

AN OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

Many hope landing Games will lead to mass-transit improvements



A boot camp for parents

‘Supernanny’ gives Plainfield couple marching orders



Chicago Tribune

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THE REGION'S BEST NCAA COVERAGE
The brackets, the matchups and more. **SPECIAL SECTION**

Cinderellas raise bar on midlevel programs

Success in NCAAs adds pressure to win, can cost coaches jobs

By David Haugh
Tribune staff reporter

Ask George Mason basketball coach Jim Larranaga about the far-reaching implications of the Patriots' improbable NCAA tournament Final Four appearance in 2006, and his favorite example involves a female fan who followed the team all the way to the altar.

The grateful woman related to Larranaga that she met her future husband at a George Mason tournament party and that the couple became closer with each of the team's four bracket-busting victories last March.

"When you realize how our winning in the tournament can have that kind of effect on people's lives, how do you quantify that?" Larranaga said.

Indeed, the NCAA tournament holds even the most casual sports fan in thrall for the duration of its three-week run, and success in or mere entry into "March Madness" can produce bliss for everyone associated with so-called midmajor college basketball programs such as George Mason.

This season's pairings were announced Sunday, and the resulting buzz can be a significant boon to universities that value the prestige as much as any profit.

But for as much fun as Larranaga had recalling the unexpected benefits such as the marriage he unwittingly nudged along, he also acknowledged contributing to the rising divorce rate between athletic directors and head coaches.

Little Valparaiso of the Mid-Continent Conference and slightly larger Gonzaga of the West Coast Conference gave Cinderella a modern-day makeover in the late 1990s, but George Mason's deep tournament run as a No. 11 seed confirmed how much parity in college basketball has increased even since then. Consequently, patience has decreased among midmajor athletic directors who have re-

PLEASE SEE **NCAA**, PAGE 17

In Texas, a white teenager burns down her family's home and receives probation. A black one shoves a hall monitor and gets 7 years in prison. The state NAACP calls it 'a signal to black folks.'



Shaquanda Cotton, 15, will spend up to 7 years at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, Texas, after shoving a hall monitor at Paris High School.

Tribune photo by Antonio Perez

To some in Paris, sinister past is back

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

PARIS, Texas — The public fairgrounds in this small east Texas town look ordinary enough, like so many other well-worn county fair sites across the nation. Unless you know the history of the place.

There are no plaques or markers to denote it, but several of the most notorious public lynchings of black Americans in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries were staged at the Paris Fairgrounds, where thousands of white spectators would gather to watch and cheer as black men were dragged onto a scaffold, scalded with hot irons and finally burned to death or hanged.

Brenda Cherry, a local civil rights activist, can see the fairgrounds from the front yard of her modest home, in the heart of the "black" side of this starkly segregated town of 26,000. And lately, Cherry says, she's begun to wonder whether the racist legacy of those lynchings is rebounding in a place that calls itself "the best small town in Texas."



"Some of the things that happen here would not happen if we were in Dallas or Houston," Cherry said. "They happen because we are in this closed town. I compare it to 1930s."

There was the 19-year-old white man, convicted last July of criminally negligent homicide for killing a 54-year-old black woman and her 3-year-old grandson with his truck, who was sentenced in Paris to probation and required to send an annual Christmas card to the victims' family.

There are the Paris public schools, which are under investigation by the U.S. Education Department after repeated complaints that administrators discipline black students more frequently, and more harshly, than white students.

And then there is the case that most troubles Cherry and leaders of the Texas NAACP, involving a 14-year-old black freshman, Shaquanda Cotton, who shoved a hall monitor at Paris High School in a dispute over entering

PLEASE SEE **PARIS**, PAGE 16

Woman is questioned in fatal fire

Wrigleyville blaze ended the lives of 4 small-town friends

By Jeff Long and Andrew L. Wang
Tribune staff reporters

Chicago police on Sunday questioned a homeless woman they consider a "person of interest" in setting a Wrigleyville fire that killed four friends and severely injured another, all of whom traced their roots to Belvidere, Ill.

Charges had not been filed late Sunday against the woman, believed to be in her 40s, who police suspect set at least three small fires several hours before the nearby fatal blaze Saturday morning at an apartment building at 3553 N. Fremont St., police spokeswoman Monique Bond said.

"She had a very strong odor of smoke, which also led detectives to believe that she was involved," Bond said. The woman appeared to be mentally unstable and made some self-incriminating statements, Bond added. Meanwhile, the victims' friends and relatives in Belvidere struggled to accept that their loved ones were gone. The fire killed the apartment's two tenants and two of three friends visiting from the northern Illinois town.

One tenant, Jennifer Carlson, 24, was a single mom who was studying to become a massage therapist while working as a waitress to support her son. Her roommate, Jason Bowers, 23, was a recent college graduate with eyes on a career in investment banking. Friends said they always turned to him for financial advice.

Bowers was the glue that

PLEASE SEE **FIRE**, PAGE 16

'You wake up coughing black stuff.'

—Chai Wenhong, who lives in Linfen, one of China's most polluted cities



Bloomberg News photo by Natalie Behring

A vendor in Linfen, China, sells coal bricks for home use. Coal has given the inland city wealth—as well as choking pollution.

In China's toxic air, winds of change

Beijing risks braking boom to cut pollution

By Evan Osnos
Tribune foreign correspondent

LINFEN, China—Here in one of the world's most polluted cities, where coal dust blackens apples still on the branch, something new is in the air.

It's not the brown smoke chugging out of coke plants and iron smelters day and night. The stranger is talk of an ultimatum.

Three years after China first cited Linfen for the nation's worst air quality, local officials have in recent weeks begun shuttering factories that for

years had fouled the environment with impunity. And more than 100 other plants in the city face a deadline: adopt environmental protection equipment by the end of March or be shut down.

Vows to crack down on polluters are nothing new in China and have brought little improvement. But what makes this case intriguing is that local officials in one of the country's worst-affected cities are closing factories, saying they have been warned that their political careers will hinge on successfully curbing pollution.

"We are under strong pressure" from the central government, said Yang Zhao Feng, deputy

PLEASE SEE **CHINA**, PAGE 13

Art lovers bristle over Italy's decision to lend a Leonardo

With the 500-year-old 'Annunciation' headed to Japan, an Italian senator asks: 'Why is this painting traveling so far?'

By Christine Spolar
Tribune foreign correspondent

FLORENCE, Italy—In a city steeped in Renaissance intrigues, add a modern tale of political and artistic dispute: how and why a masterpiece by Leonardo da Vinci—deemed by many to be an essential draw of the Uffizi Gallery—is being

flown halfway around the world to boost trade with Japan.

Uffizi Director Antonio Natali vowed to stay home Monday to protest the crating and removal of "The Annunciation," a 15th Century work he argued for months was wrongly swept up in a government campaign for business and tourism.

Deep-pocketed donors who

raise private cash for restorations have lamented the deal. Hundreds of Florentines have signed petitions to stop the trip. A senator from Florence—ignored in his monthslong quest for answers from the Culture Ministry and the Italian officials in Tokyo—said last week he'd retaliate with a bit of performance art Monday on mov-

ing day.

"I'm going out and buying a chain to lock myself up near the front door," said Sen. Paolo Amato.

The furor over the "The Annunciation," a stunning, 6-foot-wide depiction by a young Leonardo of the Virgin Mary and

PLEASE SEE **ART**, PAGE 14

BUSINESS

Stepping back in time

Sears mixes nostalgia, modern offerings in store redesign.

Weather: Rain; high 59, low 42
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Online at chicagotribune.com



PARIS: Parents allege discrimination in Texas town

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the building before the school day had officially begun.

The youth had no prior arrest record, and the hall monitor—a 58-year-old teacher’s aide—was not seriously injured. But Shaquanda was tried in March 2006 in the town’s juvenile court, convicted of “assault on a public servant” and sentenced by Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville to prison for up to 7 years, until she turns 21.

Just three months earlier, Superville sentenced a 14-year-old white girl, convicted of arson for burning down her family’s house, to probation.

“All Shaquanda did was grab somebody and she will be in jail for 5 or 6 years?” said Gary Bledsoe, an Austin attorney who is president of the state NAACP branch. “It’s like they are sending a signal to black folks in Paris that you stay in your place in this community, in the shadows, intimidated.”

The Tribune generally does not identify criminal suspects younger than age 17, but is doing so in this case because the girl and her family have chosen to go public with their story.

None of the officials involved in Shaquanda’s case, including the local prosecutor, the judge and Paris school district administrators, would agree to speak about their handling of it, citing a court appeal under way.

But the teen’s defenders assert that long before the September 2005 shoving incident, Paris school officials targeted Shaquanda for scrutiny because her mother had frequently accused school officials of racism.

Retaliation alleged

“Shaquanda started getting written up a lot after her mother became involved in a protest march in front of a school,” said Sharon Reynerson, an attorney with Lone Star Legal Aid, who has represented Shaquanda during challenges to several of the disciplinary citations she received. “Some of the write-ups weren’t fair to her or accurate, so we felt like we had to challenge each one to get the whole story.”

Among the write-ups Shaquanda received, according to Reynerson, were citations for wearing a skirt that was an inch too short, pouring too much paint into a cup during an art class and defacing a desk that school officials later conceded bore no signs of damage.

Shaquanda’s mother, Creola Cotton, does not dispute that her daughter can behave impulsively and was sometimes guilty of tardiness or speaking out of turn at school—behaviors that she said were manifestations of Shaquanda’s attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, for which the teen was taking prescription medication.

Nor does Shaquanda herself deny that she pushed the hall monitor after the teacher’s aide refused her permission to enter the school before the morning bell—although Shaquanda maintains that she was supposed to have been allowed to visit the school nurse to take her medication, and that the teacher’s aide pushed her first.

But Cherry alleges that Sha-



Tribune photos by Antonio Perez

A corrections officer leads Shaquanda Cotton to her dorm last month. She has tried to harm herself, Shaquanda said, out of depression, desperation and fear.



