

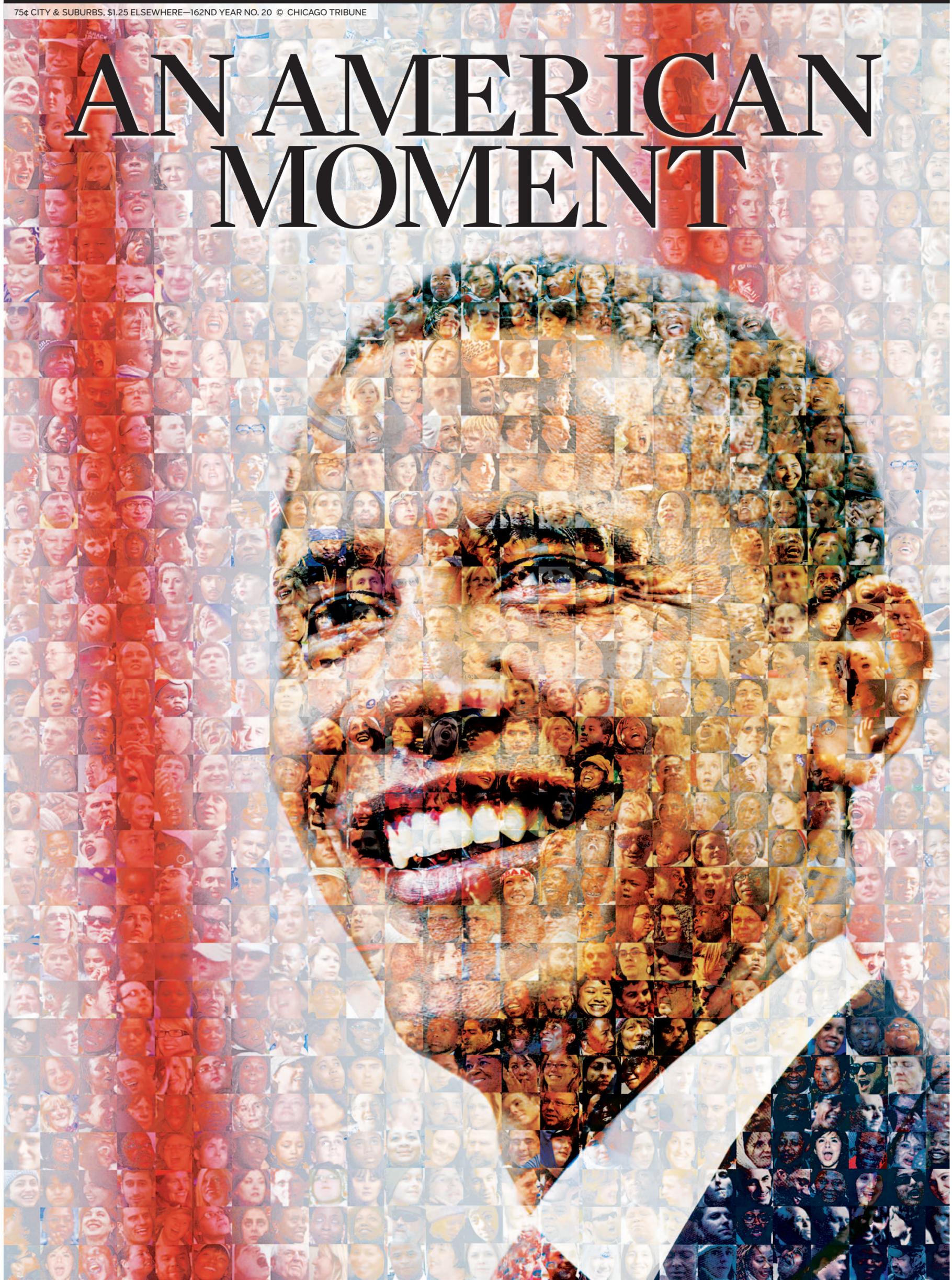
Chicago Tribune



TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009 | The Midwest's largest reporting team | 24 hours at chicagotribune.com

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AN AMERICAN MOMENT



On Page 8, learn how this image was created using more than 800 portraits of people from the campaign trail. CHRISTINE BRUNO/ILLUSTRATION AND ZBIGNIEW BZDAK/BARACK OBAMA PHOTO

By Howard Witt | TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

Complete coverage of the Obama inauguration and King Day events.

PAGES 2-9, 12

COLUMBIA, S.C.—Sometimes, history comes full circle. On Tuesday, Hannah Jane Hurdle-Toomey, one of the last living children of an African-American slave, will be watching intently on TV as an African-American family takes up residence in the White House—a national monument built by slaves. “At last, the time has come,” said the 76-year-old retired Oregon pastor whose father, Andrew Jackson Hurdle, was born into slavery in North Carolina in 1845. “This at least will give our young African-American children hope that they, too, can achieve. We had just about collectively given up.” Sometimes, history puts things right. On the front lawn of the South Carolina state Capitol, hard by the Confederate flag waving in the breeze and next to the monument honoring Confederate soldiers, stands a forbidding statue of one of America’s most notorious white supremacists. “We have done our level best. We have scratched our heads to find

out how we could eliminate the last one of them, and we would have done it if we could,” declared Benjamin Tillman, a South Carolina governor and senator, speaking of black Americans on the floor of the U.S. Senate in 1900. “We stuffed ballot boxes. We shot them. We are not ashamed of it. We of the South have never recognized the right of the Negro to govern white men, and we never will.” On Tuesday, when the first black man in American history recites the presidential oath of office, Benjamin Tillman officially becomes moot. For a nation sucker-punched by an economic crisis, a world rocked back on its heels by terrorism and a planet gasping for relief from a steadily warming climate, the inauguration of President Barack Hussein Obama offers a breathtaking moment of audacious hope. Unemployed Americans with evaporated medical insurance are

Please turn to Page 8

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DON'T MISS OUR INAUGURATION EXTRA EDITION, AVAILABLE THIS AFTERNOON DOWNTOWN AND AT TRIBUNE TOWER

NATION & WORLD The Obama inauguration



In Washington on Monday, Caleb Leak, 7, of Alabama, waves a flag with an image of Barack Obama superimposed on it. SCOTT STRAZZANTE/TRIBUNE

A U.S. milestone, with miles to go

Continued from Page 1

hoping Obama's promised health reforms come through before they get sick. Vulnerable Americans living along the nation's coasts are hoping Obama does something about climate change before the seas rise even higher. War-weary Americans with sons and daughters in the U.S. armed forces are hoping Obama can bring the precarious interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan to a secure conclusion. Black Americans still victimized by systemic racial inequalities are hoping that Obama will address the nation's unfinished business of equal opportunity.

And every American who is hoping to send a child to college, care for an elderly parent or simply retire without having to take a full-time job as a Wal-Mart greeter is praying that Obama can chart a way out of the nation's deepening financial crisis.

"I didn't vote for Obama," said a woman hurrying out of an unemployment office in downtown Columbia, "but if he can create some jobs down here, a lot of us will be willing to change our minds."

The nation's 44th president will scarcely resemble all the Establishment white men who came before him. In fact, even as the Obamas finally integrate 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. after more than 200 years, outgoing President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, will be heading back to Texas to a newly purchased home in an exclusive, 82-percent-white Dallas neighborhood where, until just a few years ago, home sellers routinely attached "racial covenants" to their property deeds to prevent blacks from buying in.

But President Obama, the son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas, will look very much like the new, multiracial, multicultural America he will begin to lead—a nation that, by the time Obama's two young daughters reach middle age, will no longer have a majority white population.

Yet not only Democrats or liberals or African-Americans will be rejoicing on Inauguration Day. Polls show that more than three-fourths of Americans—many of them Republican and conservative and white—are pulling for Obama in these perilous times, far more than the 53 percent of the electorate that voted for him.

"You'd have to be irrational not to want the new president to succeed," Newt Gingrich, one of the Republican Party's



Society—and a photo of her dad—remind Hannah Hurdle-Toomey that she is a generation removed from slavery. TRIBUNE FILE



Race in America

The Tribune series examines the nation's views of race as a black man becomes president. Read the stories at chicago.tribune.com/raceinamerica

ideological standard-bearers, recently told The New York Times.

There is another national yearning out there as well, one as old as America's founding sin of slavery—the hope that, 146 years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and nearly 46 years after Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of his evocative dream, Obama's presidency might finally salve the wounds of America's enduring struggles over race.

Today, of course, all Americans have the right to vote, or live where they choose, or eat where they want.

The nation can look back at the grainy newsreels of little black girls being escorted by federal marshals into public schools; or the faded photographs of red-faced sheriffs unleashing vicious dogs on peaceful protesters; or the museum displays of "Whites Only" signs posted above water fountains and restrooms, and take comfort in the notion that such Old South anachronisms are locked away in America's shameful Jim Crow past.

What's more, liberated from the rigid categories of "black" or "white," 2 percent of Americans now identify themselves to census-takers as members of two or more races—like Obama, the progeny of interracial unions that not so long ago triggered arrests and even public lynchings.

"We're very excited about the potential for Barack Obama to ignite a very productive

discussion about race and culture," said Louie Gong, president of the MAVIN Foundation, an interest group for people of mixed racial heritage. "For the first time, people who aren't multiracial and who have never been concerned with racial issues are really thinking about what it means to be mixed."

But all of that substantial progress only casts into sharper relief how much remains to be done in a nation where some experts say it will take another 500 years for African-Americans to bridge the income gap with whites, where Hispanic immigrants are vilified by TV pundits denouncing them as vectors for leprosy, where the Republican Party of Lincoln does not have a single African-American among its 219 senators and representatives in Washington and where many inner-city schools remain as racially segregated—and educationally deficient—as they were half a century ago.

A portrait of faces

For a high-resolution version of today's cover illustration that allows you to see every face, go to chicagotribune.com/obamafaces



1. After editors came up with the idea to compose an illustration of President-elect Barack Obama, the first step was to find a good base image to work from. This image by Tribune photographer Zbigniew Bzdak was chosen.

2. A photo editor pored over thousands of images taken in 2008 by Tribune photographers from rallies, Election Night at Grant Park, scenes at campaign offices, voting and crowds lining the streets of Chicago to see Obama's motorcade. More than 400 separate frames were selected.

3. Then Christine Bruno, Chicago Tribune imager and Photoshop illustrator, sorted through them all and determined the more than 800 different faces (some individual frames had several good faces) and arranged them in a grid in Photoshop, a photo editing program.

4. Bruno then adjusted the coloring, tone and opacity of the faces so Obama's features came to the foreground.

"The reality is that, for African-Americans, we have lost all the progress we had made since the 1960s," said Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles and a leading expert on school desegregation. "For whites, it is a lost opportunity to prepare" for the nation's multiethnic future.

Contrary to the fondst hopes of liberal Americans—and the insistent declarations of conservatives—America is decidedly not yet "post-racial." Race, particularly the historic divide between blacks and whites, is still the abiding subtext of many of our national conversations.

"On the day after Obama's election, I went to the post office, and the postman couldn't find anything to call me but 'girl,'" said Hurdle-Toomey, whose father, the former slave, died three years after she was born in 1932. "I went to the gym to work out, and a woman asked me if I would do her laundry. You would think there was a committee set up to remind me I am just one generation away from slavery."

Obama never campaigned to become the nation's first black president. He wants instead to be seen as the first president who happens to be black. And black political leaders are acutely sensitive to the distinction, mindful that a successful president must govern from the center and not be seen as beholden to any particular interest group.

"I don't think we are going to be walking up to him and saying 'Brother President,'"

Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), a leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, told a forum at Williams College in November. "He's not the Black Caucus president. He is the president of America. He's the leader of all Americans."

Others, however, emphasize that they will be looking to the new president and his Justice Department to focus on issues of justice and equality.

"Although Obama's candidacy has fantastically and forever shattered the shackles in the American psyche that a black person can't make it in America, it says nothing—yet—about what blacks as a people can achieve," said Al Sharpton. "Until we have reached that tipping point where race does not negatively affect millions of people of color—as opposed to just one—there is still much more work for me and other civil rights leaders to do."

Lonnie Randolph Jr., the president of the South Carolina chapter of the NAACP, is similarly wary.

He has been struggling for years to force state officials to repair scores of rural schools—attended mostly by impoverished black students—where the roofs leak, the bathrooms are filled with sewage and there is no working heat or air conditioning.

"The inauguration is not going to solve the problem in our schools," Randolph said. "Ceremonially it's a nice event. But one out of 44 presidents and we are supposed to be happy? This is just a very small step."

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Race not over

As the nation's first African-American president takes the oath of office, the U.S. is growing more multicultural...

4.5 million

The total number of interracial couples in 2007, nearly 9 percent of all married couples. Marriages between blacks and whites increased from 65,000 in 1970 to 464,000 in 2007. (U.S. Census Bureau)

6.1 million+

The number of Americans, or 2 percent of the total population, who now identify themselves as being of two or more races. (U.S. Census Bureau) Groups currently categorized as racial minorities will account for a majority of the U.S. population by 2042. (U.S. Census Bureau)

... but large disparities remain between blacks and whites

\$28,946

Per capita income for whites in 2005.

