ballots and spreading the word of early voting.

Dwayne Collins, chairman of the NAACP's political action committee, said everyone's vote will be counted. "Due to the current climate in America, we want to insure that African Americans register to vote and will be able to do so," Collins said.

But, he added, African Americans shouldn't blindly support a particular candidate because of the way he or

Please see VOTING/2A



PHOTO:PAUL WILLIAMS III

Poet/activist Nikki Giovanni encouraged women to vote at the Pantene Total You Tour last week in Charlotte.

## Jamaica welcomes Haitian refugees

Few contemplate trying for American shore

By Dionne Jackson Miller  
INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Nearly 500 Haitians fleeing violence and turmoil in their country have made the precarious journey in small, often overcrowded boats across the 160 kilometers of ocean separating Haiti from Jamaica since a political crisis erupted there in February.

When the boats appear off Jamaica's east coast, usually at the parish of Portland, they are often pulled to shore by local fishermen and their passengers welcomed by community members before they are turned over to the authorities.

In contrast, U.S. residents rarely see the Haitian refugees bound for their shores — their worn vessels are stopped by U.S. Coast Guard ships at sea and the asylum-seekers returned to Haiti — a process known as interdiction — in violation of international law.

The policy was spelled out by President George W. Bush on Feb. 25, as a violent rebel uprising swept from Haiti's north toward the capital Port-au-Prince, and fearful residents started fleeing the Caribbean island.

Please see HAITIANS/7A

## Fewer low-income U.S. families are buying homes

By Genaro C. Armas  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Home ownership rates for low- and moderate-income working families with children have declined since the late 1970s, even though the overall U.S. homeownership rate has risen, according to a study released Tuesday by an affordable housing coalition.

The new analysis of already-released government data suggests in part that incomes for these working families haven't kept pace with soaring housing prices, highlighting a need for government to promote construction of more affordable homes, the Center for Housing Policy says.

Over the last couple of decades, builders have generally erected bigger homes than those built

Please see FEWER/2A

### the box NEWS, NOTES & TRENDS

Mecklenburg County and N.C. Treasurer Richard Moore will host a financial conference for the faith community May 25 at 8:30 a.m. at Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500 Shopton Road.

The conference will include workshops on debt financing, tax issues and retirement planning.

Early registration can be made by logging onto www.nctreasurer.com or call the Rev. Ralph Williamson of the Department of Social Services office of faith-based and community initiatives at (704) 336-7512.

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