Creola Cotton visits her daughter, Shaquanda, at the correctional center last month. Supporters say the teen was singled out because her mother frequently accused school officials of racism.

quanda’s frequent disciplinary write-ups, and the insistence of school officials at her trial that she deserved prison rather than probation for the shoving incident, fits in a larger pattern of systemic discrimination against black students in the Paris Independent School District.

In the past five years, black parents have filed at least a dozen discrimination complaints against the school district with the federal Education Department, asserting that their children, who constitute 40 percent of the district’s nearly 4,000 students, were singled out for excessive discipline.

An attorney for the school district, Dennis Eichelbaum, said the Education Department had determined all of the complaints to be unfounded.

“The [department] has ex-

plained that the school district has not and does not discriminate, that the school district has been a leader and very progressive when it comes to race relations, and that there was no validity to the allegations made by the complainants,” Eichelbaum said.

Not so clear

But the federal investigations of the school district are not so clear-cut, and they are not finished. In one 2004 finding, Education Department officials determined that black students at a Paris middle school were being written up for disciplinary infractions more than twice as often as white students—and eight times as often in one category, “class disruption.”

The Education Department asked the U.S. Justice Depart-

ment to try to mediate disputes between black parents and the district, but school officials pulled out of the process last December before it was concluded.

And in April 2006, the Education Department notified Paris school officials that it was opening a new, comprehensive review to determine “whether the district discriminated against African-American students on the basis of race” between 2004 and 2006. Federal officials say that investigation is still in progress.

According to one veteran Paris teacher, who asked not to be named for fear of retribution, such discrimination is widespread.

“There is a philosophy of giving white kids a break and coming down on black kids,” said the teacher, who is white.



Creola Cotton (center) and Brenda Cherry (left) speak with Paris resident Carolyn King last month about plans for a “unity rally.”

Not everyone in Paris agrees, however, that blacks are treated unfairly by the city’s institutions.

“I’ve lived here all my life, and I don’t see that,” said Mary Ann Reed Fisher, one of two black members of the Paris City Council. “My kids went to Paris High School, and they never had one minute of a problem with the school system, the courts or the police.”

A peculiar inmate

Meanwhile, Shaquanda, a first-time offender, remains something of an anomaly inside the Texas Youth Commission prison system, where officials say 95 percent of the 2,500 juveniles in their custody are chronic, serious offenders who already have exhausted county-level programs such as probation and local treatment or detention.

“The Texas Youth Commission is reserved for those youth who are most violent or most habitual,” said commission spokesman Tim Savoy. “The whole concept of commitment until your 21st birthday should be recognized as a severe penalty, and that’s why it’s typically

the last resort of the juvenile system in Texas.”

Inside the youth prison in Brownwood where she has been incarcerated for the past 10 months—a prison currently at the center of a state scandal involving a guard who allegedly sexually abused teenage inmates—Shaquanda, who is now 15, says she has not been doing well.

Three times she has tried to injure herself, first by scratching her face, then by cutting her arm. The last time, she said, she copied a method she saw another young inmate try, knotting a sweater around her neck and yanking it tight so she couldn’t breathe. The guards noticed her sprawled inside her cell before it was too late.

She tried to harm herself, Shaquanda said, out of depression, desperation and fear of the hardened young thieves, robbers, sex offenders and parole violators all around her whom she must try to avoid each day.

“I get paranoid when I get around some of these girls,” Shaquanda said. “Sometimes I feel like I just can’t do this no more—that I can’t survive this.” *hwitt@tribune.com*

FIRE: Victim’s son was not home during blaze

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bound a loose circle of friends from Belvidere together, often inviting them to taste the urban life they loved and stay at the Wrigleyville apartment, family members said.

“He was kind of like the border between country and city,” John Bowers said of his brother. “If people got tired here in Belvidere, they could go to the city and see him. And he would come back here to see them when he got tired of the city.”

The Cook County medical examiner’s office could confirm Sunday only that Carlson died in the fire. The other three victims, all of whom appeared to be in their early 20s, could not immediately be confirmed because the bodies were too badly damaged by fire, and officials needed dental records to positively identify them.

Bowers’ family members, however, said Sunday that police have told them that both he



Jason Bowers and Jennifer Carlson were among four friends killed in a fire Saturday in a Wrigleyville apartment.

and Carlson were killed in the fire.

The person of interest was arrested around midnight Saturday near Belmont Avenue and Broadway, Bond said. She matched a description released by police earlier in the day.

Residents of the block where the smaller fires occurred identified the woman as the one they saw setting them, Bond said.

The fatal fire was reported just before 7 a.m. Saturday in a three-story building that sits at Fremont and Addison Streets, authorities said. Carlson, Bowers and the three friends were in the only occupied unit on the third floor, in the rear of the building.

Police said the fire appeared to have started in a stairwell between the second and third floors and spread quickly through the nine-unit structure.

A 20-year-old man in the

apartment opened the front door to the apartment, and fire burst into the unit, according to law-enforcement sources. He ran back into the apartment and tried to climb out a window, then fell to the ground.

He was taken to Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center, where he was in stable condition and being treated for a fractured pelvis and wrist, police said Saturday. A hospital spokesman would not release his condition Sunday.

According to David Tyrawa, a friend in Belvidere, the injured man had spent much of Saturday in surgery to help mend his pelvis and was told by the man’s parents that he would be set to undergo additional surgery within the next few days.

Carlson’s body was found in the north bedroom, sources said, while the body of one male victim was found in the living room and two others were found in another bedroom. Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said there were multiple smoke detectors in the building, some of which were working, while others were not. It was unclear how many smoke or carbon-monoxide detectors were in the apartment or whether they were working, he said.

Several samples of debris from the scene were sent to a state crime laboratory, and the state fire marshal’s office and

the police bomb and arson section were both conducting investigations, officials said. A police source close to the investigation said Saturday that a fire dog with the fire marshal’s office found an area where an accelerant may have been used, but Bond could not confirm that.

In Belvidere on Sunday, the mothers of two of the victims declined to speak at length with reporters, both saying their sons had not been officially pronounced dead by the medical examiner’s office.

Bowers’ family gathered at his mother’s home and tried to make sense of his death.

He graduated in 2005 from Southern Illinois University with a degree in business administration. After a stint doing construction work after college, he found a job at a Chicago bank about a year ago and had recently been promoted, his brother said.

“He was just getting his life together and knew what he wanted to do,” said his half-brother Joe Zobel. “He wanted to be in the city with the hustle and bustle.”

Although he was making new friends in the city, his mother, Kathleen, said he stayed in close touch with his friends from home.

“They would just come to visit” him in Chicago, she said.

“They do that a lot—back and forth, here and there. They’ll just go kick up their heels and go run around Chicago.”

Bowers ran track in high school and was on a YMCA swim team when he was younger. He enjoyed the outdoors and loved water sports. He also liked to rock-climb and had been on whitewater rafting trips, his family said.

His father, John Harold Bowers, who was in the Army, died of a brain tumor in 1987. The family had lived in North Carolina and Louisiana and was stationed in Germany when he died. Kathleen Bowers moved to Belvidere to be near her husband’s family. Her son Greg Zobel died in a truck accident about five years ago.

“My kids aren’t supposed to go before me,” Kathleen Bowers said, shaking her head slowly at the latest loss.

Friends and family said the lease on the Wrigleyville apartment was set to expire in about a month, and Carlson and Bowers planned to part ways.

He was searching for a new place in the city with another friend; she was set to return to Belvidere soon with her son, Blake, 4, who was staying with a baby-sitter in Itasca the morning of the fire because his mother had to work a late shift the night before.

Carlson was the youngest of

three children and dropped out of Belvidere High School in 2000 during her senior year, though she earned a GED later that year, said her aunt Cheryl Greenlee.

She moved to Chicago two years ago to attend college, her aunt said, and though she loved the city, she was also happy to come back home.

“She was moving back home to start her career,” Greenlee said.

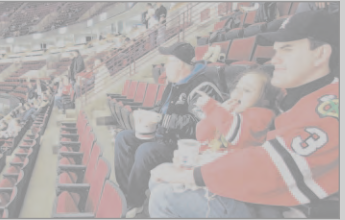
On Saturday, family members had feared that Carlson’s son had also died in the fire but rejoiced when the baby-sitter brought the boy to the scene that afternoon. A day later, they wondered whether he could understand what happened.

“We just answer his questions specifically and don’t give any more details,” Greenlee said. “We let him talk when he wants to talk and let him play when he wants to play.”

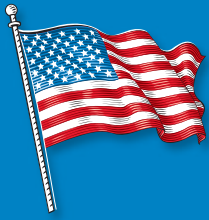
On an already trying day, she said, family members went to the medical examiner’s office Sunday to identify Carlson’s body. They needed only to see the tattoo of the Celtic cross on her back to know it was her.

“It’s been a difficult day today,” her aunt said. *jilong@tribune.com*
alwang@tribune.com

Can't even give 'em away
Blackhawks struggling to bring in fans BUSINESS



SPORTS
FANTASTIC FOUR
Florida vs. UCLA, Ohio St. vs. Georgetown



Chicago Tribune

FINAL

50¢ City & Suburbs; \$1.00 Elsewhere SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2007 CHICAGO

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TRIBUNE UPDATE

Teen is first of possibly hundreds to be freed from a scandal-ridden juvenile justice system

Girl in prison for shove to get released early

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

HOUSTON — Shaquanda Cotton, the black teenager in the small east Texas town of Paris whose prison sentence of up to 7 years for shoving a teacher's aide sparked nationwide controversy, will be released Saturday morning, prison officials confirmed on Friday.

Her release, ordered by a special conservator appointed to overhaul the state's scandal-ridden juvenile prison system, is the first of what could be hundreds as a panel of civil rights leaders begins reviewing the sentences of every youth incarcerated by the Texas Youth Commission to weed out those being held arbitrarily.

"We have no confidence in the system that was in place," said Jim Hurley, spokesman for the conservator, Jay Kimbrough. "And this case is an example of what we expect to happen if something wrong has been done to youths being held inside that system."

Cotton, who is 15, had no prior criminal record when she was incarcerated a year ago under an indeterminate sentence that could have lasted until her 21st birthday. Her case rose to national prominence and became the focus of ongoing civil rights protests after a March 12 Tribune story detailed how a 14-year-old white girl convicted of the more serious crime of arson was sentenced to probation by the same judge.