\$16,629

Per capita black income. Median household wealth for black families is 10 percent of median wealth for white families. (Institute for Policy Studies)

537

Approximate years it will take for blacks to reach income equality with whites if the income gap continues to close at the same rate it has since 1968. (Institute for Policy Studies)

39%

The percentage of black students who attend intensely segregated schools. (Gary Orfield/UCLA Civil Rights Project)

12

Black men in the U.S. are nearly 12 times as likely as white men to be imprisoned for similar drug convictions. (Human Rights Watch)

Stuck in the office?

Watch the inauguration live online or join live blogging all day at chicagotribune.com



Barack Obama supporters pray on Election Night at a church in Selma, Ala., after the polls closed. Activists say Obama's election hasn't closed the door on racism in America. STACEY WESCOTT/TRIBUNE

Obama's in, but struggle not over

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON—On the very day that the rest of America elected the first black president in the nation's history, voters in Nebraska approved a referendum banning all government affirmative action programs in the state.

For many Americans, those two developments add up to one conclusion when it comes to the long and bitter struggle over civil rights: Problem solved. Everyone's equal now. Let's move on.

Or, as Ward Connerly, the black conservative activist from California who has led a national crusade against race-based affirmative action programs, put it: "We have overcome the scourge of race."

Civil rights leaders across the country scarcely had time to savor Sen. Barack Obama's unprecedented victory before grappling with an ironic new predicament Wednesday: How to keep the nation's focus on the continuing racial injustices they see when an African-American

will be occupying the White House.

"Now that we've got a black person in the most powerful and most highly symbolic place, I do expect many white Americans will consider it one less reason for black Americans to whine," said James Rucker, founder of Color of Change, an Internet-based civil rights group with more than 400,000 members. "The problem with that is, we still have housing discrimination, hate crimes, the overrepresentation of African-Americans in prison and inequities in education. One election doesn't make all that go away."

Obama's election feels historically cleansing to Americans of all races who know that when the nation was founded more than 200 years ago, blacks were not even regarded as fully human. But even though the most overt forms of institutional discrimination, such as segregation and bans on interracial marriage, were purged from the nation's lawbooks a generation ago, profound social and economic disparities still divide blacks from whites in America.

RACE IN AMERICA

For example, the income gap between blacks and whites has been slowly closing since the 1968 assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. But at its current rate, it still would take five centuries for blacks to reach income equality with whites, according to a study this year by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington.

To address such enduring inequalities in the new age of the Obama presidency, Rev. Al Sharpton, a leader of some of the nation's largest and most visible civil rights protests over the last decade, already was contemplating how to recalibrate his approach.

"The movement has to go from confrontation to accountability," Sharpton said. "The issue now is not racism in terms of a guy with a Klan hood. The issue is inequality and bringing about the change we have voted for. With a strongly Democratic Congress and a black president, if we can't pass legislation now to fix the education system and the

criminal justice system, then we are simply incompetent."

At the NAACP, the nation's oldest and best-known civil rights organization, joy over Obama's election was mixed with caution.

"We now will have a former civil rights lawyer and community organizer in the White House, so that should mean on certain issues we will have to do less convincing," said Benjamin Jealous, the organization's president. "But at the same time, we have to remind Americans that racism still exists."

Alan Bean, a Baptist preacher who directs a small Texas-based civil rights group called Friends of Justice, has worked to expose several cases of alleged racial bias in small-town criminal courts, including last year's Jena Six case that drew more than 20,000 civil rights protesters to the small Louisiana town.

This week he issued a plaintive fundraising appeal to his supporters warning that his group is nearly out of money and may soon have to close its doors.

Bean is hopeful that Obama will

Tribune series: A look at race

At this historic moment, examine our enduring struggles over race at chicagotribune.com/raceinamerica

elevate the importance of civil rights cases in the U.S. Justice Department. And the president-elect already has signaled an interest in expanding the definition of civil rights to encompass economic as well as racial disparities.

But just in case the new administration were to falter, Sharpton said he's prepared to stage one of his signature civil rights protests outside the Obama White House.

"I don't think that would happen, because Obama's commitment to civil rights is basically there," Sharpton said. "But if we had to protest, we would."

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Immigrants elated by Obama

His story delivers on nation's promise

By Ron Grossman and Noreen S. Ahmed-Ullah
TRIBUNE REPORTERS



"To see someone become president who isn't white, I can identify with that," says Lily Taino, child of Filipino immigrants.

he heard Obama speak at the Democratic National Convention in August. He worked the phones on the candidate's behalf.

Though Khan encountered dismay from some Pakistanis who disliked Obama's talk of bombing their homeland, he persevered. On Election Day, he passed out voter information cards in Hammond, Ind., and hoped that a better day was coming when immigrants from Muslim countries no longer felt like strangers in their adopted homeland. "I hope [Obama's win] means Muslims will be viewed as a part of society," Khan said, "that we're more accepted, not looked at as terrorists."

Some minority Americans were reserving judgment on the election's ultimate impact—perhaps guarding against disappointment should they once again find themselves out of the mainstream.

"Barack Obama is not going to run on an ethnic agenda," said Juan Andrade Jr., president of the Chicago-based United States Hispanic Leadership Institute. "This is not going to be about us. He's got bigger fish to fry."

And in truth, the nation's democratic ideal is still a work in progress. But for one night at least, Americans with families from all corners of the Earth had something to celebrate—and to share with relatives in an older homeland.

Yusuf Hameed, 31, a cabdriver from Nigeria, called Africa and found people there were celebrating too. A friend called from England to share in the excitement Hameed was feeling on Michigan Avenue. "What a wonderful day!" Hameed said. "What a wonderful country!"

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Ann Nixon Cooper, 106, said of her reaction to Obama's election: "I never thought we'd see that happen." JOHN SPINK/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

On historic night, homage to a witness to history

ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

ATLANTA — Ask Ann Nixon Cooper whether she is a celebrity, and her response is definite: "Oh, no. I wouldn't think of myself that way." The 106-year-old woman says, "It's nothing unusual, really."

"It" was Barack Obama telling her story during his victory speech on Election Night — of someone who knew Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a child and who decades later cast her ballot for the country's first African-American president.

"And tonight, I think about all that she's seen throughout her century in America," Obama said, "the heartache and the hope; the struggle and the progress; the times we were told that we can't,

and the people who pressed on with that American creed: Yes, we can."

Her reaction to Obama's remarks: "I wasn't surprised because I knew it was going to happen." (The Obama camp called her about 10 p.m. Tuesday; Obama himself called last month and left a message.)

The Obama campaign became aware of Cooper when CNN featured her early voting with Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin late last month. The next day, Obama called her.

"I just want you to know how nice it is to have your support," he said on her answering machine, leaving his cell phone number. "I'm going to take your advice and keep smiling."

Hate incidents in U.S. surge

Election seen as factor behind revival of Klan

By **Howard Witt**
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

BOGALUSA, La.—Barely three weeks after Americans elected their first black president amid a wave of interracial good feeling, a spasm of noose hangings, racist graffiti, vandalism and death threats is convulsing dozens of towns across the country as white extremists lash out at the new political order.

More than 200 hate-related incidents, including cross-burnings, assassination betting pools and effigies of President-elect Barack Obama, have been reported so far, according to law-enforcement authorities and the Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors hate groups. Racist Web sites are boasting that their servers are crashing under the weight of exponential increases in page views.

Even more ominously, America's most potent symbol of racial hatred—the Ku Klux Klan—has begun to reassert itself, emerging from decades of disorganization and obscurity in a spate of recent violence.

Two weeks ago, the leader of a Klan cell based in this backwoods town once known as the Klan capital of the nation was charged with second-degree murder for allegedly shooting to death an aspiring member who tried to back out of an initiation ceremony.

Late last month, two suspected skinheads with ties to a notoriously violent Klan chapter in Kentucky were charged in a bizarre plot to kill 88 black students and then assassinate Obama by shooting him from a speeding car while wearing white tuxedos and top hats.

"We've seen everything from cross burnings on lawns of interracial couples to effigies of Obama hanging from nooses to unpleasant exchanges in schoolyards," said Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Center, based in Montgomery, Ala. "I think we're in a worrying situation right now, a perfect storm of conditions coming together that could easily favor the continued growth of these groups."

Among the factors experts say are contributing to white supremacist anxieties: The rapidly worsening economic crisis; demographic trends indicating that whites will cease to compose a majority of Americans within a generation; and the impending arrival of a black family in the White House.

The FBI is investigating the recent Klan-related incidents to determine the extent of any possible conspiracies. And the Secret Service is monitoring the apparent sudden surge in hate incidents "to try to stay ahead of any emerging threats," according to spokesman Darrin Blackford in Washington.

Even some white supremacist leaders who describe themselves as moderates say they are alarmed.

"There is a tremendous backlash" to Obama's election, said Richard



After Judy Robinson placed a Barack Obama sign in her yard in Angie, La., she found "KKK" and "white power" spray-painted around her yard. "I thought all that KKK stuff was in the past," she said. Some experts are calling the sharp increase in hate incidents surprising and unprecedented. **HOWARD WITT/TRIBUNE**



A federal grand jury in Memphis indicted Daniel Cowart (left) and Paul Schlesselman, who are accused of plotting to kill Barack Obama.

Barrett, the leader of the Nationalist Movement, a white supremacist group based in Learned, Miss. "My focus is to try to keep it peaceful. But many people look at the flag of the Republic of New Africa that will be hoisted over the White House as an act of war."

The FBI, which tracks hate crimes across the country, has no figures yet for 2008. But already, based on local media reports across the country, some experts are calling the rise in hate incidents surprising and unprecedented.

"The rhetoric right now is just about out of control," said Brian Levin, director of Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University in San Bernardino. "When you get this depth of hatred, it usually is the smoke before the fire."

In the small Louisiana town of Angie, 58-year-old Judy Robinson decided to place an Obama campaign sign outside her home a few weeks before the election. On the morning after Halloween, she awoke to find the words "KKK" and "white power" spray-painted around her yard.

"I thought all that KKK stuff was

in the past," said Robinson, an African-American home health-care worker. "But now I look at people and think, 'Could he be Klan?' Suddenly I'm feeling like my town is hostile territory."

Experts acknowledge that modern Klan chapters remain isolated and small, with perhaps 6,000 members nationwide—a shadow of the group's membership of 4 million in the early 20th Century.

But the recent events in Bogalusa, a lumber and paper-mill town of about 13,000 just down the road from Robinson's home in Angie, are giving them pause.

Historians say that the Ku Klux Klan so dominated Bogalusa's commerce, politics and law enforcement in the 1960s that the group once held a public meeting to debate which black church to burn down next.

Several Bogalusa Klan members were long suspected of shooting two black sheriff's deputies in a 1965 ambush, killing one and wounding the other. But no one was ever brought to trial for the crimes.

"To this day, most white people in Bogalusa know who the killers were, and they were never brought to justice," said Lance Hill, a Tulane University law professor and Klan expert.

Now that grim history is lurching back to life.

On Nov. 10, local law-enforcement authorities arrested Raymond Foster, 44, the leader of a Bogalusa Klan chapter called the Sons of Dixie, and seven other Klan members in connection with the shooting death of a Tulsa, Okla., woman who had journeyed to the group's remote campsite in nearby St. Tammany Parish to participate in an initiation cere-

mony.

Authorities allege that Foster shot the woman when she tried to change her mind about joining the group. He has been charged with second-degree murder; the alleged accomplices, including Foster's 20-year-old son, have been charged with obstruction of justice.

Bogalusa officials insist they had no idea any Klan cells were still active in their community.

"I've been here 13 years, and this was a complete surprise to me that there was Klan here," said Jerry Agnew, the town's police chief.

Yet the house on Louisiana Avenue that Foster was renting is owned by a Bogalusa deputy sheriff. And leaders of Bogalusa's black community, which makes up 41 percent of the town's population, said they've been reporting Klan sightings to the local police for more than a year.

In October 2007, residents of one black neighborhood said they witnessed white-hooded Klan members on horseback riding through their streets. And last March, Klan members openly handed out fliers in town advertising the second annual "Sons of Dixie Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Craw Fish Boil" held at the house Foster was renting.

"The city leaders want to make it look like this is just some small fringe group," said Marvin Austin, 61, a former city councilman who was once a member of a black self-defense group, the Deacons for Defense, that formed in the 1960s to defend black Bogalusa residents from the Klan. "But the Klan still has a lot of sympathizers here."

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Hate groups' rise

602

Number of active hate groups in the U.S. in 2000

888

Number of active hate groups in the U.S. in 2008

States with largest numbers of active hate groups:

- California: **80**
- Texas: **67**
- Florida: **49**
- South Carolina: **45**
- Georgia: **42**
- Tennessee: **38**
- Virginia and New Jersey: **34**
- Pennsylvania: **33**

SOURCE: Southern Poverty Law Center

Race in America

Read more of Howard Witt's series on race, which explores the nation's tortured history with diversity and equality, at chicago.tribune.com/raceinamerica

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Racial prejudice and the elderly

The big question: Will the biases they can't escape affect how seniors vote?