Cotton's case occurred against a backdrop of persistent



Tribune photo by Antonio Perez
Shaquanda Cotton, 15, learned from her mother on Friday that she would be going home.

IN THE WEB EDITION



Read all of Howard Witt's stories about alleged racial discrimination in Paris, Texas, and view photo galleries at chicagotribune.com/paris

allegations of racial discrimination inside the Paris public schools—allegations that are the subject of a continuing probe by the U.S. Department of Education to determine whether black students in the district are disciplined more harshly than whites.

PLEASE SEE RELEASE, PAGE 22

Blagojevich deals on business tax

\$1 billion higher levy would cut property tax

By Ray Long and Rick Pearson
Tribune staff reporters

SPRINGFIELD—Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Senate President Emil Jones teamed up Friday on a new version of the governor's already controversial plan to place a new levy on businesses by proposing to increase the size of the tax by \$1 billion to provide property-tax relief.

The proposal, the outcome of discussions between the two political allies, would increase the take from Blagojevich's proposed gross receipts tax to \$7 billion annually from the \$6 billion

the governor proposed in March to bolster education funding and enact a broad health-care coverage plan. Extra revenue would come from increasing the tax rate beyond what Blagojevich originally proposed on the revenues that businesses receive.

Unlike a tax on corporate profits, Blagojevich has proposed taxing each time a business takes in revenue. Supporters argue that the tax would more efficiently capture revenue in an economy shifting from manufacturing to services. Opponents contend the tax would unfairly compound at each stage of a product's development, jeopardizing the business climate and increasing

PLEASE SEE TAX, PAGE 6

Miglin needs financial makeover

Court defeat over failed business venture forces socialite and salon owner to file for bankruptcy

By Ameet Sachdev
Tribune staff reporter

Cosmetics maven Marilyn Miglin, a regular on Chicago's civic and social scene as well as the Home Shopping Network, has filed for bankruptcy protection from creditors.

Earlier this month, the 68-year-old widow of murdered real estate developer Lee Miglin lost a lawsuit related to a Las Vegas company she invested in that resulted in a preliminary \$16.8 million judgment against

her. The verdict forced her to file for bankruptcy Thursday in Chicago, according to a statement she released Friday.

The Las Vegas company marketed a medical device used to improve the appearance of women's legs. Miglin said in her statement that the bankruptcy filing is a "prudent step to ensure the continued and uninterrupted operations of the companies that bear my name."

Over the last 40 years Miglin



Tribune file photo by Bill Hogan
Marilyn Miglin, as seen in 2002, faces a \$16.8 million judgment from a lawsuit.

PLEASE SEE MIGLIN, PAGE 2

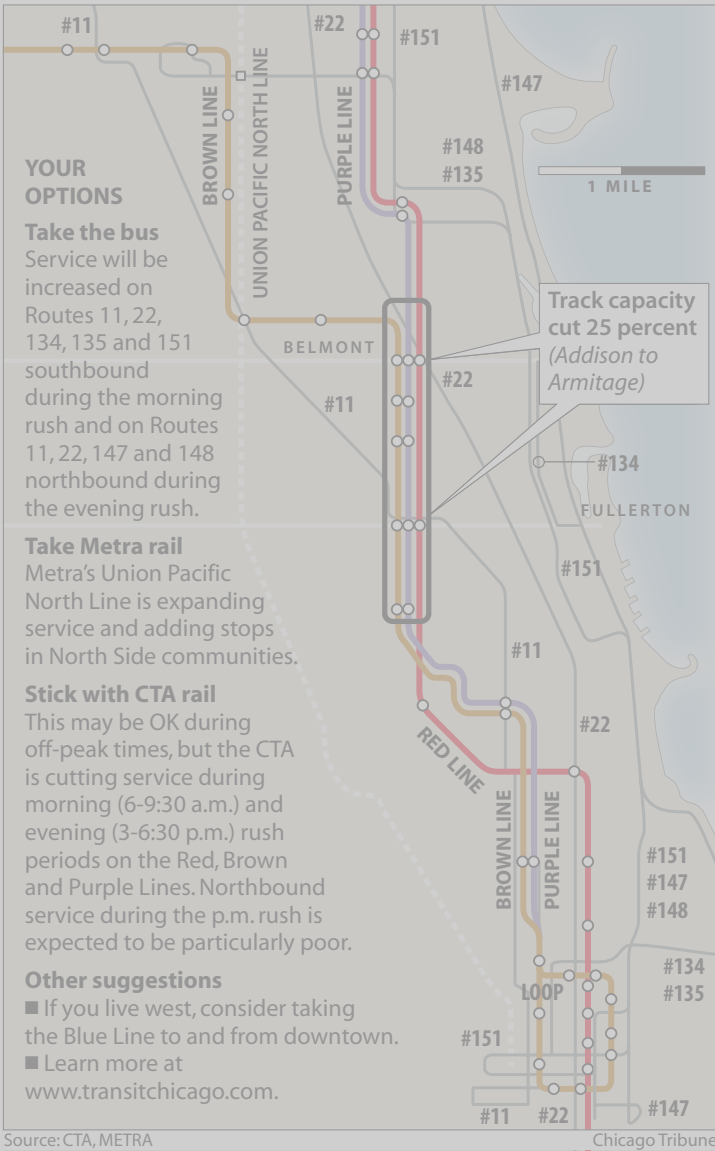


CTA commuters, waiting for trains Friday at the Fullerton station, will see fewer trains and longer commutes beginning Monday.

CTA gives go-ahead for a rail headache

What to expect starting Monday

o Rapid-transit stations #00 CTA bus routes with expanded service



Work to start Monday will tie up 3 'L' lines

By Jon Hilkevitch
Tribune transportation reporter

Almost three years of unprecedented service reductions will start as scheduled Monday on the CTA's busiest rail corridor, the transit agency's board decided Friday, despite calls from riders and some aldermen to postpone construction work until better transportation alternatives can be worked out.

"Monday, hell begins," CTA chairwoman Carole Brown said, echoing the sentiments of a transit blogger, after the board voted 6-0 to accept the recommendation of transit agency president Frank Kruesi to implement a 25 percent reduction in track capacity on the North Side corridor served by the Red, Brown and Purple/Evanston Express Lines.

Steep rush-hour service cuts, necessary to accommodate work on the \$530 million Brown Line reconstruction project, will result in already crowded trains being even more packed and will considerably lengthen

travel times, CTA officials said. "People need to expect that this will be an unpleasant experience in their commute," acknowledged Kruesi. But he insisted delaying the project would increase costs.

"We are ready to go," added Richard Winston, the agency's executive vice president for transit operations. Winston said the agency has fixed jamming problems with track switches, and he is confident that many months spent training and testing crews on new procedures will pay off.

But Brown and board member Nicholas Zagotta said they based their yes votes solely on Kruesi's assurances that the CTA has done all it can to prepare and to minimize disruptions for the 185,000 people who use the three rail lines, as well as for thousands of transit users on other rail lines and bus routes who will feel the crunch due to increased ridership.

"What if we're wrong?" Brown asked Kruesi before the



'Monday, hell begins.'

—CTA chairwoman Carole Brown

PLEASE SEE CTA, PAGE 22

City will close one school, give an overhaul to second

By Stephanie Banchemo and Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah
Tribune staff reporters

Chicago Public Schools officials announced Friday that they will close one North Side elementary school and turn over a South Side grade school to a private management company that plans to fill it with highly qualified teachers.

Under the proposal, part of the Renaissance 2010 reform, LeMoine Elementary School would be shuttered at the end of the school year. The 50 pupils in

the North Side school would transfer to two nearby campuses with better academic records than LeMoine.

But Harvard Elementary School in the Englewood-West Chatham neighborhood would undergo a complete transformation.

Under the proposal, the district would turn over Harvard—one of the lowest-performing schools in the district—to the Academy of Urban School Leadership. The group would close

INSIDE

NATION

FDA names new toxin in pet deaths

Melamine in wheat gluten likely cause of poisonings, agency says. The gluten was also found in one dry food product. **PAGE 3**

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Tribune photo by Alex Garcia
Zach Schultz of Lakeview waits Friday for a Brown Line train.

CTA: Plan is OKd despite pleas for a delay

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

board voted.
“Well, then I’ll be in very deep doo-doo,” answered Kruesi, a longtime adviser to Mayor Richard Daley.

The CTA plans to operate 24 fewer trains during the evening rush and nine fewer trains during the morning rush because one of four tracks will be shut down between Addison Street and Armitage Avenue to make room for crews to install elevators and expand platforms at the Belmont and Fullerton stations.

Critics of the CTA’s management of the Brown Line project say the transit agency’s advice to its customers is insulting because it focuses on asking riders to alter commuting times and switch to other train lines or to buses. Some called for a halt to the project until traffic studies and City Council hearings are conducted.

“The CTA’s alternate transportation plan, consisting of a vague plan for extra buses and a recommendation to find other means of transportation, is no plan at all and simply reflects arrogance and incompetence,” Tom Lisy, a board member of the Rogers Park Community Council, told CTA board members before the vote.

But CTA officials insisted riders can help operations go more smoothly by staying off northbound trains leaving downtown between roughly 4:45 and 6 p.m., when the number of passengers

is expected to exceed capacity. The second busiest period is expected to be from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. for southbound travel, officials said.

Commuters are asked to consider using CTA buses.

Service will be increased on seven CTA bus routes during the morning and evening rushes in the hope that some regular rail commuters will shift to buses, transit officials said.

Forty-two bus routes serve the area affected by the Brown Line project.

But to critics of the plan, inconveniencing commuters for almost three years is unacceptable. Several community activists, aldermen and a Brown Line corridor business owner who testified before the board Friday accused CTA officials of being short-sighted.

Aldermen Joe Moore (49th) and Ricardo Muñoz (22nd) called on the CTA to delay planned construction on the Fullerton and Belmont stations that is prompting the shutdown of one track.

“This three-track operation is off on the wrong track,” Moore said in a statement read by an aide at the meeting.

“Rapid transit, it ain’t—and it isn’t safe transit, either, I fear,” Moore added.

jhilkevitch@tribune.com

IN THE WEB EDITION



The Tribune’s Jon Hilkevitch provides updates on Brown

Line reconstruction project, and the resulting delays caused by the work at chicagotribune.com/gettingaround

RELEASE: Faced up to 7 years, served less than 1

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“When I learned about this case, I thought, this just looks so bad and smells so bad it made me hurt,” said state Rep. Harold Dutton, the influential chairman of the Texas Legislature’s juvenile justice committee. “I told [prison officials] I wanted her out of there immediately.”

The superintendent of the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, Texas, where Shaquanda Cotton is being held, called the girl’s mother, Creola Cotton, Friday afternoon and told her she could come pick up the youth, Creola Cotton said.

But because it is a five-hour drive from Paris to Brownwood, and the weather in the area on Friday was severe, Creola Cotton said she couldn’t reach the prison until Saturday morning.

Later Friday, prison officials, who had not told Shaquanda of her impending release, allowed her to call her mother.

‘She nearly fell on the floor’

“She thought they were bringing her to the office to tell her I was not going to be able to visit this weekend like I was planning because of the bad weather, so she was already crying,” Creola Cotton said. “I said, ‘Oh, I’m still gonna come see you tomorrow. But you’re going to be coming home with me.’ She nearly fell on the floor.”

Officials said Shaquanda Cotton was being released on 60 days’ probation to allow her to access state health and counseling services. But after that, she would be completely free, they said. Creola Cotton said her daughter would not return to the Paris public schools but would pursue her GED at home.

What effect her release might have on the pending legal appeal of the youth’s case was unclear.

Since she has been in prison, Shaquanda Cotton said that she had grown despondent surrounded by other youths who were hardened criminals, and that she had tried to commit suicide. Her sentence, which ultimately



Tribune photo by Antonio Perez
Shaquanda Cotton, shown in February, said she grew despondent and attempted suicide during her imprisonment. Prison officials extended her sentence twice.

mately was up to the discretion of prison officials, had twice been extended, first because she would not admit her guilt as required by prison regulations and then because she was found with “contraband” in her cell—an extra pair of socks.

Those sentence extensions drew the attention of Kimbrough, who was confirmed by the state Senate on Thursday as conservator of the youth prison system, which has been rocked by a sex scandal over allegations that guards and administrators coerced inmates for sex.

Kimbrough, a former deputy attorney general, said last week that he was convening a special committee to examine the sentences of all 4,700 youths in Texas juvenile prisons to determine how many might have had their sentences unfairly extended by prison authorities—and that Shaquanda Cotton’s was the first case he intended to review.

Prison officials said it was Kimbrough who personally ordered the girl’s release on Friday.

Since the Tribune’s first account of Shaquanda Cotton’s case, her story has been circulated on more than 400 Internet

‘When I learned about this case, I thought, this just looks so bad and smells so bad it made me hurt.’

—Texas state Rep. Harold Dutton

blogs and featured in newspapers and radio and TV reports across the country. Two protests demanding her release were held in Paris and a third, to be led by Rev. Al Sharpton, was scheduled for Tuesday.

Even before news of her impending release broke Friday, the Lamar County District Attorney’s office, which prosecuted her and pressed for her to be sent to prison for up to 7 years, made an abrupt turnaround and said the youth had served enough time and ought to be freed.

Court discrepancy revealed

“Let her out of TYC,” said Allan Hubbard, spokesman for Lamar County District Atty. Gary Young. “Hell, she’s done a year for pushing a teacher.

That’s too long.”

Hubbard also backed away from claims he and Young made this week in numerous media interviews that the judge in the case, Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville, had had no choice but to send the youth to prison because her mother had testified that she would not cooperate with probation officials had the judge sentenced the teen to probation.

On Thursday, Young’s official Web site contained this assertion: “This juvenile’s mother (Creola Cotton) told the judge she would not comply with conditions of probation.”

But a review of the full court transcript shows no such testimony. In fact, Creola Cotton repeatedly answered “yes” when asked in court whether she would comply with any conditions of probation that the judge might impose.

On Friday morning, after an inquiry about this discrepancy by the Tribune, the district attorney’s Web site was altered to read: “Through her actions of non-cooperation, Ms. Cotton told the judge she would not comply with conditions of probation.”

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TRIBUNE UPDATE

Freed teen: ‘I feel like I have a 2nd chance’

Youth goes home to a small town roiled by racial tension

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

HOUSTON—After spending a year behind bars, Shaquanda Cotton walked out of a central Texas youth prison Saturday pretty much like many 15-year-olds would: eager for a hug from her mom and pining for a Big Mac.

So McDonald’s was the first stop for the soft-spoken black teenager, who was abruptly released by Texas officials after nationwide civil rights protests erupted over her sentence of up to 7 years for shoving a teacher’s aide at her high school.

“I feel like I have a second chance,” she said, moments after devouring her hamburger. “I’m going to be a better person now. I’m a good person, but I want to be a better person.”

Soon after the restaurant stop, though, Cotton and her mother, Creola, headed out on the five-hour drive from the prison in Brownwood back home to Paris, the small northeast Texas town that has been roiled by protests and racial acrimony over her case and broader allegations of racial discrimination in the town’s schools and courts.

What reception awaits the teenager there in coming days is anyone’s guess, but her mother says she is concerned.

“I don’t want to place my daughter in danger,” Creola Cotton said. “I hope we can stay in Paris because this is where my family is. I would hate to have to pick up and leave.”

At the heart of the controversy, which exploded across hundreds of blogs and then scores of newspapers and radio and TV stations in the past three weeks, was the seeming severity of the teenager’s sentence for an offense that caused no documentable injury to the teacher’s aide.

School district investigated

Three months before Cotton, who had no prior criminal record, was sentenced by Paris Judge Chuck Superville in March 2006 to up to 7 years in youth prison for the shoving incident, Superville sentenced a 14-year-old white girl convicted of the more serious crime of arson to probation. Later, when the white teenager violated her probation, Superville gave her yet another chance and declined to send her to prison. Only when the youth violated



Creola Cotton (left) watches daughter Shaquanda open cards and gifts Saturday. Shaquanda Cotton is the first of hundreds of youths expected to be released from Texas juvenile prisons. The rest are to be freed starting Monday.

her probation a second time did the judge order her locked up.

School officials, the Paris district attorney and the judge have all strongly denied that race played a role in the prosecution and sentencing of Cotton. But her case has coincided with an ongoing investigation of the Paris school district by the U.S. Department of Education, which is examining allegations that the district systemically discriminates against black students by disciplining them more frequently and more harshly than whites.

The furor over Cotton’s case caused the special conservator now in charge of the Texas Youth Commission, the state’s juvenile prison system, to examine it more closely last week, at the urging of civil rights leaders.

The conservator, Jay Kimbrough, who is charged with completely overhauling the Texas Youth Commission because of a spreading sex scandal involving prison officials who allegedly coerced sex from inmates, decided Friday that Shaquanda merited immediate release.

Kimbrough said his decision was not based on the circumstances of the teenager’s prosecution and sentence but rather on the arbitrary way in which her indeterminate sentence had been extended by prison authorities since she had been in-

carcerated. Authorities penalized her because she was found with “contraband” in her cell—an extra pair of socks.

“The TYC staff brought that file in to me [Friday] morning and were so surprised by what they saw that they felt like im-

mediate action was justified, and I supported that wholeheartedly,” Kimbrough said.

Cotton was the first of an esti-

IN THE WEB EDITION



Read more about the case and see more photos of Shaquanda Cotton’s release at chicagotribune.com/paris

mated 400 juveniles incarcerated across the state whom Kimbrough has ordered released, beginning Monday. Those youths have all satisfied their minimum sentences and have committed no serious violations while in custody.

‘The right thing’

Kimbrough has also convened a special review panel to examine the sentences of all 4,700 juveniles in Texas Youth Commission custody, with the goal of releasing any whose sentence has been unjustly extended by prison authorities.

“This is the right thing to do, and TYC could have and should have done it long before Mr. Kimbrough took over,” said Will Harrell, executive director of the Texas chapter of the ACLU. “Shaquanda was the first domino, but there will be hundreds if not thousands to follow.”

hwitt@tribune.com

3 that Congress had blocked are tapped anew by White House

By Judy Pasternak
Tribune Newspapers

WASHINGTON—The White House has renominated three people for top jobs affecting the environment who previously were blocked in Congress because of their pro-industry views.

If necessary, said industry lobbyists and Republican aides in Congress, Bush intends to skirt the Senate approval process by making recess appointments to put the three nominees in the posts.

All three nominees have ties to industries that face costly Environmental Protection Agency restrictions, and all have bypassed or questioned EPA’s scientific process.

They are William Wehrum, who would head the air office of the EPA; Alex Beehler, to be the EPA’s inspector general; and Susan Dudley, who would become White House regulations czar.

The White House believes all three nominees “are highly qualified and well versed in their areas,” said spokeswoman Emily Lawrimore. She said she “would not speculate” on Bush’s plans for any recess appointments.

Bush, like other presidents, has used such recess appointments to get around Senate opposition, as when he named John Bolton as United Nations ambassador.

Wehrum and Beehler were proposed for the same posts last year, but Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) blocked the nominations. Boxer now chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, where the names have been sent again.

“I view it as an enormous threat to public health that the

president refuses to back off,” Boxer said.

The committee plans hearings on both men this month.

Dudley’s nomination stalled in the last congressional session when the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee failed to vote on it. Liberal groups had objected to her candidacy.

Wehrum, a former lawyer for the chemical, utility and auto industries, was counsel to the EPA’s air office when controversy erupted over the agency’s new standard for power plant mercury emissions. The mercury rule contained whole paragraphs lifted verbatim from a memo by Latham & Watkins, Wehrum’s former law firm, which represented utility companies affected by the rule.

In late 2005, Wehrum became acting air administrator; a temporary promotion that expires July 7. Bush’s appointment would keep him in the job.

To replace Nikki Tinsley, the retired inspector general who criticized EPA’s work on the mercury rule, the administration has recommended Beehler, a Pentagon official and former executive for Koch Industries, a private oil and chemical conglomerate based in Kansas.