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON — The personality is familiar to us all: the sweet old aunt, the loving grandfather or the generous widow down the street, each of them unfailingly kind toward friends and family but given to flights of shocking prejudice when the conversation turns toward ethnic groups to which they don't belong.

Often the response is a nervous laugh, a wan smile or a hasty effort to change the subject. We assume that old people are the products of less-enlightened times, they're unlikely to change and their comments, however ugly, are largely innocuous. Now, though, in the midst of the nation's first presidential campaign between a black candidate and a white one, a convergence of new political and scientific research suggests that prejudice and stereotyping among elderly white Americans in particular may not be so innocuous after all.

Older white voters heavily favored Sen. Hillary Clinton over Sen. Barack Obama during the Democratic primary season, and national polls indicate that group now leans toward Sen. John McCain by 10 percentage points or more.

Pollsters and political scientists cannot pinpoint how much of that anti-Obama sentiment may be related to racial prejudice. But sociologists say their research indicates that implicit racial biases influence the voting decisions of many Americans of all ages—and that, for very basic physiological reasons related to the aging of their brains, many older citizens may be unable to suppress their prejudicial impulses, whether at the family dinner table or in the privacy of a voting booth.

In other words, Grandma's biased outbursts may not be her fault. And Obama's election strategists may want to schedule more campaign stops at nursing homes.

Less inhibition with age

"We learn stereotyping at a young age when we can't really appreciate it's not the right thing to do," said William von Hippel, a psychologist who studies age-related declines in the area of the brain devoted to inhibiting unwanted or socially inappropriate thoughts. "Once we get older, we can decide that racial stereotypes are wrong and we can inhibit them with an effortful act. But older adults gradually lose that ability to inhibit."

Von Hippel, a professor at the University of Queensland in Australia,



Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama shakes hands on the campaign trail with a senior citizen in Columbia City, Ind., earlier this year. AP photo by Jae C. Hong

How to tell if you're biased

More than 4.5 million people around the world have taken the Project Implicit test at implicit.harvard.edu to gain insight into their own, often unwitting, biases. Among the general conclusions cited on the Web site:

Implicit biases are pervasive: More than 80 percent of Web respondents show implicit negativity toward the elderly compared with the young; 75 to 80 percent of self-identified whites and Asians show an implicit preference for whites relative to blacks.

People are often unaware of their implicit biases: Participants are found to harbor implicit biases even while honestly reporting that they regard themselves as lacking these biases.

Implicit biases predict behavior: From simple acts of friendliness and inclusion to more consequential acts such as the evaluation of work quality, those who demonstrate stronger implicit bias have been shown to display greater discrimination.

has found that as the brain's frontal lobe begins to atrophy with age, elderly adults exhibit greater social inappropriateness and increased stereotyping and prejudice. And it happens despite their best intentions.

"At some level, I would say we should not hold older adults responsible for their racist attitudes," von Hippel said. "We call it 'prejudice against your will,' because we think it's not something they can control."

Obama himself noted this phenomenon last March, in his frank Philadelphia speech on race.

Referring to his elderly white grandmother, Obama said she is "a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me

cringe."

Sociologists have found that racial bias pervades the subconscious of most Americans and that the elderly hold more such prejudices than those who are younger.

For example, 35 percent of Americans age 60 and older believe it's unacceptable for whites to date blacks, according to surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Yet just 16 percent of Baby Boomers disapprove of interracial dating—and among Americans age 30 and younger, the disapproval figure is only 6 percent.

Explaining implicit bias

A massive, decade-long sociological study called Project Implicit, jointly run by Harvard University, the University of Washington and the University of Virginia, has

shown that up to 80 percent of whites and Asians show a measurable bias favoring whites over blacks.

More than 4.5 million people worldwide—730,000 of them Americans—have participated in the online study, which captures subconscious, or implicit, bias by asking respondents to associate positive or negative words with photographs of black and white faces.

The Project Implicit data show that whites age 60 and older exhibit 5 percent to 10 percent more bias than younger study participants.

"We don't call it prejudice; we talk about it as hidden bias or unconscious bias—a form of bias that most people are unaware they even possess, because our culture has implanted associations in their heads," said Anthony Greenwald, a founder of Project Implicit. "This is why many people who take this test are repelled by their own results."

Yet Greenwald said research shows that implicit biases affect behavior, such as hiring decisions and voting, unless people make an active effort to counteract them.

Political scientists long ago discovered a disconnect in which some white voters, not wanting to appear racist, tell pollsters they support the black candidate but once inside the voting booth vote for the white candidate.

The phenomenon has a name—the "Bradley effect"—from the 1982 California governor's race in which Tom Bradley, a black Democratic mayor of Los Angeles, consistently led the pre-election polls over his white Republican opponent but lost when the votes were counted.

IN THE WEB EDITION

To read earlier stories in this series, go to chicagotribune.com/raceinamerica



Greenwald found the "Bradley effect" at work in this year's Democratic primaries in four states with relatively low black populations where Obama finished far worse than the polls had predicted.

And a new Associated Press-Yahoo News poll found that racial prejudice could cost Obama up to 6 percentage points in November. The poll also indicated that whites and blacks see racial discrimination in starkly different terms: Just 10 percent of whites—but 57 percent of blacks—said they thought "a lot" of discrimination against African-Americans exists.

At the Bayou Manor assisted-living center in Houston, some residents said they expect older voters to show a "Bradley effect" of their own.

"I think what people say is their intent is not necessarily how they will vote," said Margaret Wilborn, 83, an Obama supporter.

Other Bayou Manor residents appeared to show some of the inhibition losses studied by von Hippel.

"I have two black caregivers," said Iris Williams, 89, who supports McCain. "One of them is pretty smart, the other one not really. But neither of them is for Obama. So that tells you something right there."

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Sick school dreams of aid

Failing S.C. facility visited by Obama is hopeful on stimulus

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

DILLON, S.C.—Ty'sheoma Bethea went to the public library in this struggling South Carolina town Tuesday night to write a letter to Congress about the economic stimulus bill.

The 8th grader had never thought about writing to Congress before. She didn't even have a clear idea what a "stimulus bill" is. She went to the library because her family has no computer at home, and the handful of computers at her crumbling middle school — hand-me-downs once used by felons in the state prison system—were unavailable.

All the 14-year-old knew was that powerful people in faraway Washington were debating something that might directly help her school, where stained rugs cover holes in the floor; rain pours from the ceiling, classroom temperatures hover in the 50s in the winter and freight trains passing along nearby tracks shake the building so violently that the lights go out several times a day.

"People are starting to see my school as an hopeless, uneducated school which we are not," Bethea wrote, awkwardly but with passion. "We finally want to prove to the world that we have an chance in life just like other schools and we can feel good about what we are doing because of the conditions we are in now we can not succeed in anything."

On Wednesday, congressional leaders reached agreement on President Barack Obama's \$789 billion economic stimulus package, including billions of dollars in aid to states, some of which will be used to repair decrepit schools.

The school money might seem like just another obscure line item in the massive recovery bill. But the students and teachers at the J.V. Martin Junior High School—a school so academically deficient that some of Bethea's 8th-grade peers can't recognize the letters of the alphabet—are hoping the federal money will be a lifeline.

The local school district, already running a \$1.2 million deficit this year just to keep teachers' paychecks from bouncing, does not have anything close to the \$40 million it would take to rebuild J.V. Martin. The school consists of a partially condemned main building constructed in 1896, a "new" wing built in the 1950s and a handful of portable classrooms scattered across the muddy, grassless school grounds.

Obama visited J.V. Martin as a presidential candidate in August 2007 and returned again last year, each time pronouncing himself appalled by the conditions he found here.

"When a child goes to a school that's crumbling, is it any wonder that she gets a sense her education is not important?" Obama said during his first visit.

The president mentioned the school again during his news conference Monday night, securing J.V. Martin as the emblem of the deteriorating schools across the nation that Obama wants to rebuild using stimulus money.

Students and teachers here well remember the moment when Obama, standing on the buckled floorboards of the 1926-era gymnasium where teachers must spread eight trash cans to catch the leaking water whenever it rains, nailed a perfect 3-point basket.

"He said back then, 'No matter what happens, I will not forget you,'" said Principal Amanda Burnette. "And he proved this week that he remembered us."

It's not yet clear how much money the Dillon schools can expect from the stimulus bill. But any amount will help, officials here say.

For 16 years, Dillon School District No. 2, along with 35 other rural and largely black South Carolina school districts along the Interstate Highway 95 corridor, has been waging a protracted court battle against the state, seeking an equal share of school funding from a system that leaves wealthier, whiter communities far better off.

This year, for example, Dillon School District No. 2 has a total of \$8,624 per pupil to

spend—half of what the state's wealthiest districts receive. For some of the plaintiff school districts in the lawsuit, which were featured in the 2005 documentary "Corridor of Shame," such limited funds have meant underpaid teachers working in overcrowded schools where raw sewage puddles in hallways and students often must wear hats and gloves in unheated classrooms.

In South Carolina, "the

folks with the most votes and the most power are taking care of their kids in their areas," said Ray Rogers, superintendent of the Dillon No. 2 District. "But they are leaving our kids, and lot of others across the state, to whatever fate may bring."

In a state where the Confederate flag still flies in front of the Capitol building, some South Carolina civil rights leaders assert that racism lies behind the school-funding

disparities.

State officials dismiss charges of racism and the assertions of structural inequality contained in the lawsuit. They say they are doing all that is required under the state constitution, which mandates only that the state government provide a "minimally adequate" education to schoolchildren.

hwitt@tribune.com



An unsafe auditorium serves as storage now at J.V. Martin Junior High School in Dillon, S.C. MILBERT O. BROWN/TRIBUNE PHOTO

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Letter lands teen next to first lady at speech



Ty'Sheoma Bethea impressed Tribune reporter **Howard Witt** during his visit to her deteriorating school

HOUSTON—I met Ty'Sheoma Bethea, the teenage girl invited by President Barack Obama to sit beside the first lady during his speech to Congress on Tuesday night, quite by accident a couple of weeks ago.

I was visiting J.V. Martin Junior High School in Dillon, S.C., a decrepit facility where the roof leaks and winter classroom temperatures hover in the 50s, to learn about how one impoverished school district was hoping for financial help from the stimulus bill then being debated in Congress.

I knocked on the door of a rusting mobile-classroom trailer where an 8th-grade social studies class was under way, and the teacher graciously allowed me to interrupt his lesson. When I asked the students whether

they knew anything about Congress and the fiercely contested stimulus bill, Ty'Sheoma was one of the few students to raise her hand.

"All I know is that the Congress might not agree that we need help and they might deny the president the money he needs to help us," the 14-year-old explained.

Later that evening, after our exchange in her classroom, Ty'Sheoma decided to walk to the town library. She sat down in front of a computer and typed out a single-spaced letter that began, "Dear Congress of the United States."

In rough but passionate prose, the teenager beseeched the faceless representatives to help her school.

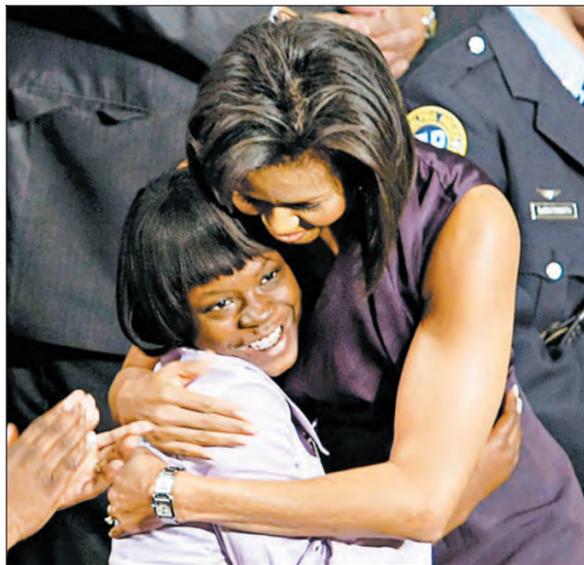
"People are starting to see my school as an hopeless,

uneducated school which we are not," Ty'sheoma wrote. "We finally want to prove to the world that we have an chance in life just like other schools and we can feel good about what we are doing because of the conditions we are in now we can not succeed in anything."

The next morning, Feb. 11, Ty'Sheoma gave her letter to Amanda Burnette, the principal of the school. Burnette promptly scanned it and e-mailed copies to South Carolina's representatives in Congress, as well as the White House. I featured Ty'Sheoma's letter in the story I wrote that night about the J.V. Martin school.

Obama already was personally familiar with the dire conditions at the school. He visited J.V. Martin twice during the campaign and mentioned it again during his first presidential news conference.

Ty'Sheoma's letter made its way to the president's desk, and last week he invited the teenager and her mother to sit in First Lady Michelle Obama's box at the



Ty'Sheoma Bethea hugs First Lady Michelle Obama before President Barack Obama's speech Tuesday. ALEX WONG/GETTY PHOTO



House of Representatives to watch the speech. Ty'sheoma smiled Tues-

day as the president read some of her letter. "We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, congressmen like yourself and one day president, so we can make a change to not just the state of South Carolina but also the world," Obama read. "We are not quitters."

At that, the audience rose to give the teenager a standing ovation.

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Also invited

Some other guests of First Lady Michelle Obama at Tuesday's speech:

Jill Biden: Wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Leonard Abess Jr.: Florida bank executive who sold his stake, gave \$60 million to employees.

Richard Decoatsworth: Philadelphia police officer who was shot in the face but still pursued the suspect.

Earl Devaney: He was named this week to oversee the \$787 billion economic stimulus plan.

Bob Dixon: Mayor of tornado-ravaged Greensburg, Kan.

Mary Henley: A 78-year-old Virginia resident who receives Social Security but is working part-time cleaning buildings to help pay living expenses.

Jonathon James: Army specialist who continued fighting, helping others after being wounded in Afghanistan.

Valerie Jarrett: A senior adviser to the president.

Lilly Ledbetter: Activist whose fight against unfair pay practices for female workers led to a pay-equity bill that was the first President Barack Obama signed into law.

—Associated Press

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NEWS FOCUS Race in America



A Texas senator aims to rein in search-and-seizure practices like those used in Tenaha, where scores have been targeted but never charged with any crime. LISA SANDBERG/SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS PHOTO

Highway robbery in Texas?

Lawsuit says motorists, disproportionately black, are forced by police to forfeit cash, cars and more—or be charged with trumped-up crimes

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

TENAHA, Texas — You can drive into this dusty fleck of a town near the Texas-Louisiana border if you're African-American, but you might not be able to drive out of it—at least not with your car, your cash, your jewelry or other valuables.

That's because the police here allegedly have found a way to strip motorists, many of them black, of their property without ever charging them with a crime. Instead they offer out-of-towners a grim choice: voluntarily sign over your belongings to the town, or face felony charges of money laundering or other serious crimes.

More than 140 people reluctantly accepted that deal from June 2006 to June 2008, according to court records. Among them were a black grandmother from Akron, who surrendered \$4,000 in cash after Tenaha police pulled her over, and an interracial couple from Houston, who gave up more than \$6,000 after police threatened to seize their children and put them into foster care, the court documents show. Neither the grandmother nor the couple were charged with any crime.

Officials in Tenaha, situated along a heavily traveled state highway connecting Houston with popular gambling destinations in Louisiana, say they are engaged in a battle against drug trafficking, and they call the search-and-seizure practice a legitimate use of the state's asset-forfeiture law. That law permits local police agencies to keep drug money and other property used in the commission of a crime and add the proceeds to their budgets.

"We try to enforce the law here," said George Bowers, mayor of the town of 1,046 residents, where boarded-up businesses outnumber open ones and City Hall sports a broken window. "We're not doing this to raise money. That's all I'm going to say at this point."

But civil rights lawyers call Tenaha's practice something else: highway robbery. The attorneys have filed a federal class-action lawsuit to stop what they contend is an unconstitutional perversion of the law's intent, aimed primarily at blacks who have done nothing wrong.

Tenaha officials "have developed an illegal 'stop and seize' practice of targeting, stopping, detaining, searching and often seizing property from apparently non-white citizens and those traveling with non-white citizens," asserts the lawsuit,



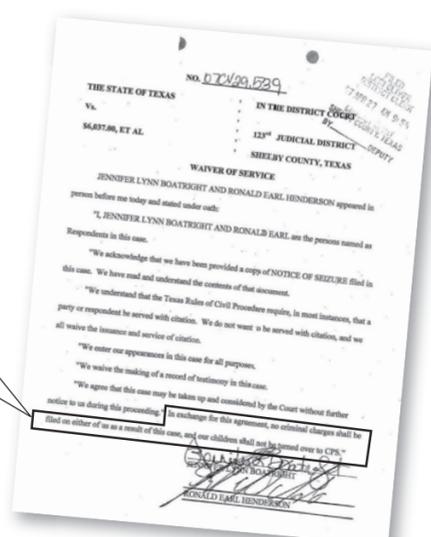
SOURCES: ESRI, Tribune reporting TRIBUNE

Crime or no crime, motorists pay

Court records show that from June 2006 to June 2008, nearly 150 motorists pulled over in Tenaha, Texas, forfeited property rather than face serious criminal charges. Below is a court document in one case:

ARREST DOCUMENT ▶ One Houston family—never charged with any crime—ended up surrendering more than \$6,000 after police threatened to turn their children over to foster care.

"In exchange for this agreement, no criminal charges shall be filed on either of us as a result of this case, and our children shall not be turned over to CPS."



ered pre-signed and pre-notarized police affidavits with blank spaces left for an officer to fill in a description of the property being seized.

Jennifer Boatright, her husband and two young children—a mixed-race family—were traveling from Houston to visit relatives in east Texas in April 2007 when Tenaha police pulled them over, alleging that they were driving in a left-turn lane.

After searching the car, the officers discovered what Boatright said was a gift for her sister: a small, unused glass pipe made for smoking marijuana. Although they found no drugs or other contraband, the police seized \$6,037 that Boatright said the family was carrying to purchase a used car—and then threatened to turn their children, ages 10 and 1, over to Child Protective Services if the couple didn't agree to sign over their right to their cash.

"It was give them the money or they were taking our kids," Boatright said. "They suggested that we never bring it up again. We figured we better give them our cash and get the hell out of there."

Several months later, after Boatright and her husband contacted an attorney, Tenaha officials returned their money but offered no explanation or apology. The couple remain plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit.

Except for Tenaha's mayor, none of the defendants in the lawsuit, including Shelby County District Atty. Linda Russell and two Tenaha police officers, responded to requests from the Tribune for comment about their search-and-seizure practices. Lawyers for the defendants also declined to comment, as did several of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

But Whitmire says he doesn't need to await the suit's outcome to try to fix what he regards as a statewide problem. On Monday he introduced a bill in the state Legislature that would require police to go before a judge before attempting to seize property under the asset-forfeiture law—and ultimately Whitmire hopes to tighten the law further so that law-enforcement officials will be allowed to seize property only after a suspect is charged and convicted in a court.

"The law has gotten away from what was intended, which was to take the profits of a bad guy's crime spree and use it for additional crime-fighting," Whitmire said. "Now it's largely being used to pay police salaries—and it's being abused because you don't even have to be a bad guy to lose your property."

hwitt@tribune.com



Tenaha's mayor defends his town's use of asset-forfeiture laws as a means to fight drug trafficking, not to raise money. HOWARD WITT/TRIBUNE PHOTO

which was filed in U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Texas.

The property seizures are not just happening in Tenaha. In southern parts of Texas near the Mexican border, for example, Hispanics allege that they are being singled out.

According to a prominent state legislator, police agencies across Texas are wielding the asset-forfeiture law more aggressively to supplement their shrinking operating budgets.

"If used properly, it's a good law-enforcement tool to see that crime doesn't pay," said state Sen. John Whitmire, chairman of the Senate's Criminal Justice Committee. "But in this instance, where people are being pulled over and their property is taken with no charges filed and no convictions, I think that's theft."

David Guillory, an attorney in Nacogdoches who filed the federal lawsuit, said he combed through Shelby County court records from 2006 to 2008 and discovered nearly

200 cases in which Tenaha police seized cash and property from motorists. In about 50 of the cases, suspects were charged with drug possession.

But in 147 others, Guillory said the court records showed, police seized cash, jewelry, cell phones and sometimes even automobiles from motorists but never found any contraband or charged them with any crime. Of those, Guillory said he managed to contact 40 of the motorists directly—and discovered all but one of them were black.

"The whole thing is disproportionately targeted toward minorities, particularly African-Americans," Guillory said. "None of these people have been charged with a crime, none were engaged in anything that looked criminal. The sole factor is that they had something that looked valuable."

In some cases, police used the fact that motorists were carrying large amounts of cash as evidence that they must have been involved in laundering drug money, even though Guillory said each of the drivers he contacted could account for where the money had come from and why they were carrying it—such as for a gambling trip to Shreveport, La., or to purchase a used car from a private seller.

Once the motorists were detained, the police and the local Shelby County district attorney quickly drew up legal papers waiving their rights to their cash and property or face felony charges for crimes such as money laundering—and the prospect of having to hire a lawyer and return to Shelby County multiple times to attend court sessions to contest the charges.

The process apparently is so routine in Tenaha that Guillory discov-

Read the series:
Race in America

A black man has won the highest office in the land, yet racial tensions remain. The Tribune examines America's enduring struggles over race at chicagotribune.com/raceinamerica



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TRIBUNE SPECIAL REPORT

School discipline harder on blacks

Analysis of federal data shows racial inequality in suspensions and expulsions nationwide; locally, the gap is widest in Lake and DuPage

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

AUSTIN, Texas — In the average New Jersey public school, African-American students are almost 60 times as likely as white students to be expelled for serious disciplinary infractions.

In Minnesota, black students are suspended six times as often as whites.

In Iowa, blacks make up just 5 percent of the statewide public

school enrollment but account for 22 percent of the students who get suspended.

Fifty years after federal troops escorted nine black students through the doors of an all-white high school in Little Rock, Ark., in a landmark school integration struggle, America's public schools remain as unequal as they have ever been when measured in terms of disciplinary sanctions such as suspensions and expulsions, according to little-known

FULL COVERAGE

- Supremacist groups seize on Jena 6 controversy. **PAGE 4**
- Compare the state-by-state racial disparity of disciplinary actions against students at chicagotribune.com/discipline

ted data collected by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2004-2005 school year.

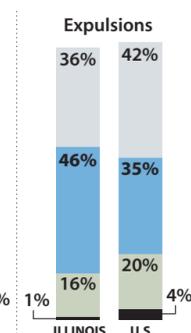
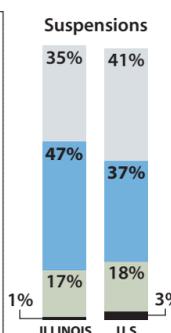
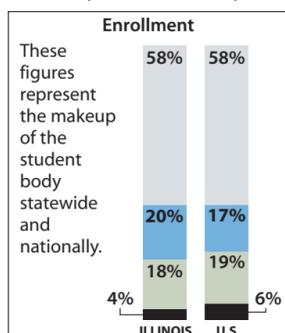
In every state but Idaho, a Tribune analysis of the data shows, black students are being suspended in numbers greater

PLEASE SEE **DISCIPLINE**, PAGE 16

Suspensions and expulsions by race/ethnicity

U.S. Department of Education statistics show that black students are disciplined at a much higher rate than students of other races. In Illinois, this disparity is slightly greater than the national average.

KEY
■ White
■ Black
■ Hispanic
■ Other



Note: Totals may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Tribune analysis of Department of Education data for the 2004-05 school year

Chicago Tribune

Iranian leader's speech sparks protests in NYC



New York Times photo by Damon Winter

Students fill the central quad at New York City's Columbia University on Monday as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accepted a controversial invitation for a campus address. Columbia President Lee Bollinger, who like Ahmadinejad was a focus of protests, excoriated the Iranian leader as a

"petty and cruel dictator" but said the invitation was a chance to "confront the mind of evil." Ahmadinejad fired back in his speech, calling Bollinger's words "insults," denouncing the White House, defending his doubts about the Holocaust and asserting Iran's right to a nuclear program. **STORY, PAGE 10**

UAW walks over job security

Auto giant GM has enough vehicles to last 3 months

By Rick Popely and Stephen Franklin
Tribune staff reporters

For a union that seemed to be pinned to the ropes, the United Auto Workers showed it can still punch back, shutting down General Motors Corp. on Monday after the two sides failed to agree on a four-year contract.

The strike, the first national walkout against GM since 1970, stunned Wall Street and industry analysts, who expected the union to agree to billions of dollars in concessions on wages, health care and other benefits in order to lower GM's labor costs.

But the UAW didn't get what it needed in return—significant promises of job security. And so 73,000 GM members streamed out of factories across the country Monday morning, shutting down production and setting up an epic showdown between a union and an industry whose mutual survival depends on getting a historic deal done.

GM desperately needs to offload tens of billions of dollars in health-care costs if it is to remain competitive with nimble foreign competitors like Toyota Mo-

COMPLETE COVERAGE IN BUSINESS

PLEASE SEE **STRIKE**, PAGE 17

IN METRO

County eyes sales-tax hike

Most anything purchased in Cook County would cost more if the county decides to more than triple its portion of the sales tax to solve its lingering financial woes. If adopted, the hike would push the sales tax in Chicago to 11 percent. The idea might not win enough converts, but county leaders have been warning for months that some kind of tax increase is likely. Other proposals? Taxes on electricity, gas and phone service.

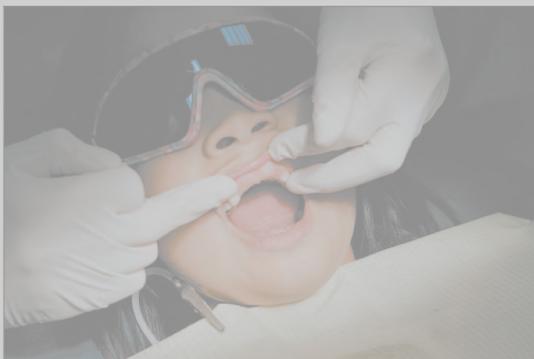
Weather: Storms in afternoon; high 80, low 58
Index, Page 2

Survey finds big holes in little kids' dental care

By Mary Ann Fergus
Tribune staff reporter

Katelyn Patthana confidently slid into a chair to have her molars sealed, no big deal for a 7-year-old who had lived through a dental horror story. The Gilberts 2nd grader's tooth decay was so severe two years ago that dentists pulled six teeth, crowned two and filled five.