Dudley headed a free-market think tank, the Mercatus Center, at George Mason University. It is supported in part by Koch Industries, whose chairman sits on the board.

Bush has renominated her to lead a section of the White House Office of Management and Budget that reviews all proposed government rules, where she is now a special adviser.

Los Angeles Times

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TRIBUNE EXCLUSIVE

Girl alleges sex abuse in Texas prison

White teen whose sentence led to uproar over racial disparities says guard molested her

By Howard Witt

Tribune senior correspondent

HOUSTON — When the Chicago Tribune published the story last March of Shaquanda Cotton, the 14-year-old black girl from Paris, Texas, who was imprisoned for shoving a hall monitor at her high school, the article quickly provoked a national civil rights scandal because of apparent racial disparities in the way justice was administered in the small east Texas town.

Shaquanda had no prior arrest record, and the hall monitor was not seriously injured. Yet the teenager was convicted in March 2006 of assault and sentenced by Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville to prison for up to 7 years.

Just three months earlier, Superville sentenced a 14-year-old white girl, convicted of the more serious crime of arson, to probation.

The furor that erupted over the disparity in how the two girls were treated prompted Texas authorities to release Shaquanda

from prison three weeks after the Tribune article appeared.

This is the story of what happened to the white girl in that saga.

It appears she has suffered a fate far worse than Shaquanda's.

The emotionally troubled teenager, who has been diagnosed with depression and bipolar disorder, was sent to the same youth prison in Brownwood, Texas, where Shaquanda was incarcerated, because she subsequently violated her probation twice.

While there, the teenager—whom the Tribune is not identifying—was allegedly sexually molested by a male prison guard, who then threatened her to keep her quiet, according to documents and witness statements examined by the Trib-

une. The girl self-mutilated her arms with a knife, carving the word "Why" into her flesh, her mother said.

Last spring, the girl attempted suicide by swallowing a handful of pills prescribed for another inmate. When a guard rushed into her cell to rescue her, authorities allege, the girl knocked the officer to the ground—an assault that tacked another 6 months onto her sentence.

Even worse, officials at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex knew of allegations that the guard was sexually abusing the girl but did not remove him from contact with female inmates until four months later.

In a letter to the girl's parents dated Oct. 18, 2006, prison Supt. Teresa Stroud wrote that "a formal investigation has been initiated" into allegations that a prison guard "touched [the girl's] buttocks and made comments about her anatomy."

The girl would later tell authorities that she was too frightened to talk to investigators about the incident, and prison officials ruled that the allegation was "unconfirmed," according to Tim Savoy, a spokesman for the Texas Youth Commission, the state's juvenile corrections agency.

But on Feb. 24, 2007, another abuse allegation against the same guard surfaced, and he was suspended with pay the same day.

In August, a Brown County, Texas, grand jury indicted the guard, Jaime Segura, 30, on multiple felony counts including sexual assault, indecency with a child, improper sexual activity with a person in custody and official oppression.

Authorities allege that Segura molested other female inmates at the Brownwood youth prison in addition to the Paris teenager. Officials in the Texas attorney general's office were unable to clarify Monday whether the Paris girl's case was among those cited in the indictment.

Segura's arrest came six months after a series of abuse incidents at other Texas Youth Commission facilities exploded into public view in a scandal that rocked the agency and forced the resignation or firing of all of its top leaders. Segura is the fifth guard at the Brown-



Tribune photos by Antonio Perez

This Brownwood, Texas, prison has been at the center of the state's juvenile justice woes, which now include sexual abuse claims.



Teresa Stroud, superintendent of the prison, declined to say why she did not immediately remove a jail guard after he was first alleged to have molested a teenage female inmate.

wood facility to face felony charges for allegedly molesting youths incarcerated there as part of this investigation.

Stroud declined to answer questions from the Tribune about why she did not immediately remove Segura from contact with youthful prisoners after he was first alleged to have molested the girl from Paris.

Girl describes alleged abuse

"I can't explain or try to justify what happened back then," Savoy, the youth commission spokesman, said. "I can tell you what we do now: If there's an allegation, they will pull the person away from the kids, either put the guard on suspension or in an area where they will not be around the kids."

But today, even as the youth commission moves forward with administrative reforms and the abuse scandal recedes into history, the Paris girl, who turned 16 in July, remains locked up in the Brownwood prison, where she has been for the past year. The girl's assault on the prison guard pushed her earliest possible release date to June of next year; she was originally due to be released Dec. 15.

That assault—and the suicide attempt, the self-mutilation and the girl's deepened depression—would never have hap-

pened if she had not been victimized by a prison guard, the girl's mother believes.

"I understand there are processes and procedures they need to go through," said the mother, whom the Tribune is not identifying to protect her daughter's identity. "I understand [my daughter] needed to take responsibility for her actions and learn from them. But what is happening now is punishment, not rehabilitation. She's being punished for something that should never have happened to her."

Last July, during an interview conducted by an investigator from the Texas attorney general's office, the girl related the details of what she said Segura had done to her, starting just a few days after she arrived at the Brownwood prison in October 2006 at the age of 15.

Among other things, the girl alleged that Segura watched her while she showered, offered her extra food if she would show him her breasts and threatened that she "was not going to like the outcome of it" if she revealed what the guard was doing to her.

"Mr. Segura put his hands up my shirt and grabbed both of my breasts," the girl wrote in her witness statement. "Mr. Segura rubbed my breasts. I

Prisons in turmoil

Scandals over abuses in the Texas juvenile prison system continue to mount, more than eight months after the first revelations that guards in Texas Youth Commission facilities were routinely molesting young prisoners:

- Dozens of guards have been charged with abusing inmates, and at least 65 correctional officers remain suspended pending further investigations, Texas Youth Commission officials say.

- A toll-free hot line set up by state officials to field abuse reports has logged nearly 6,000 calls.

- Officials shut down the Coke County Juvenile Justice Center and moved its 197 male inmates to other facilities last week after revelations of squalid conditions in the prison run by a private contractor.

- State lawmakers have scheduled a new round of hearings this month into the operation of the Texas Youth Commission.

jured, the girl's mother said, but the relative filed a complaint, causing Superville to revoke the girl's probation and send her to the Brownwood prison on an indeterminate sentence.

The abuse the girl allegedly suffered once she got to Brownwood deepened her despondency, her mother said—a point she tried to make when she appealed her daughter's sentence extension for knocking down the guard who interrupted her suicide attempt.

Texas Youth Commission officials denied that appeal last week, without ever considering the alleged sexual molestation as a potentially mitigating circumstance.

"The information in the file I have does not state what the alleged act of abuse was, who the alleged abuser was, or when the alleged abuse took place," Doug Wise, an attorney for the Texas Youth Commission, wrote to the girl in a letter explaining the denial of the appeal.

"I don't want it looking like we're trying to copycat the attention that Shaquanda got, but I think my daughter's story needs to be told," the mother said. "They should take into consideration that she has tried to take her life over this issue. She's really despondent. She blames herself for what the guard did. She just cannot forgive herself. And she is not receiving any counseling for what the guard did to her."

Late Monday, after the Tribune published this story on its Web site, state Rep. Harold Dutton, chairman of the Texas Legislature's juvenile justice committee, said he had contacted Texas Youth Commission officials "to seek an early remedy to this young lady's situation."

hwitt@tribune.com



IN THE WEB EDITION

Read Tribune coverage of the Paris, Texas controversy at chicagotribune.com/paris

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Democrats jab each other

Candidates take aim at rivals' stances on foreign policy

By Rick Pearson
Tribune political reporter

DES MOINES — Barack Obama's decision to launch a new tougher phase of his campaign with a withering foreign policy attack on Hillary Clinton opened the door Friday for the most contentious campaign day yet among the field of Democratic presidential contenders.

Clinton, who is the front-runner in national public opinion polls, found herself under attack not only from Obama, but Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware and former Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina. Biden also criticized Obama over a missed Senate vote and sparred with New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson over a strategy to stabilize Iraq.

With the first caucuses and primaries less than three months away, Dennis Goldford, a professor of politics at Drake University, said the Democrats are responding as Clinton has been solidifying her lead in many polls.

"If you're seeking to be the un-Hillary, you've got to do something to shake it up," Goldford said.

Obama, Illinois' junior senator, used a speech before a few hundred students at Drake University's Old Main to blister Clinton as being part of a Congress that "failed" the public by leading the nation into a war with Iraq that should have never happened.

He also criticized her recent vote for a non-binding Senate resolution that labeled an offshoot of the Iranian military as a terrorist organization that is destabilizing Iraq. The resolution, Obama said, could provide a "blank check" for the Bush administration to refocus the U.S. military objective in Iraq toward fighting Iranian insurgents in Iran.

"She said, like she did five



A young attendee shies away from Barack Obama after an event in Indianola, Iowa, on Friday. Earlier, Obama faulted fellow presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton's for her votes on Iraq and Iran.

AP photo by Kevin Sanders

New nod for Clinton

In a serious blow to the presidential campaign of Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), civil rights hero and Georgia Rep. John Lewis has endorsed Sen. Hillary Clinton. "I have looked at all the candidates, and I believe that Hillary Clinton is the best prepared to lead this country at a time when we are in desperate need of strong leadership," Lewis said in a statement released Friday by the Clinton campaign.

—Mike Dornier

years ago [in a vote authorizing the war in Iraq], that it is a way to support diplomacy," Obama said of Clinton. Obama said diplomacy should be conducted "separately from any saber-rattling about checking Iranian influence with our military pres-

ence in Iraq."

At a separate appearance in Des Moines, Biden called Clinton's vote for the Iranian resolution a "serious mistake." But Biden also asked why Obama was campaigning in New Hampshire instead of staying in Washington voting against the resolution. "I wonder why he wasn't there to vote," Biden said. "We all knew that this vote was coming up."

Obama also attacked Clinton for saying she would negotiate without preconditions with Iran's leaders after she earlier had assailed Obama as "naïve" for saying as president he would meet with leaders of rogue nations without precondition.