Katelyn is among a growing number of young children with cavities, creating concern among dentists and parents who hoped that brushing and avoiding candy was enough to silence the drills.



Tribune photo by Terry Harris

Katelyn Patthana, 7, opens wide at a checkup in Hoffman Estates. She has had teeth pulled, crowned and filled.

But with continual snacking and the use of non-fluoridated bottled water on the rise, experts say parents have to be even more vigilant.

"There's plenty of new cavities coming through," says Dr. Nicola Hill-Cordell, a pediatric dentist in Hoffman Estates. "At least once a week, you get a new kid who is

[younger] than 2 with a cavity."

Nationwide, nearly 28 percent of children ages 2 to 5 had at least one cavity, according to a federal survey covering 1999 to 2004. That represents a 4 percent climb from the previous survey, 1988 to 1994, and

PLEASE SEE **CAVITIES**, PAGE 2

TRIBUNE UPDATE

Swindler convicted of taking church lots

Tribune investigation shed light on scheme, alerted others to thefts

By Ray Gibson and Robert Becker
Tribune staff reporters

When authorities raided the Berwyn home of Phillip Radmer on the suspicion that he was selling vacant lots that really belonged to poor Chicago churches, they recovered boxloads of records, \$100,000 in cash, and a cartoon with two figures posing outside a house with a sign that read "For Sale By Non Owners."

Judge Stanley Sacks said the cartoon was a "five-word biography for Phil Radmer" as he

found the disbarred lawyer guilty of theft and forgery after a three-day bench trial in Cook County Circuit Court.

Radmer was the central figure in a scheme, uncovered last year by the Tribune, to steal more than 60 vacant lots using phony corporations and fictitious buyers. Radmer netted at least \$655,000 from the sale of just four properties owned by the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago.

Using public records, the Tribune traced dozens of land sales to phony corporations whose officers didn't exist. In most cases, the true owners were not aware their land had been sold until the Tribune informed them.

PLEASE SEE **CHURCH**, PAGE 17

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6,500 schools try different approach

DISCIPLINE:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

than would be expected from their proportion of the student population.

In 21 states—Illinois among them—that disproportionality is so pronounced that the percentage of black suspensions is more than double their percentage of the student body. And on average across the nation, black students are suspended and expelled at nearly three times the rate of white students.

No other ethnic group is disciplined at such a high rate, the federal data show. Hispanic students are suspended and expelled in almost direct proportion to their populations, while white and Asian students are disciplined far less.

Backgrounds a factor?

Yet black students are no more likely to misbehave than other students from the same social and economic environments, research has found.

Some impoverished black children grow up in troubled neighborhoods and come from broken families, leaving them less equipped to conform to behavioral expectations in school. While such socioeconomic factors contribute to the disproportionate discipline rates, researchers say that poverty alone cannot explain the disparities.

"There simply isn't any support for the notion that, given the same set of circumstances, African-American kids act out to a greater degree than other kids," said Russell Skiba, a professor of educational psychology at Indiana University whose research focuses on race and discipline issues in public schools.

"In fact, the data indicate that African-American students are punished more severely for the same offense, so clearly something else is going on. We can call it structural inequity or we can call it institutional racism."

Academic researchers have been quietly collecting evidence of such race-based disciplinary disparities for more than 25 years. Yet the phenomenon remains largely obscured from public view by the popular emphasis on "zero tolerance" crackdowns, which are supposed to deliver equally harsh punishments based on a student's infraction, not skin color.

That's not what the data say is happening. Yet the federal Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, which is charged with investigating allegations of discriminatory discipline policies in the nation's public schools, has opened just one such probe in the past three years. Officials declined requests to explain why.

There's more at stake than just a few bad marks in a student's school record. Studies show that a history of school suspensions or expulsions is a strong predictor of future trouble with the law—and the first step on what civil rights leaders have described as a "school-to-prison pipeline" for black youths, who represent 16 percent of U.S. adolescents but 38 percent of those incarcerated in youth prisons.

Relatively few school districts scattered across the country—about 6 percent—have begun to acknowledge the issue of racial disparities in discipline and tried to do something about it.

In Austin, after administrators discovered that black youths accounted for 14 percent of the school district's population but 37 percent of the students sent to punitive alternative schools, they introduced a program in some schools based on encouraging positive student behaviors rather than punishing negative ones.

At one school, Pickle Elementary, which serves mostly Hispanic and black pupils, the results were dramatic—disciplinary referrals dropped to 20 last year from 520 in 2001-2002.

"I am not going to give up on a child and suspend him or send him to an alternative school," said Julie Pryor, who was the school's principal when the behavioral program was implemented and is now a district administrator. "Washing our hands of a child will never change his behavior, it just makes it worse. These are children. It's up to us to be creative to find ways to help them behave."

Paris is the sole school district in the nation currently



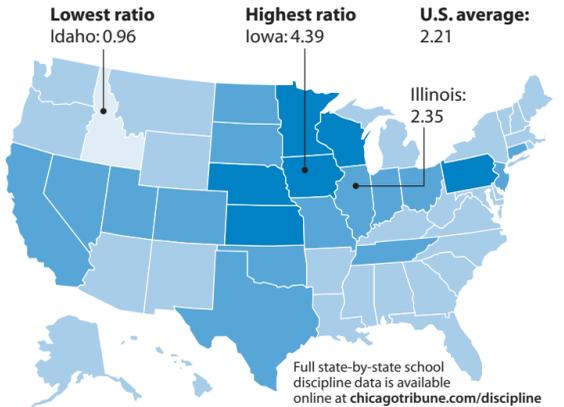
Texas teacher Sheila Carver works with children at Pickle Elementary School in Austin, where a program based on encouraging positive pupil behaviors rather than punishing negative ones has helped reduce disciplinary referrals to 20 last year from 520 in 2001-2002. The school serves mostly Hispanic and black children.

School discipline and race

In every state except Idaho, black students were disciplined at a higher rate than their proportion of the student body. For example, in Illinois, where 20 percent of all students are black, they might be expected to make up 20 percent of all students receiving suspensions. Instead, they make up 47 percent of students receiving suspensions, or 2.35 times the percentage expected.

BLACK STUDENT SUSPENSIONS

Ratio of percentage of black student suspensions to percentage of black student enrollment



Source: Tribune analysis of Department of Education data for the 2004-05 school year
Chicago Tribune

'If you teach kids the behaviors that are expected, you have a greater likelihood of success.'

—George Sugai, education professor at the University of Connecticut who helped create a positive behavioral program being tried in 6,500 schools

under investigation by the Department of Education to determine whether higher discipline rates for black students there constitute institutionalized discrimination. The probe has been under way for more than a year.

"The school district has been a leader and very progressive when it comes to race relations," Dennis Eichelbaum, attorney for the Paris Independent School District, said in an interview earlier this year.

That perspective is not shared by the families of many of Paris' black students, who make up 40 percent of the school district's nearly 4,000 students.

"They say there's no racism here, but if you go inside a school and look in the room where they send the kids for detention, almost all the faces are black," said Brenda Cherry, a Paris civil rights activist who assembled some of the complaints that sparked the federal investigation. "Unless black people are just a bad race of people, something is wrong here." Exactly why black students

across the nation are suspended and expelled more frequently than children of other races is a question that continues to perplex sociologists.

Socioeconomic factors are certainly at play, researchers believe.

"Studies of school suspension have consistently documented disproportionality by socioeconomic status. Students who receive free school lunch are at increased risk for school suspension," according to "The Color of Discipline," a 2000 study by Skiba and other researchers in Indiana and Nebraska.

Another study concluded that "students whose fathers did not have a full-time job were significantly more likely to be suspended than students whose fathers were employed full time."

But those studies and others have repeatedly found that racial factors are even more important.

"Poor home environment does carry over into the school environment," said Skiba, who is widely regarded as the nation's foremost authority on school discipline and race. "But middle-class and upper-class black students are also being disciplined more often than their white peers. Skin color in itself is a part of this function."

Some experts point to cultural miscommunications between black students and white teachers, who fill 83 percent of the nation's teaching ranks. In fact, the Tribune analysis found, some of the highest rates of racially disproportionate discipline are found in states with the lowest minority popula-

DuPage 1st in Chicago-area student expulsion disparity

By Stephanie Banchemo
Tribune staff reporter

In Chicago-area public schools, African-American students are five times as likely to be suspended and nearly eight times as likely to be expelled as white students, according to a Tribune analysis of state data.

The expulsion disparity was greatest in DuPage County, where blacks were expelled at a rate nine times as high as whites. African-Americans represent 6 percent of the public school population in DuPage yet accounted for 32 percent of all the students expelled in the last school year, the data show.

Lake County schools in the north suburbs had the largest suspension gap. Black students, who make up 10 percent

of the school enrollment, are six times as likely as whites to receive a suspension.

African-American students in Illinois have long been over-represented in school discipline statistics. The issue came to national prominence in 1999 when six black students were expelled from a Decatur high school after a fight. Their expulsion touched off a firestorm and brought Rev. Jesse Jackson and other civil rights leaders to the Downstate town.

The following year, the number of expulsions dropped statewide. But it has crept back up.

"These numbers are a wake-up call for those of us who went to sleep after the Decatur incident," said Mark Allen, who worked for Jackson and helped open the Decatur Rain-

bow/PUSH chapter. "When we were agitating and protesting, things got better. Now that we stopped monitoring, things went right back to the old way. It's a travesty."

Several area school districts, including Chicago, Oak Park and Carpentersville, have grappled with racial disparity in discipline in recent years.

In 2005, African-Americans in Oak Park and River Forest High School demanded an audit into the disparate suspensions and expulsions of black students. District officials eventually crafted new policies, including plans to train teachers in non-confrontational discipline methods.

Tribune staff reporter Darnell Little contributed to this report. sbanchemo@tribune.com

in turn, can reinforce race-based expectations about which students are most likely to require discipline.

"Most suburban schools, where the students are more likely to be white, purchase security equipment that is meant to protect children—for example, hand scanners that make sure that the parent/guardian picking up the child is legitimate," said Ronnie Casella, an expert on the criminalization of student behavior at Central Connecticut State University. "In contrast, urban schools choose equipment such as metal detectors and surveillance cameras that are meant to catch youths committing crimes."

The new behavioral program being tried in Austin and some 6,500 schools nationwide, including some in Chicago area, seeks to turn zero tolerance on its head in a bid to slash the number of suspensions, expulsions and other punishments meted out by teachers.

Called "Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports," the intensive regimen requires a commitment from an entire school, including training of students in the behaviors that are expected of them and re-education of teachers and administrators in the use of positive motivational techniques.

The interactions of individual teachers with their students are scrutinized by a team of experts to pinpoint communication breakdowns, and specialized counseling teams are deployed to work with students who present the most serious discipline issues so that class-

room teachers are not left to deal with the problems on their own.

"Most schools use a get-tough, punish-the-kids kind of perspective, which results in the kinds of racial disciplinary disparities we see across the country," said George Sugai, a professor of education at the University of Connecticut who helped create the positive behavioral program.

"We come at it from the other perspective: If you teach kids the behaviors that are expected, you have a greater likelihood of success. It's really more about changing how adults interact with kids than it is about changing the kids."

Schools such as Pickle Elementary in Austin that are using the positive behavioral program often report sharp reductions in disciplinary referrals. But Skiba, who is studying the effectiveness of the program, cautions that it doesn't always eliminate racial disparities.

"They've been very successful at reducing rates of suspension and expulsion while making schools function more effectively," Skiba said of the schools using the program.

"But if you look at the data by race, what you find is that some discrepancies still exist. It's not enough to put this program in place and say, 'We are happy to reduce our rates of suspension,' because what we might have done is reduce our white suspensions and increase our African-American suspensions. There's just no silver bullet for this problem."

hwitt@tribune.com

Chicago Tribune

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Photo for the Tribune by Brian Harkin
Ex-Black Panther Eddie Griffin's activism has found a home online, and he says he is now more effective.

On blogs, activists get to say it louder

The Web unites today's crop of black advocates — but the landscape still seems separate and unequal

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON—The first time Eddie Griffin set out to fight for civil rights, back in 1972, he joined the Black Panthers, picked up a gun and robbed a bank in Ft. Worth. The crime landed him in federal prison for 12 years.

Today, Griffin's weapon is a blog. And his incisive commentary regularly lands him atop the rankings of the most influential African-American bloggers devoted to issues of racial justice and equality.

"As activists, we can be so much more effective now," Griffin said. "We are not alienating a lot of people like we did back then. And we've learned some things over the years in the art of communication. One thing I learned in prison was to write persuasive arguments."

Half a century after Little Rock, the Montgomery bus boycott and the tumultuous dawn of the modern civil rights era, the new face of the movement is Facebook, MySpace and some 150 black blogs united in an Internet alliance they call the Afro

RACE IN AMERICA

In this periodic series, the Tribune examines the nation's enduring struggles over race.

PLEASE SEE **BLOGGERS** » PAGE 7

Job woes jolt economy

One-month spike fans talk of recession

By James P. Miller
TRIBUNE REPORTER

U.S. employers cut their payrolls for a fifth consecutive month in May, and the nation's jobless rate recorded its biggest one-month jump in two decades, as the economy's deterioration continued, the Labor Department reported Friday.

The jarring jump in the unemployment rate, to 5.5 percent, combined with a breathtaking spike of \$10.75 in the price of oil to a record

\$138.54 a barrel, spooked Wall Street into a high-volume sell-off. The Dow Jones industrials sank more than 394 points, its eighth-biggest point loss ever.

The May jobless figures offer proof that "the labor market is under severe stress, [and] firms have stopped expanding payrolls," said Northern Trust economist Asha Bangalore, adding that there is "no doubt" the U.S. has entered a recession.

In May, the economy lost a net 49,000 jobs, with declines

MORE IN BUSINESS

■ Financial firms take big hit as Dow Jones tumbles.
■ Oil's climb means no relief from \$4 per gallon gasoline.

in manufacturing, construction and retail, along with a big jump in the unemployment rate among teenagers. Since December, 342,000 payroll jobs have disappeared.

To accommodate a growing population, the U.S. economy needs to create about

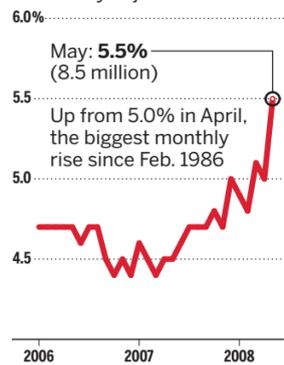
100,000 new jobs each month. But over the past year, the number of unemployed people jumped by 23 percent, to 8.5 million from 6.9 million, and the jobless rate has risen by a full percentage point, from 4.5 percent.

Insight Economics' Steven Wood said that since World War II, "every time the unemployment rate has jumped by a full percentage point in the course of a year, the economy has slipped into recession."

PLEASE SEE **JOBLESS** » PAGE 14

U.S. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Seasonally adjusted



Crosswalk or danger zone?



Tribune photo by Phil Velasquez
Mireya Vergara (from left), Marco Lopez, Brenda Vergara and Yashira Rivera link arms as they cross a street at Belmont and Lawndale Avenues in Chicago's Avondale neighborhood. The intersection will be the site next week of a series of stings to catch drivers who do not yield to pedestrians.

City cracking down on drivers who do not yield to pedestrians

By Jon Hilkevitch
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Beginning next week, Chicago cops will take on a most dangerous undercover role, posing as pedestrians in the

city's traffic-choked streets.

In an effort to improve safety and promote walking with gas prices surging past \$4 a gallon, police officers dressed as civilians will step into crosswalks at two busy Northwest Side intersections as cars approach.

Drivers who don't give the right of way to these pedestrians will be issued warning citations. Real tickets will follow as the campaign is expanded to other locations, including the downtown, offi-

cialists said.

The first sting will be Monday at Belmont and Lawndale Avenues, officials said. Later this month, the undercover operation will move to Lawndale and Milwaukee Avenues. Both were chosen because of nearby schools and commercial areas.

On average, almost one pedestrian is killed in a traffic collision each week in Chicago, police records show.

The two test intersections aren't controlled by traffic

signals or stop signs, but state and city ordinances require drivers to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

The city also is turning to technology to try to improve pedestrian safety and visibility for motorists. Among the measures are countdown signals so pedestrians know how much time they have to cross a street, islands in the middle of intersections where pedestrians can wait and raised crosswalks to help motorists better see pe-

destrians.

In the stings, a plainclothes officer will cross the street as a vehicle approaches from 140 feet away, officials said. That provides adequate stopping distance based on the 30 m.p.h. speed limit on most streets, officials said.

An offending driver will be pulled over by a police officer positioned farther down the street if the motorist doesn't

PLEASE SEE **STINGS** » PAGE 13

Happy few live the dream of climbing through trees

By James Janega
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Todd Kramer, considered a favorite by many for best all-around tree climber in Illinois, gazed into an aging honey locust in Lombard, tossed a line into its top branches and steeled himself to perform his odd and perilous art.

Kramer is a climbing arborist, a job title giving him license, at 37, to climb trees every day and swing from their branches, pruning them as he goes. His skills and judgment have brought him international renown, six Illinois Arborist Association championship titles and consensus that he can go the distance again.

But none of this has quieted his fear of falling 40 feet from a tree in a Lombard backyard.



Tribune photo by Wes Pope
Mike Skilling (from left), Rich Hattori and Israel Garcia watch a test run at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle on Friday.

"I could never climb that!" Anita Coughlin called from her back porch. The aging locust tree is hers. "I don't like heights."

Kramer, a scarred and sunburned man, took a rope in his hands and gathered

his legs below him. "Neither do I," he grunted. With that, he sped up the rope and scampered into the tree like a frightened squirrel.

PLEASE SEE **TREES** » PAGE 2



Digging books and blues this weekend

According to Tom Skilling, early may be better this weekend if you're heading to the **Printers Row Book Fair** in the South Loop or **Blues Festival** in Grant Park. He forecasts heat and humidity, with a chance of storms in the afternoon. Find event information in **TEMPO** and at chicagotribune.com.

Hot summer reads

150 new titles just right for the hammock. **BOOKS**

Riders say 'e-bikes' give them extra spark

By Joel Hood
TRIBUNE REPORTER

Dave Kennedy is part of a two-wheeled revolution. Or so it seems some days.

Fed up with \$4 gas, the war in Iraq, America's automotive obsession and the seeming reluctance of leaders to fully embrace alternative energy, Kennedy bought an electric-powered bicycle for his 2-mile commute to and from work in Tinley Park. And if it were up to him, he'd probably never step on a gas pedal again.

Whether their reasons are financial, political or both, Kennedy and others are at the forefront of a new era in two-wheeled transportation: the "e-bike." Widely used in Europe and parts of Asia for a decade, battery-powered bicycles have found a home in America.

Cycling powerhouses such as Schwinn and Giant are reporting a surge in sales during the last year and have stepped up production to meet the demand. They're competing with small manufacturers in a suddenly crowded marketplace.

"We can't keep them in stock," said Nate Newton, assistant manager at Azy's Cyclery on Milwaukee Avenue. "As soon as we get them in, we sell them. And then we have calls from 10 other people who want them."

It's a trend that has some in the industry thinking big.

"In some ways I think we're seeing the future of this business," said Patrick VanHorn, corporate communications manager for Giant Bicycles Inc. "I

PLEASE SEE **E-BIKES** » PAGE 8

» BLOGGERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Spear.

Older, familiar leaders such as Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and NAACP Chairman Julian Bond are under challenge by a younger generation of bloggers known by such provocative screen names as Field Negro, the-freeslave and African American Political Pundit.

And many of the newest struggles are being waged online.

Web seen as net gain

After black bloggers criticized the Democratic National Convention Committee over its decision to issue elite credentials for this summer's convention to a corps of 55 political blog writers, nearly all of them white, party leaders quickly expanded the blogging pool to include AfroSpear members and other ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, ColorofChange.org, an Internet-based rights group with 400,000 members, recently sent 30,000 letters to Democratic leaders and superdelegates warning them against handing the presidential nomination to Sen. Hillary Clinton "against the will of the voters."

The march through Jena, La., last September, which drew more than 20,000 demonstrators on the strength of a blogging campaign, demonstrated the potency of the new Internet movement, many analysts say—and the waning

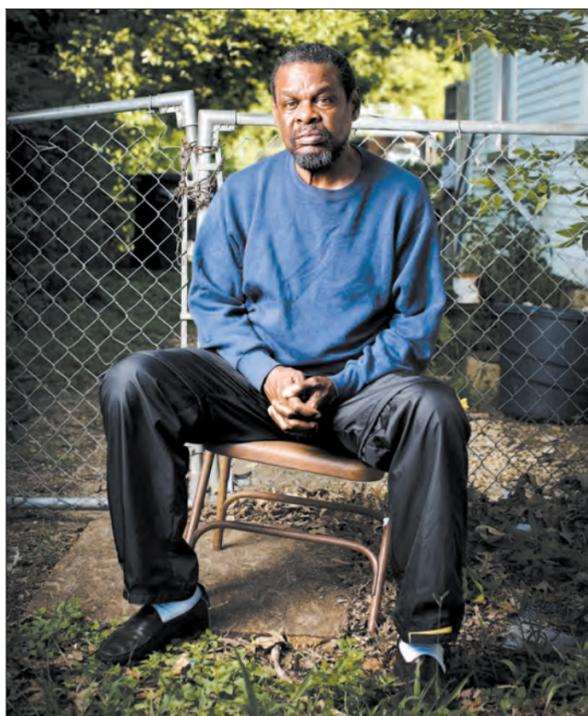


Photo for the Tribune by Brian Harkin

Black bloggers have "learned some things over the years in the art of communication," Eddie Griffin says.

influence of traditional civil rights groups.

"The NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the National Urban League and other old-line civil rights and advocacy groups are badly out of touch with the activism of today on civil rights and social justice issues," said Earl Ofari Hutchinson, president of the Los

Angeles Urban Policy Roundtable.

"Bloggers and younger activists have the means and the access to a vast network of readers to jump on issues on a speedy and timely basis," he said.

For their part, old-line leaders scarcely agree that their relevance is diminishing.

"Our struggle today is that

COMING SUNDAY

Rev. Jesse Jackson on Barack Obama's candidacy: "An unbroken line from the blood of Selma." **PERSPECTIVE**

"we are free, but not equal," Jackson said. "You will not close that gap with a YouTube mobilization."

Jackson and other civil rights veterans contend that lasting structural change, such as pressuring corporations to give minority-owned businesses more contracts or persuading Congress to pass new hate-crimes laws, requires the kind of sustained lobbying that only established groups like the NAACP or the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition can provide.

Fast results or fast food?

"Internet bloggers can serve the meal better than they can farm," Jackson said. "Farming requires tilling the soil, removing the debris, planting, being patient, letting it germinate. That's the strength of labor unions and churches and civil rights organizations."

Jackson acknowledges that bloggers "can get issues to the marketplace faster"—a fact he said he exploited to draw attention to a hunger crisis in Haiti. He gave the first accounts of what he saw there to The Huffington Post, a widely read political blog.

The NAACP, meanwhile, has started a blog of its own and appointed as its presi-

dent Benjamin Jealous, a 35-year-old activist who promises to reinvigorate the group.

"I don't see any tension with the black bloggers," said Dennis Hayes, the group's chief executive officer. "But there is also the need in civil rights to produce warm bodies to bring to a cause, and traditional civil rights organizations ... are still able to do that most effectively."

Not necessarily, counters Antoinette Pole, a political science professor at Southern Connecticut State University who studies African-American blogs.

"Black bloggers really stand out because they are organized in a way that many other groups are not," Pole said. "The Latino blogosphere, for example, is really fragmented, which is not unexpected given that there are Cubans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, etc. But black bloggers are very cohesive, and they are talking to each other."

That unity of purpose — bloggers in the AfroSpear link to each other generously and amplify each other's messages enthusiastically — can generate tens of thousands of petition signatures and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fundraising in a matter of days for issues that strike chords of racial injustice.

Last year, for example, pressure generated by bloggers helped lead to the firing of radio's Don Imus after he broadcast racial crudities on his talk show. Another blogging

IN THE WEB EDITION



Read the series examining America's enduring struggles over race at chicagotribune.com/raceinamerica

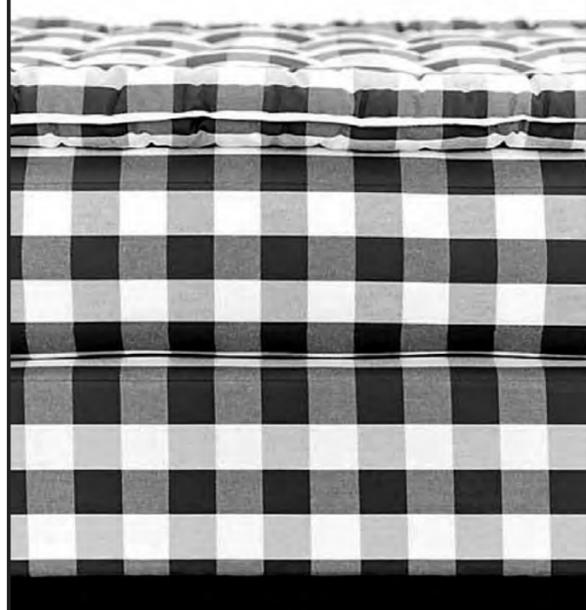
campaign, on behalf of Shaquanda Cotton, a black teenage girl from east Texas who was sentenced to juvenile prison for shoving a hall monitor, spurred Texas authorities to grant her early release.

Yet despite their demonstrated influence, black bloggers — many of whom have professional day jobs as attorneys, accountants and technology workers — find themselves struggling for respect from the mostly white liberal blogging establishment, which rarely picks up black blog postings.