"I'm not sure if any of us knows exactly where she's standing on this issue," Obama said. Edwards, whose attacks on Clinton have been more direct, said in a statement that the public deserves a president "who

will tell them the truth and offer straight answers, not flip-flops and political doublespeak."

According to Clinton's campaign, the New York senator said the United States should enter into diplomatic talks with Iran, not a face-to-face presidential meeting as Obama said he would conduct without precondition.

Her campaign also noted that Obama's colleague, Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, also voted for the Senate resolution and did not believe it could be used as a pretense to invade Iran.

"Once again, Sen. Obama has abandoned the politics of hope to engage in the same old attack politics," said Clinton spokesman Phil Singer. "If Sen. Obama really believed that this measure gave the president a blank check for war, he should have been there, speaking out and fighting against it."

rap30@aol.com

Texas prison official to review girl's case

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

TRIBUNE UPDATE

AUSTIN, Texas —The acting executive director of the scandal-plagued Texas juvenile corrections system is reviewing the case of a troubled teenage girl from the small east Texas town of Paris whose prison sentence was extended for assaulting a guard despite mitigating evidence that she had been sexually molested by another correctional officer, a state legislator said Friday.

Acting Texas Youth Commission Executive Director Dmitriya Pope "has indicated she will personally take a look at this case and see what needs to be done," said state Rep. Harold Dutton, the chairman of the Texas Legislature's juvenile justice committee. "I've asked her to see what we need to do to get her out of there."

The 16-year-old girl was featured in a Tribune article this week that detailed allegations that she had been repeatedly molested by a guard at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood, but that prison officials waited four months to remove the guard from contact with female prisoners. The guard, Jaime Segura, 30, was later indicted on multiple felony counts for allegedly molesting other girls at the prison.

In February, the teenager—whom the Tribune is not identifying because of her age and her status as an alleged sex abuse victim—attempted to commit suicide by swallowing another inmate's pills and knocked down a prison guard who rushed to rescue her, according

to prison officials.

As punishment, prison officials added six more months to the sentence of the girl, who was due to be released this December after serving more than a year for violating her probation on an arson conviction.

The girl's mother maintains that her daughter's suicide attempt—and her assault on the guard trying to rescue her—resulted directly from her emotional turmoil over the molestation she allegedly suffered. But prison officials say the girl had committed other offenses while incarcerated and they did not consider any mitigating circumstances when imposing the additional sentence.

Pope testified Friday before a state Senate committee on other recent scandals involving the state's juvenile correctional agency.

Earlier this month, Pope ordered the immediate shutdown of the Coke County Juvenile Center operated by a private contractor, The Geo Group Inc., after investigators discovered that youths were being held in feces-covered cells and other decrepit and unsafe conditions.

On Friday, Pope revealed that just hours earlier she had fired the top two administrators at another youth prison after they could not be contacted to respond to a bomb threat at the facility. No bomb was found.

"We are trying to change the culture, which is a big uphill battle for us, because staff is not used to talking with kids as if they were humans," Pope told the hearing.

The acting executive director, who was brought in to overhaul the agency in the wake of the sex scandals, added that she was confident that recent changes to the agency's grievance and monitoring procedures would ensure that future problems will be uncovered quickly.

"I would say that, yes, the kids are safer now," Pope said. hwitt@tribune.com

IN THE WEB EDITION

Read Tribune coverage of the Paris, Texas, controversy at chicagotribune.com/paris

ACROSS THE NATION

PENNSYLVANIA

Mom accused of arming son, 14,

PHILADELPHIA — The mother of a 14-year-old boy accused of planning an armed attack on a suburban Philadelphia high school was arrested Friday on charges that she had given him three firearms.

The deputy chief of the Plymouth Township Police Department, Joseph Lawrence, said the 46-year-old woman, Michele Cossey, had bought her son a 9 mm rifle, a .22-caliber rifle and a .22-caliber handgun. She was

charged with providing a firearm to a minor, contributing to the corruption of a minor, unlawful transfer of a firearm and reckless endangerment, and was freed on bail.

The Montgomery County district attorney's office said Cossey was not believed to have known about what the authorities describe as a plan by her son for a possible Columbine-like assault in the community of Plymouth Meeting.

NEW YORK

Noose found near site of 9/11 attack

NEW YORK — Another noose has been found in New York, this time outside a post office overlooking ground zero, police said Friday.

It was the third case involving a noose in the city in a week.

Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said that the noose, which was found Thursday, will be analyzed and that police will consider the possibility that someone may be trying to capitalize on the publicity surrounding the noose found Tuesday on the office door of a black professor at Columbia University. This week, a white Richmond Hill, Queens, teen was charged for allegedly taunting a black neighbor with a noose.

MICHIGAN

Pupils face retest after questions leaked

LANSING — The Michigan Department of Education said Friday it will reconsider letting school districts give state standardized tests on different days after a breach that means 5th and 6th graders must retake a portion of the tests.

Schools now are given a three-

week window for the tests.

State officials say some of the 260,000 5th and 6th graders across Michigan have to retake a writing portion of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test because a newspaper published information about essays on the test.

TEXAS

Police: Man killed estranged wife, kids

ARLINGTON—A man accused of killing his estranged wife and two stepchildren fatally shot himself Friday as he drove into a lake after a seven-hour standoff, police said.

When a wrecker pulled the submerged car out of Lake Arlington, officers saw Arthur Jackson was dead and had a head wound, police said.

Earlier Friday, Jackson dropped off his bloody but unharmed 3-year-old daughter at an Arlington church. Ft. Worth police then went to the family house and found the bodies of the wife and stepchildren.

Items compiled from Tribune news services

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Oct. 12 Pick 4 9821 7686

Oct. 12 Little Lotto 04 07 17 23 28

Oct. 12 Mega Millions 21 26 34 44 54 23

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Oct. 13 Lotto jackpot \$2.5 million

Indiana

Oct. 12 Daily 3 Midday 663 Evening 405

Oct. 12 Daily 4 3884 9583

Oct. 12 Lucky 5 mid. 07 13 21 23 35

Oct. 12 Lucky 5 eve. 04 10 12 25 29

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Obama gives it the old college try

Students urged to attend caucus vote

By Mike Dorning
Tribune national correspondent

CEDAR FALLS, Iowa — Josh Mahoney, a 6-foot-1, 237-pound linebacker for the University of Northern Iowa's winning Panthers, stood on a platform at the campus gymnasium to introduce Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama and roused the crowd with his promise.

"I personally am going to drive 4 1/2 hours from Sioux Falls, S.D. I'm going to come all the way back here, and I'm going to caucus," Mahoney said. "It's probably going to be the most important election of your entire life."

Younger voters—much less college students from out-of-state—have not historically played much of a role in the Iowa caucuses. In the last presidential caucus here, only 11 percent of participants in the Democratic caucuses were younger than 35, according to the state party. Less than 4 percent were 18- to 24-year-olds.

Yet with only a month to go before the caucuses and two of those weeks a period when many voters will be preoccupied by holiday celebrations, Obama devoted most of a three-day swing through Iowa this week to college campuses, making appearances at six Iowa schools. And at the cost of some negative reaction from Iowa political commentators, his campaign actively urged Iowa college students from out of state to return to campus for the Jan. 3 caucuses that fall in the midst of winter breaks for most of them.

"Your futures will be decided by the decisions made in the next few years," the Illinois senator said at the University of Northern Iowa. "So I believe you will turn out. But don't make me look bad. I don't want



Tribune photo by Charles Cherney

He's with the band

Wilco band member Jeff Tweedy greets Sen. Barack Obama after introducing the Democratic presidential hopeful during a rock concert fundraiser Friday at the Riviera Theatre in Chicago.

to wind up on Jan. 3. with people saying, 'See, he was wasting all that time with young people.'"

Younger voters and particularly college students are among the strongest supporters of Obama's presidential bid but it remains an open question how significant a role they will play in the presidential contest.

A national poll of 18- to 24-year-olds released this week by Harvard's Institute of Politics found Obama leading Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York in contrast to other national polls that have Clinton ahead with the

overall public. Obama topped her by a nearly 2-1 margin among students at four-year colleges.

At the University of Iowa this week, students trudged through sleet and snow to see Obama at a 9 p.m. rally. At Grinnell College earlier in the evening, students were turned away at the door as a gymnasium crowd reached capacity.

Still, younger voters have notoriously low turnout rates on Election Day.

So Obama has sought to galvanize enthusiasm on cam-

pus, casting the election as a historic moment and appealing to the idealism prevalent in youth.

After Obama's speech at the University of Iowa, plenty of out-of-state students said they were planning to make the drive back to Iowa City for Obama. Others were not.

"Great speaker. Great guy. Very likable," said Michael Zmuda, 21, of Buffalo Grove, Ill. As for his plans on caucus night, "I'll be out in Colorado for a ski trip."

mdorning@tribune.com

CAMPAIGN DIGEST

BUDDY SYSTEM: Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York returned Friday night to the same Des Moines high school where she kicked off her campaign in January to explain why she needed Iowans to show up for her on caucus night. Attending a rally at East High School, the Democratic presidential contender was joined by her mother, Dorothy Rodham, at a "Take Your Buddy to Caucus" event. Clinton chided the Bush administration for its handling of the sub-prime mortgage crisis and the failure to regulate lenders who awarded adjustable-rate mortgages to people who couldn't afford such loans.

ROMNEY STRIKES BACK: Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney lashed out Friday when quizzed about the flap over a landscaping crew working at his home whose employees included illegal immigrants. Asked by a reporter as he campaigned in Iowa if, especially given his tough stance on illegal immigration, he should have been more vigilant about the work force at his home, Romney responded with pointed questions of his own. "If I go to a restaurant, do I make sure all the waiters there are all legal? How would I do that?" the former Massachusetts governor asked. "I've certainly never proposed that homeowners have a responsibility when they hire a contractor or company to then go out and inquire of the company's employees whether they happen to be legal or not. That's not the course of this country. It's even potentially against the law."

—Tribune political reporter Rick Pearson and news services.

For the latest political news, visit chicagotribune.com/theswamp

ACROSS THE NATION

CALIFORNIA

Writers strike talks break off

LOS ANGELES — Talks between Hollywood writers and studios imploded Friday, dashing hopes of a resolution to a 5-week-old strike that has upended the entertainment industry.

The strike has become one of the most tumultuous and vitriolic labor disputes in Hollywood history. It comes after eight days of contentious negotiations that yielded very little progress between the parties.

The sides remain divided on how to split new media revenues as digital technology and the Internet transform the way entertainment is delivered and consumed.

Both sides blamed the other for the breakdown of the talks.

NEBRASKA

Surveillance images show mall shooter

OMAHA — Chilling surveillance images released Friday show a shaggy-haired, bespectacled Robert Hawkins taking aim at holiday shoppers, and his hand-scrawled suicide note offers compassion for his friends and contempt for his victims.

The 19-year-old gunman left the note at the suburban house where he lived before going to Omaha's Westroads Mall on Wednesday with an AK-47 and opening fire on the crowd, fatally shooting eight people at the Von Maur store before turning the gun on himself.

Meanwhile, funerals for some of Hawkins' victims were scheduled. The mall was scheduled to reopen Saturday.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Landowners help demanded on border

The Bush administration warned landowners along the southern border Friday that it will seize their property if they refuse to cooperate with federal efforts to build a fence meant to slow illegal immigration.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said he would give landowners 30 days to indicate if they will allow federal officials on their land to survey whether it is suitable for fencing. If they decline, he said, he would turn to the courts to gain temporary access.

If the agency determines the land is appropriate for fencing and landowners refuse to cooperate, the department will turn to the courts to get title.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Inspector general to resign in January

The State Department's embattled inspector general, accused of impeding a Justice Department investigation of Blackwater Worldwide, announced his resignation Friday, citing a poisonous political atmosphere.

Howard Krongard wrote to President Bush that he would quit effective Jan. 15. He released a statement that said recent congressional testimony and correspondence give ample documentation of the reasons for his departure.

Krongard has said he never stood in the way of the probe.

FLORIDA

Shuttle officials aim for Sunday launch

CAPE CANAVERAL—After a two-day mechanical delay that continues to bedevil engineers, NASA hopes to launch Atlantis on Sunday, but only if habitually balky sensors perform perfectly as the shuttle is fueled.

A marathon series of meetings ended Friday night with mission managers inclined toward authorizing a Sunday launch at 2:21 p.m. CST, though a final decision will be made Saturday.

The launch window closes Thursday. If Atlantis is not in orbit by then, it must wait until early January.

Items compiled from Tribune news services

TRIBUNE UPDATE

Youth prison guard faces new sex counts

By Howard Witt

Tribune senior correspondent

HOUSTON—A grand jury on Friday indicted a former Texas youth prison guard on two felony counts of indecency with a child and two misdemeanor counts of official oppression alleging he molested a teenager from the small East Texas town of Paris.

Texas youth prison authorities have declined to grant clemency to the girl, who was 14 at the time the incident allegedly took place and who remains incarcerated despite allegations that she was repeatedly molested by the guard even after prison administrators were alerted to the situation.

Now the accused guard, Jaime Segura, could also find himself behind bars for the alleged offenses after the grand jury in Brownwood, the central

Texas town where the youth prison is located, indicted him.

The special prosecutor in the case confirmed the indictments and said Segura was arrested Friday. Bond was set at \$55,000.

The Paris youth, now 16, is the fifth female inmate Segura, 31, has been charged with molesting

Segura

between July 2005 and February 2007, when he worked as a guard at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood. Segura was suspended in February by the Texas Youth Commission, the state's troubled youth prison agency. He had been free on \$77,000 bond before Friday's new indictments were issued.



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Dec. 7 Mega Millions jackpot	\$96 million	
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Dec. 7 Daily 3	328	037
Dec. 7 Daily 4	3225	6788
Dec. 7 Lucky 5 mid.	06 24 30 31 36	
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Bush: Nooses ‘deeply offensive’

Displays, jests ignore history, he says

By Deb Riechmann
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush said Tuesday that recent displays of nooses indicate that some Americans may be losing sight of the suffering that blacks have endured across the nation.

“The era of rampant lynching is a shameful chapter in American history,” Bush said at a Black History Month event at the White House.

“The noose is not a symbol of prairie justice, but of gross injustice,” the president said. “Displaying one is not a harmless prank. Lynching is not a word to be mentioned in jest.”

As a civil society, Americans should agree that noose displays and lynching jokes are “deeply offensive,” Bush said.

“They are wrong,” the



President Bush thanks The Temptations at a White House event Tuesday for Black History Month. Bush honored a number of African-Americans as well as the group’s Otis Williams.

AP photo by Ron Edmonds

president said, referring to such displays and jokes. “And they have no place in America today.”

For decades, the noose was a symbolic part of a campaign of violence, fear and intimidation against blacks, the president said.

“Fathers were dragged from their homes in the dark of night before the eyes of their terrified children,” he said. “Summary executions were held by torchlight in front of hateful crowds. In many cases, law-enforcement officers responsible for protecting the victims were

complicit in their deaths.”

Rev. Al Sharpton, who was at the White House, said he was pleased with Bush’s comments. Sharpton helped organize a massive rally in September in Jena, La., to protest what marchers believed to be the unfair treatment of six black students charged with beating a white student at Jena High School. The beating came months after three other white students were suspended, but not criminally charged, for hanging nooses in a tree at the school.

At the event, Bush hon-

ored Rep. John Lewis, the Georgia Democrat who was a leader of the civil rights movement; and William Coleman, the first black U.S. Supreme Court law clerk and who served as President Gerald Ford’s transportation secretary.

Bush also recognized Ernest Green, one of the nine black students in Little Rock, Ark., who were escorted into the city’s all-white Central High School following the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling; and Otis Williams of The Temptations who performed Tuesday.

TRIBUNE UPDATE

Texas to free teenage inmate

16-year-old accused guard of molestation

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON—Quietly closing another chapter in the long-running sex-abuse scandal inside Texas youth prisons, state officials have reversed themselves and decided to grant early release to a 16-year-old girl from the small east Texas town of Paris who attempted suicide after she was allegedly molested by a male guard.

The girl’s mother confirmed Tuesday that officials of the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood have written her with instructions to come to the prison on Friday to take her daughter home, four months ahead of her scheduled release date.

The emotionally troubled teenager, whose story was reported in several Tribune articles last year, was sent to the youth prison in October 2006 after twice violating her probation for arson for burning down her family’s house. She was originally due to have been released in December 2007, but prison authorities extended her term by 6 months after she knocked down a guard who was trying to restrain her after interrupting the girl’s attempt to commit suicide.

The girl and her family maintained that her despondency and suicide attempt were the result of repeated incidents of sexual molestation and intimidation she allegedly suffered at the hands of the guard, and the refusal of prison authorities to believe her allegations. But until their recent turnabout, Texas Youth Commission officials had refused to regard the girl’s status as a sex assault victim as a mitigating factor in her case.

The guard, Jaime Segura, was indicted in December on four counts of molesting the Paris girl, who was 14 at the time of the alleged incidents. Segura had previously been charged with sexually as-

IN THE WEB EDITION



Read previous Tribune coverage of the controversy in Paris, Texas, at chicagotribune.com/paris

saulting four other female inmates at the Brownwood facility and was one of dozens of guards accused of sexually abusing inmates in youth prisons across the state last year.

Revelations about that abuse led to wide-ranging reforms inside the Texas Youth Commission, the state’s juvenile corrections agency, and the early release of hundreds of youthful inmates.

“We’re going to pick her up Friday and we’re just ecstatic,” said the mother of the girl, whose identity the Tribune is not revealing because of her age and circumstances. “I think once she gets home and has the love and support from our family, she’s going to be OK.”

A Texas Youth Commission spokesman would not publicly confirm the girl’s impending release, citing confidentiality rules. But officials said privately that they had recently decided to review her case and shorten her sentence.

Months before it was disclosed that the girl had allegedly been victimized by a prison guard, her case first generated controversy when the Tribune contrasted it with the case of Shaquanda Cotton, another Paris teenager who was sentenced to the Brownwood prison for up to 7 years for shoving a hall monitor at her high school.

The same Paris judge sentenced Cotton, who is black, and the other girl, who is white. But the wide disparity in their punishments—prison for the black girl’s shove and probation for the white girl’s arson—angered civil rights activists and triggered national protests, which led to Cotton’s early release last March.

hwitt@tribune.com

Spine ailments up despite big increase in spending

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Americans are spending more money than ever to treat spine problems, but the backs aren’t getting better.

Those are the findings of a report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, which said spending on spine treatments in the U.S. totaled nearly \$86 billion in 2005, up 65 percent from 1997 after adjusting for inflation.

Even so, the proportion of people with impaired function because of spine problems increased.

“You’d think if you’re putting a lot of money into a problem, you’d see some improvements in health status,”

said Brook Martin, research scientist at the University of Washington and lead author on the study, scheduled for publication Wednesday.

“We’re putting a lot of money into this problem ... but we’re not seeing health status commensurate with those investments,” Martin said.

The researchers found that people with spine problems spent about \$6,096 each on medical care in 2005, compared with \$3,516 in medical spending by those without spine problems.

Researchers estimated that the percentage of adults with limiting back or neck problems rose from 21 percent in 1997 to 26 percent in 2005.

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RACE IN AMERICA



About a hundred people attended a meeting led by specialists from the Department of Justice on Thursday in racially divided Paris, Texas. **TOM VAN DYKE/TRIBUNE PHOTOS**

Race dialogue turns into dispute

Black, white residents of deeply divided Paris, Texas, gather to vent, share their views — and eventually find solutions — with help of Justice Dept. mediators



By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

PARIS, Texas — Ten days into a new American era, a hundred white and black citizens of this deeply polarized east Texas town tried their hand at the kind of racial reconciliation heralded by the historic inauguration of

President Barack Obama, gathering for a frank community dialogue on the long-ta-boo topic of race.

Things didn't go so well. The black speakers at Thursday night's meeting, led by two conciliation specialists from the U.S. Department of Justice, mostly spoke about incidents of discrimination, prejudice and unfairness they said they routinely suffer in Paris. Their white listeners mostly glared back with their arms crossed.