"Just because we are soul mates ideologically, we don't necessarily have the same issues we want to fight about," said Wayne Bennett, a Philadelphia lawyer who blogs as Field Negro. "Our issues are things like crime and stuff that goes on in public schools. Their issues are the Iraq War and illegal immigration. And for a lot of the liberal progressive blogs, it's more like recreation for them. With us, it's more personal. This is our life."

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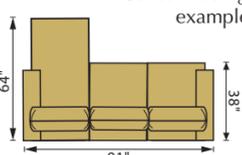
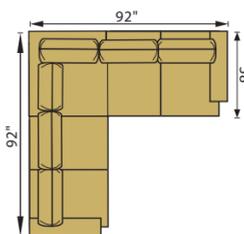
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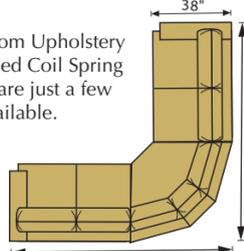
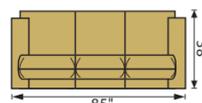
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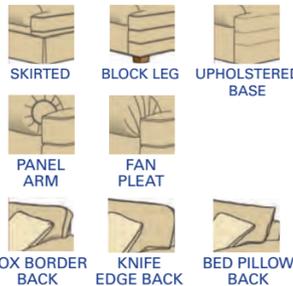
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Case puts civil rights blocs at odds

Web-based activists, old-guard leadership not seeing eye to eye on Florida assaults

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON — The crime was unspeakably horrific.

A 35-year-old Haitian immigrant and her 12-year-old son were forced into their home at gunpoint in the bleak Dunbar Village housing project in West Palm Beach, Fla. The woman was beaten, raped and sodomized for hours, allegedly by a gang of African-American teenagers, then forced to abuse her son. Finally the attackers doused the victims with household chemicals—pouring them directly into the boy's eyes—and attempted to set the two on fire before fleeing.

Yet outside South Florida, the attack last June largely escaped notice, and it scarcely registered on the radar of national civil rights leaders because it involved the awkward topic of black-on-black crime.

Three weeks ago, however, Al Sharpton and local representatives of the NAACP held a news conference in West Palm Beach where they declared that four black teenagers arrested for the Dunbar Village attack are being treated unfairly because they remain incarcerated without bond, while five white teenagers recently accused of sexually assaulting two white girls in nearby Boca Raton were freed on bail.

Triggering dual outrage

"You cannot have one set of rules for acts that are wrong and horrific in Boca and another set in Dunbar Village," Sharpton said, as parents of some of the Dunbar defendants nodded behind him. "You must have equal protection under the law."

It was, for Sharpton and the NAACP, a familiar situation and a routine news conference: Contrasting the treatment of blacks and whites in the criminal justice system and calling for fairness.

But Sharpton's remarks—and his apparent call for the Dunbar Village suspects to be released on bail—triggered outrage on dozens of blogs devoted to civil rights, feminism and the interests of African-American crime victims. Now the Dunbar Village case is deepening a growing schism between traditional civil rights organizations and a new, Internet-driven generation of younger activists who take a more nuanced view of many issues.

"For Sharpton and the NAACP to come out and recklessly say we need to free these guys because some white guys over in Boca Raton are out on bail is just unconscionable," said Gina McCauley, an Austin, Texas, attorney and author of an influential African-American civil rights blog called What About Our Daughters?

"We've lost our way in the civil rights movement," McCauley added, "when in every case, no matter what an African-American is in cus-



South Florida Sun-Sentinel photo by John L. White

Activist Al Sharpton has been criticized for coming to the defense of four suspects in a 2007 home invasion at Dunbar Village in West Palm Beach, Fla.



Sun-Sentinel photo by John L. White
"It's not right," said Ruby Walker, the mother of one of the suspects.

tody for, we automatically start screaming about unfairness—even when they are in custody to protect the black community from them."

Color of Change, a Web-based civil rights group that counts nearly 400,000 members, criticized Sharpton for choosing the accused Dunbar Village assailants to champion.

"I question whether this is the case we want to be standing up for," said Mervyn Marciano, the group's spokesman. "At the end of the day, when we choose to fight for equal justice, we have to be aware of who's being affected. A lot of people think no one was speaking for the victims of this terrible crime."

For his part, Sharpton strongly denied in an interview with the Tribune last week that he was ignoring the plight of the Dunbar Village victims or insisting that their ac-

'You cannot have one set of rules for acts that are wrong and horrific in Boca and another set in Dunbar Village.'

—Al Sharpton (right)



'For Sharpton and the NAACP to come out and recklessly say we need to free these guys because some white guys over in Boca Raton are out on bail is just unconscionable.'

—Gina McCauley, attorney and author of a civil rights blog

cusped attackers should be freed on bond. He said his comments at the March 11 news conference had been misunderstood, and that he had visited Dunbar Village several times this year to show support for the residents and denounce the "hideous, deplorable" crime.

"My position is there ought to be one standard," Sharpton said. "The white kids in Boca Raton ought to be held just like the black kids in Dunbar Village. Why are they not doing the same with the white kids?"

Yet freedom for the four Dunbar Village defendants was the clear demand of the other participants at the news conference, where fliers were distributed proclaiming the teenagers to be "voiceless, vulnerable victims."

"We don't like what's going on. It's not right," said Ruby Walker, the mother of defendant Nathan Walker. "I don't think we should have to suffer."

Maude Ford Lee, president of the local West Palm Beach NAACP chapter who joined Sharpton at the news conference, said she hoped Sharpton's presence would help expose the "injustice" of the case.

"Our kids are incarcerated, they can't even get a bond, and it's unconscionable what is happening," Lee

told reporters.

Lee declined to return several phone calls seeking further explanation of her comments. But NAACP officials at both the state and national level said their organizations had taken no position on whether the Dunbar suspects should be released on bond.

Comparison issues

Sharpton's critics say it was wrong to equate the Dunbar Village and Boca Raton rape cases in the first place because the Dunbar assault was far more vicious. Among the awful details: The attackers forced the mother to perform oral sex on her 12-year-old son.

In the Boca Raton case, the five white teenagers are accused of sexually assaulting two middle-school students after the group of seven engaged in a night of drinking on Jan. 1. The Dunbar defendants, by contrast, face multiple felony counts for the torture and gang-rape that could send them to prison for life if convicted.

Prosecutors say they have DNA evidence implicating three of the suspects: Walker, 17; Avion Lawson, 14; and Tommy Poindexter, 18. A fourth suspect, Jakaris Taylor, 16, pleaded guilty in November to

charges of burglary and armed sexual battery in exchange for a 20-year sentence and a requirement that he testify against the others.

The rift between the new generation of civil rights activists, organized via blogs, Web sites and e-mail lists, and their old-guard forebears such as Sharpton, Jesse Jackson and the NAACP, opened last September over the civil rights march through Jena, La., that drew more than 20,000 demonstrators.

Even though many of the marchers traveled to Jena in response to e-mail appeals and postings on scores of African-American blogs, Sharpton, Jackson and mainstream civil rights groups claimed credit for orchestrating the huge turnout.

Two months later, black civil rights bloggers were perplexed when Sharpton organized a march for justice in Washington without tapping their organizing abilities.

"I've concluded that we can expect no leadership on the issues that are of concern to African-Americans today from these traditional civil rights groups," McCauley said. "It's at least equally important to address black-on-black violence, and it's not being addressed at all."

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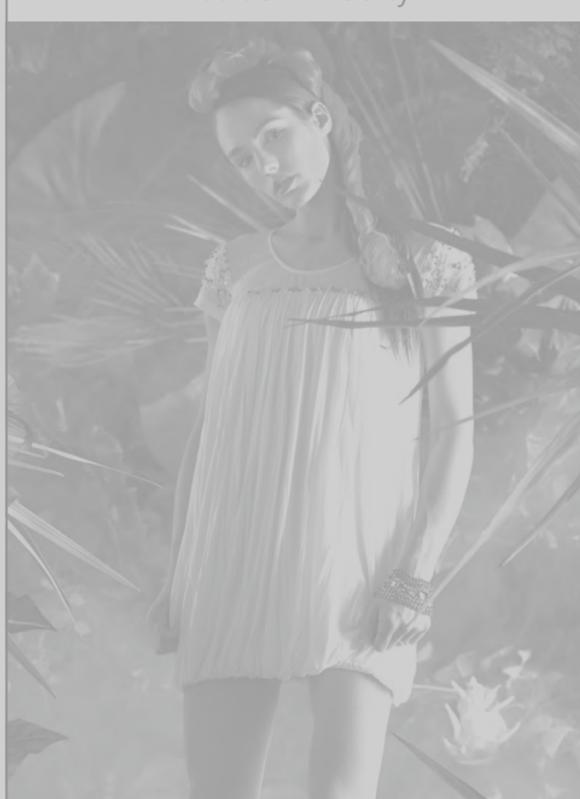
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Katrina aftermath still roils Gretna

Town cut off escape route out of New Orleans

By Howard Witt
TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

GRETNA, La. — All Patryce Jenkins wanted was to walk home.

For two days after Hurricane Katrina struck on Aug. 29, 2005, Jenkins had wandered the flooded streets of New Orleans, exhausted, hungry, filthy and terrified. She passed bodies. She avoided looters. She skirted the sweltering, violent Louisiana Superdome—the city's fetid shelter of last resort.

Finally, Jenkins made it downtown to the convention center, where she had been told evacuation buses would be waiting, only to discover a sea of tens of thousands of desperate hurricane victims like her, waiting in vain to be rescued.

Yet Jenkins, at the time a 911 operator for the New Orleans Police Department who was forced from her post when the police headquarters flooded, was so close to home she could taste it. Her apartment was on high ground just a few miles away, across the Mississippi River, on the other side of the New Orleans suburb of Gretna.

So Jenkins set out for home. She started walking up a ramp onto the massive steel Crescent City Connection bridge leading to the other side of the Mississippi River known locally as the West Bank. But she didn't get far. A phalanx of black-clad Gretna police officers, wielding what Jenkins said were "huge guns like they have in Iraq," ordered her to turn back. One officer fired a warning shot over her head.

"I was just trying to get to safety," Jenkins recalled. "I had my driver's license to prove where I lived. But those police didn't even look at my ID. I was called racist names. ... I was just crying in disbelief. I couldn't understand how people could be so heartless to force me back into the hell I had just escaped from."

Three years after Katrina's floodwaters destroyed New Orleans, what happened to Jenkins and hundreds of others who tried to flee the city's chaos by crossing the bridge to Gretna remains the subject of conflicting perceptions, lingering racial bitterness and a variety of civil rights lawsuits now making their way through state and federal courts.

And now there's an added concern: that this week's Hurricane Gustav, as well as



Patryce Jenkins under the bridge she said Gretna, La., police barred her from crossing as she tried to leave New Orleans after Katrina: "I couldn't understand how people could be so heartless to force me back into the hell I had just escaped from."

Tribune photo by Alex Garcia

RACE IN AMERICA

In this periodic series, the Tribune examines the nation's enduring struggles over race.

an ominous line of still more tropical storms gathering out in the Atlantic Ocean, will push the Gretna bridge incident even deeper into the obscurity of the history books, unaddressed and unresolved.

Tribal instincts took over

To many African-Americans and other Gretna critics, the decision by officials of the mostly white suburb to bar entry to the mostly black victims of Katrina amounted to an overtly racist—and blatantly unconstitutional—blockade of the only escape route they could find.

"We questioned why we couldn't cross the bridge," recalled Larry Bradshaw and Lorrie Beth Slonsky, two San Francisco paramedics who were trapped in New Orleans when Katrina struck and who led a group that tried to cross into Gretna.

"[The police] responded that the West Bank was not going to become New Orleans, and there would be no Superdomes in their city," the paramedics wrote later in an essay about their experience. "These were code words for: If you are poor and black, you

Big Easy relents, reopens

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS — Thousands of people who fled Hurricane Gustav forced the city to reluctantly open its doors Wednesday, but nearly 1.2 million homes and businesses across Louisiana were still without electricity.

Faced with traffic backups into the city, Mayor Ray

Nagin gave up checking ID badges and automobile placards designed to keep residents out until Thursday.

After touring an emergency center and flooded-out farmland, President George W. Bush praised the government response to Gustav as "excellent," but he urged utility companies in neighboring states to send crews to Louisiana.

are not crossing the Mississippi River, and you are not getting out of New Orleans."

Yet to Gretna officials, and even some black residents of the town that is 56 percent white and 36 percent black, blocking off the bridge was the only prudent way to protect their hurricane-ravaged municipality from the looting and violence that seemed to be erupting all across New Orleans. Although Gretna did not flood like New Orleans, officials said they had no food, water, shelter or transportation to offer to the New Orleans refugees.

"I don't feel like it was a matter of not letting them cross the bridge because of their skin color," said Rev. Jesse Pate, pastor of the pre-

dominantly African-American Harvest Ripe Church in Gretna, who sheltered some of his own displaced parishioners for several days after Katrina struck, until city officials ordered them to evacuate. "There was nothing here to serve them with. Gretna didn't let its own residents stay. We were asked to leave."

On one point, at least, nearly everyone seems to agree: Atop the bridge to Gretna, under the strain of an unprecedented crisis, the thin veneer of American civilization peeled back for a moment to reveal the atavistic, tribally protective impulses coursing beneath.