The four-hour session ended with some participants screaming at each other over the presence of three police cars parked outside the meeting hall, and who had ordered them and why.

"We are not going to end on a note like that!" commanded Carmelita Pope Freeman, the regional director of the Justice Department's Community Relations Service. "I'm getting tired of it!"

Yet the mayor of this once-obscure town, which became a national flash point after the Tribune revealed several cases of alleged racial injustice here in recent years, pronounced himself optimistic. At least, he said, black and white citizens were talking to each other—something that's rarely happened in Paris before.

"Every city should have a dialogue like this," said Mayor Jesse James Freelen, whose town of 26,000 is 72 percent white and 22 percent black. "We didn't like all the negative publicity about our town, and we didn't like how we got here. But if the end result is that our community grows together, then it will all have been worth it."

First, however, the community had to vent, which was the purpose of Thursday night's meeting. It was an early stage of a mediation program the Justice Department has offered to other troubled towns, like Jena, La., to help close deep racial fissures in an echo of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"I'm here to talk about racism. I don't see any sense in playing games, pretending it doesn't exist," said Brenda Cherry, the African-American leader of a local civil rights group. "When you go in the schools and see mostly black kids sitting in detention—it's racism. In court, we get high bonds, we get longer sentences. If that's not racism, what is it?"

Jason Rogers, the youth pastor of a local black church, reminded the audience of the monument honoring fallen Confederate soldiers that sits on the front lawn of the county courthouse.

"When I take my 5-year-old son up to the courthouse, and he says, 'Daddy, what's that?' the history I'm going to tell him is that those people fought to keep me a slave," Rogers said, as black members of the audience nodded in agreement. "It bothers my family that there's a large Confederate soldier outside the courthouse. I don't see the difference between a Confederate soldier and a Nazi soldier."

In fact, Paris' bloody racial history hung over the meeting like a toxic cloud.

The event was held in a hall at the Paris Fairgrounds, the precise spot where, a century ago, thousands of white citizens gathered to cheer the ritualized lynchings of blacks, chaining them to a flagpole or lashing them to a scaffold before tearing them to pieces and setting them on fire.

But memories of much more recent black victims also filled the room as Paris resident Jacqueline McClelland approached the microphone.

McClelland's 24-year-old son, Brandon, was killed last year, allegedly at the hands of two white men, who authorities charge dragged him beneath a pickup truck until his body was nearly dismembered. The accused killers are awaiting trial on murder charges, although McClelland's family and civil rights leaders want hate crime charges added as well.

"Any crime that is done the way my son was done, I think hate played a part in it," McClelland said, as the room fell silent. "I'm just hoping and praying that justice will be served on this."

Then Creola Cotton stood up to speak.

In 2006, Cotton's daughter Shaquanda, then 14, was sentenced by a local judge to up to 7 years in a youth prison for shoving a hall monitor at Paris High School. Three months earlier, the same judge had sentenced a 14-year-old white girl to probation for the more serious crime of arson.

Less than a month after a Tribune story contrasting the two cases triggered national protests and petition drives, Texas authorities ordered Shaquanda's early release from prison.

"Justice in Paris does have a color," Creola Cotton said. "I know this from personal experience."

At the back of the room, Lamar County Judge Chuck Superville—the white man who ordered Shaquanda to prison—listened and shook his head in disagreement.

Racial discrimination in Paris, he insisted, is a problem of perception, not reality.

"I think the black community in this town is suffering a great deal from poverty, broken homes, drugs," Superville said. "Because a larger percentage of the black population is caught up in that, in their anguish they are perceiving they are the victims of discrimination. But white people are not the enemy. Poverty, illiteracy, drugs, absentee fathers—that's the enemy. That's not racism. That's the breakdown of a community."

hwitt@tribune.com



A statue at the courthouse in Paris, Texas, depicts a Confederate soldier, flanked by Gen. T.J. "Stonewall" Jackson (left) and Jefferson Davis.

Talking to each other

More from the Tribune's "Race in America" series, as well as pictures and video from a community meeting in Paris, Texas, where residents talk about their racial issues at chicagotribune.com/dialogue

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Timetable near on Iraq exit

Plan would leave 50,000 'residual' troops into 2011

By Julian E. Barnes
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is considering a 19-month withdrawal plan for the bulk of U.S. troops in Iraq and could announce a timetable this week, military officials said Tuesday.

The plan would represent a compromise between the 16-month withdrawal timetable advocated by President Barack Obama during his campaign and the military's proposal for a 23-month period.

The plan would pull all combat forces out of Iraq by late 2010 but would leave a substantial "residual force" of as many 50,000 soldiers, at least through most of 2011.

A stepped-up Iraq withdrawal timeline is key to the Obama administration's plans for increasing the number of combat and support troops in Afghanistan. It also is crucial to the administration's plan to cut the federal deficit by reducing the cost of overseas deployments.

Although officials expect an announcement this week, a White House official said Tuesday that Obama has not made a decision on the precise withdrawal timetable.

In his speech before Congress on Tuesday night, the president declared he would "soon announce a way forward in Iraq that leaves Iraq to its people and responsibly ends this war."

Earlier this month, the Defense Department presented a 19-month withdrawal plan, along with the 16- and 23-month options, to the Obama administration, military officials said.

A security agreement between U.S. and Iraqi officials requires that all U.S. forces leave the country by the end of 2011, although that deal could be renegotiated to allow a longer-term American presence if the Iraqis request such help.

Gen. Raymond Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and other officers originally pushed for a 23-month timeline to keep a large number of troops in

place for the national elections scheduled for this fall. A 19-month timeline will require the military to begin withdrawing some units before the elections.

But with the security gains of recent months, officers believe the 19-month compromise plan will work.

"Based on what we think is going on, that would be a reasonable timeline," said a senior military officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because a final decision has not been made.

More important than the withdrawal timeline is the mission of the residual force, the officer said.

"The thing I would pay attention to is what will remain," the officer said. "The key decision for the president is: What is that force, and what specific duties does it have?"

Military officials said the remaining troops would train the Iraqi army, conduct counterterrorism missions, provide logistics help and offer aerial surveillance and airstrikes. The senior officer said the troops also could help protect Iraq from outside attack, something the Iraqi military cannot yet do.

A key challenge for Obama will be to articulate why a small force needs to remain even after the bulk of the forces are pulled out.

"When President Obama said we were going to get out within 16 months, some people heard, 'Get out,' and everyone's gone," the senior officer said. "But that is not going to happen."

Danger remains in Iraq, and the military considers a presence there important to stability in the Middle East.

"One of the challenges will be to articulate our interests in Iraq as an enduring enterprise," the senior officer said. "That is the fine line the president is going to have to walk."

In Iraq on Tuesday, a U.S. soldier and an Iraqi interpreter were killed and three American troops were injured when gunmen, who officials said wore Iraqi police uniforms, fired on them in the northern city of Mosul.

It was the third time since November that men in Iraqi security force uniforms have attacked American forces in Nineveh province.

jbarnes@tribune.com



Karl Mitchell, a worker at a Turner Industries pipe fabrication plant in Paris, Texas, said he took these photographs showing a hangman's noose (above) and a Confederate flag (below) that were displayed in the workplace.

Racism bedevils Texas town

Nooses, other images stoke Paris' already high tensions

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON — Only a few weeks ago, race relations had reached such a low point in the troubled east Texas town of Paris that federal Justice Department mediators were called in to try to bring together black and white citizens, but the public meeting quickly dissolved into rancor.

Now fresh racial tensions are erupting inside one of the town's biggest employers, the Turner Industries pipe fabrication plant, where black employees charge that hangman's nooses, Confederate flags and racist graffiti have been appearing throughout the workplace for months.

One worker, Karl Mitchell, took pictures of the offensive symbols in early February and filed a formal complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission last week. Other African-American employees assert that they've repeatedly complained about the racist symbols to their bosses, only to be ignored or told to keep quiet.



"Somebody had to step forward," said Mitchell, who has filed a formal complaint alleging a pattern of discrimination with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Where hate meets hope

Read the Tribune's series "Race in America" at chicago.tribune.com/raceinamerica

"Somebody had to step forward," said Mitchell, who also alleges a pattern of wage and promotion discrimination at the plant stretching back nearly two years. "They are so wide-open with [the racist displays] and so certain that African-Americans

aren't going to say anything about it."

Officials at Turner Industries' headquarters in Baton Rouge, La., say they only learned of the discrimination allegations last week, when photographs of the racist symbols began circulating on the Internet. They say a noose and other inflammatory depictions and graffiti have been removed and a company investigation has been launched.

"All of us in management find all of that offensive," said John Fenner, the company's corporate general counsel.

"We do not condone any displays of this type. I can promise you that in the event we uncover that any of our people participated in the display of any of those matters, they may very well lose their jobs."

Fenner also denied that blacks, who make up 11 percent of the Paris plant's 660 employees, are discriminated against in either pay or promotions.

The racial flare-up at Turner Industries comes just as Paris leaders were hoping to finally fall out of the spotlight after several troubling racial incidents focused national attention on the town of about 26,000.

"Obviously, this isn't going to play well," lamented Pete Kampf, president of the Lamar County Chamber of Commerce, who said he e-mailed the troubling photographs to Turner officials in Baton Rouge last week as soon as he was alerted to them. "We've had a lot of recent racial discussions in Paris, and you better get a heads-up if you see another storm working."

Paris first drew national scrutiny in 2007, the year after a 14-year-old African-American girl, Shaquanda Cotton, was sentenced by a local judge to up to 7 years in a youth prison for shoving a hall monitor at Paris High School. Three months earlier, the same judge had sentenced a 14-year-old white girl to probation for the more serious crime of arson.

Less than a month after a Tribune story contrasting the two cases triggered national civil rights protests and petition drives, authorities ordered Shaquanda's early release from prison.

Then last year, a 24-year-old African-American man, Brandon McClelland, was slain, allegedly at the hands of two white men who authorities charge dragged him beneath a pickup truck until his body was nearly dismembered.

The accused men are awaiting trial for murder, but McClelland's family and civil rights leaders have pressed prosecutors to add hate-crime charges as well.

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