"No one in America today can realize the collapse of civil authority that happened in

IN THE WEB EDITION



See Gretna and the faces behind the names at chicago.tribune.com/gretna

this area after Katrina," said Ronnie Harris, Gretna's mayor for the past 23 years. "People think, 'That can't happen here.' Well, it did happen. It was a return to basic human nature, a clannish feeling. You clung to people you know, people you trust and what's familiar and comfortable to you."

Constitutional rights?

The question now making its way through the courts is the legality of the way Gretna officials acted on that clannish feeling. Plaintiffs in at least four civil lawsuits are seeking class-action certification at a court hearing later this month for their claims that the closing of the Crescent City Connection bridge violated their constitutional rights, including the right to peaceful assembly, equal protection and freedom from cruel and unusual punishment.

"It was absolutely inhuman," said Adele Owen, an attorney representing some of the plaintiffs. "These people hadn't slept, they had no food, they had no water, they had



SOURCES: ESRI, TeleAtlas
TRIBUNE GRAPHIC

no place to stay. And [Gretna police] sent them back to the Superdome."

Much of the case against Gretna turns on the judgment by local officials—critics call it racially induced hysteria—that their town of 17,423 was facing an imminent threat from New Orleans looters and criminals.

"If you are in your house and they're rioting all around to get in, are you going to let them in?" Gretna Police Chief Arthur Lawson was quoted as saying in the New Orleans Times-Picayune a month after Katrina struck. "We saved our city and protected our people."

'Nobody died'

Harris insists race had nothing to do with his stricken city's decision to close its border with New Orleans. He noted, for example, that whites as well as blacks were among the Katrina victims turned back by police—and that Gretna officials were acting on assurances from state and federal officials that hundreds of buses were on the way to New Orleans to evacuate the city.

"Nobody got hurt, nobody died, but the world is left with the impression that we are a racist community, and that is incorrect and totally unfair," Harris said.

But the plaintiffs say they never expected Gretna to serve as their refuge. All they wanted was the right to walk through the town on their way out of New Orleans—a right of free travel that they believe no American community should be able to violate.

"I just don't want this to happen again if we have another hurricane like Katrina," said Joycelyn Askew, another Katrina victim who was turned back on the bridge and is a plaintiff in one of the lawsuits. "I just wouldn't want anybody to have their rights violated like this so that they can't be allowed to escape."

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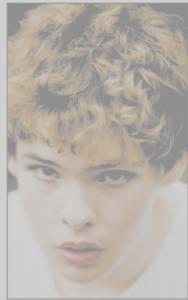
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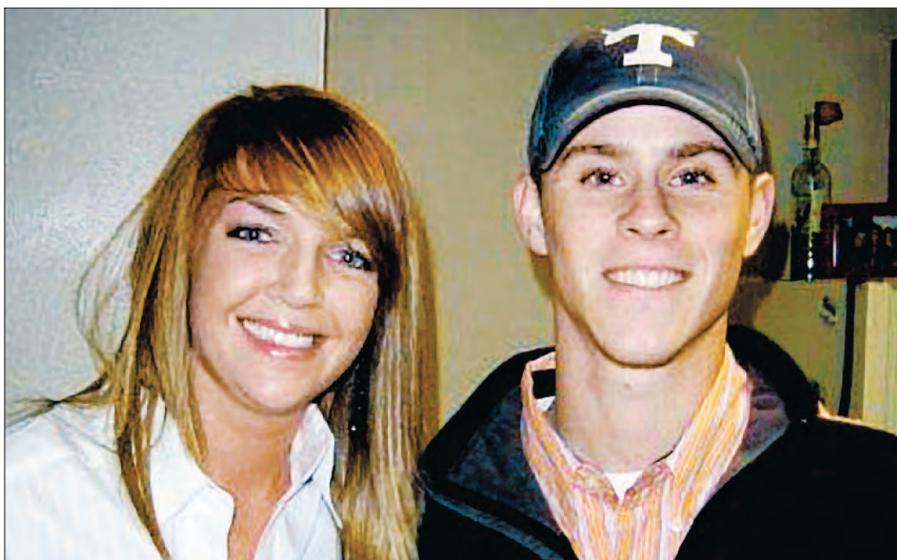


CHICAGOLAND FINAL

161ST YEAR—NO. 161 © CHICAGO TRIBUNE

TRIBUNE SPECIAL REPORT

What is a hate crime?



Family photo via Knoxville Police Department
Channon Christian, 21, and Christopher Newsom, 23, were killed in January in Knoxville, Tenn., allegedly by four black assailants (pictured below). The case has largely escaped national media attention.

Some are asking why no media outcry over murders in which victims were white and defendants are black

By **Howard Witt** | Tribune senior correspondent

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — What happened to Channon Christian and Christopher Newsom, a young Knoxville couple out on an ordinary Saturday night date, was undeniably brutal. The two were carjacked, kidnapped, raped and finally murdered during an ordeal of unimaginable terror in January.

But whether the attack was a racial hate crime worthy of national media attention is another question, one that has now ignited a fierce dispute over the definition of hate crimes and how the mainstream media choose to cover America's most discomfiting interracial attacks.

That's because the murders of Christian and Newsom didn't fit the familiar contours of a traditional Old South attack, in which whites target blacks and reporters quickly assume the motivation must have been racial.

Instead, the races were reversed: Christian and Newsom were white; the three men and one woman charged with their murders are black. And the fail-

ure of the story to gain much media attention outside of the Knoxville area has galvanized conservative commentators across the country who insist the case offers clear evidence of liberal bias in the major media.

They have launched a broad Internet campaign, waged via blogs, e-mails and YouTube videos, to counter what they regard as suppression of a story about an anti-white hate crime.

"There is a discomfort level [in the national media] with stories that have black assailants and white victims," said Michelle Malkin, a prominent conservative newspaper columnist and TV commentator who has featured the Knoxville case on her Web site. "If it doesn't fit some sort of predetermined narrative of how we view taboo subjects like race and crime, there's a disinclination to cover it."

Country music star Charlie Daniels, who lives 150 miles from Knoxville, contrasted scant covera-

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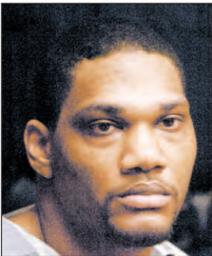
Letalvis Cobbins



Vanessa Coleman



Lemarcus Davidson



George Thomas

Oil race at top of the world

As Russia pursues claim to huge Arctic deposits, U.S. is sidelined

By **Alex Rodriguez**
Tribune foreign correspondent

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia — A new Klondike may be waiting at the top of the world, where geologists believe a quarter of the globe's undiscovered oil and natural gas lies trapped within the rock strata underneath the ice-encased Arctic Ocean.

It's a trove of energy wealth that sits unowned and unexplored, a bonanza being readied for a rush of claims thanks to climate change. Global warming is steadily wearing away the polar cap, scientists say, making the advent of Arctic energy exploration increasingly likely.

Inside a dingy, four-story building in the heart of St. Petersburg, a team of scientists is working feverishly to prove that a large chunk of that energy is rightfully Russia's.

If geologists at the Russian Research Institute for Ocean Geology and Mineral Resources

are right, the Kremlin could add as many as 10 billion tons of Arctic oil and natural gas to reserves that already make Russia one of the world's most formidable energy powerhouses.

The Arctic's potential storehouse of oil and gas likely won't be tapped for decades. But Moscow is looking ahead to a time when depleted oil and natural gas fields will force energy suppliers to scour for new hydrocarbon sources, even if they're under the polar ice cap.

"Experts say that after 2016, oil production will drop tremendously," said Anatoly Opekunov, the institute's deputy director. "Every country, including Russia and the U.S., is thinking about this."

Russia's eagerness to secure the rights to Arctic energy worries many policymakers in Washington, who argue that the U.S. is powerless to intervene

PLEASE SEE **OIL**, PAGE 14

Food-origin law is back from oblivion

Recent scares revive call to label imports

By **Stephen J. Hedges**
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Amid concerns about the safety of pet food ingredients and catfish from China, consumers and even a few members of Congress are wondering why there isn't a law that requires merchants to label where food comes from.

The short answer: There is. And there has been since 2002.

The more complicated answer is that what Congress passes, Congress can take away. The requirement for "country-of-origin labeling"—or COOL, as Washington knows it—for food products was postponed a year after its adoption, due to heavy

lobbying from food groups saying the law was unnecessary and expensive.

Recent fears over imported foods, however, have given new momentum to reviving the law.

Though COOL's suspension is due to end in September 2008, food safety groups have called for it to end immediately. Worried opponents, meanwhile, are already working to derail the law's implementation.

Some say recent food scares have made the labeling an idea whose time has come, and bills in the House and Senate propose making it effective as early as this September.

"There will be mandatory COOL by 2008 at the latest," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.). "I believe that this is the direction we're moving in. This is about

PLEASE SEE **LABELS**, PAGE 17

Look out, California. A 2-acre vineyard in Crete is turning out wine grapes. Can wine snobs and tourism be just around the corner?

The grapes of Will County

By **Stanley Ziemba**
Tribune staff reporter

Could Will County be going "Sideways"?

While the Easy Street vineyard in Crete hardly evokes visions of the California wine country featured in the 2004 film, Frank Cassara's 2 acres of grapevines are the closest anyone will find in Will County to sprawling grape orchards.

Hidden behind a stand of trees and his ranch house 40 miles south of downtown Chi-

ago, the 77-year-old Cassara's vineyard is the only one in the county and one of just a handful in metropolitan Chicago that produce wine grapes commercially, the Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association says.

If local and state agriculture officials have their way, though, Cassara will soon be joined by other landowners and farmers in growing wine grapes alongside the corn, wheat and soybean crops for which Will County's agricultural industry

is best known.

The fact is, with the county losing some 3,000 farm acres a year to residential and commercial developers, agriculture officials are looking for new footholds in smaller spaces.

"With land for growing corn, wheat and soybeans becoming scarce, we think grape growing would be a viable option," said Mark Schneidewind, Will County Farm Bureau manager.

PLEASE SEE **GRAPES**, PAGE 18



Tribune photo by John Smerciak
Frank Cassara, 77, who owns a 2-acre vineyard in Crete, is the only commercial grape grower in Will County.

INSIDE

Chicago Tribune turns 160

A letter from the publisher.
METRO, PAGE 6

The last, and next, 160 years. **EDITORIAL, SECTION 2, PAGE 6**

Weather: Sunny; high 83, low 58
Index, Page 2



MURDERS: Authorities say race wasn't factor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ge of the Christian-Newsom murders with the national media frenzy that erupted last year when a black woman accused three white members of the Duke University lacrosse team of raping her at a party. The white players were cleared in April after the accuser proved unreliable and no evidence corroborated a crime.

"If this [Knoxville case] had been white on black crime, Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson and their ilk would have descended on Knoxville like a swarm of angry bees," Daniels wrote on his Web site. "I guess the lack of TV cameras discouraged them."

Cause celebre for extremists

Neo-Nazis and other white supremacists have jumped on the case as well, drawn to the state where the Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865. Hate groups have organized rallies in Knoxville and set up Web sites under the victims' names to spew racial invective.

But it's not just conservative whites and extremists who have criticized the national silence over the Knoxville case.

"Black leaders are not eager to take this on because it's one more thing that would cast a negative light on African-Americans," said Earl Ofari Hutchinson, an author and nationally syndicated black columnist who has written frequently about the reluctance of black leaders to denounce crimes committed by blacks against whites. "There's already an ancient stereotype that blacks are more violent and crime-prone, anyway."

Rev. Ezra Maize, the president of the Knoxville chapter of the NAACP, has been one of the few black leaders to address the case.

"It doesn't make me uncomfortable speaking out against this crime because it was African-Americans [allegedly] committing a crime against Caucasians," Maize said. "It's not a black-and-white issue. It's a right-and-wrong issue. Those who committed this crime were unjust in doing so and they should pay the penalty."



Alex Linder, a white supremacist, is arrested last month after entering a neutral zone between his group and counterprotesters at a rally in Knoxville that he organized to promote the case involving the slayings of Channon Christian and Christopher Newsom.

Knoxville News Sentinel photo by Michael Patrick

The murders of Newsom and Christian have resonated because they play into some of the deepest fears of urban crime harbored by many Americans. By all the accounts of authorities, the couple—Newsom, 23, was a talented carpenter and former high school baseball star; Christian, 21, was a senior at the University of Tennessee—fell victim to a random carjacking Jan. 6 in the parking lot of an apartment complex where they had gone to visit friends.

Kidnapped, then killed

Authorities say the couple's assailants, some of them ex-convicts, forced their victims to drive at gunpoint to a clapboard house in one of Knoxville's roughest neighborhoods, where both victims were raped and then killed. Newsom's body, shot and burned, was found dumped beside nearby railroad tracks, while Christian, who was strangled, was found bundled in plastic garbage bags inside the house.

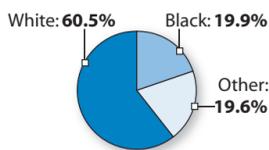
State prosecutors have lodged murder, rape and other charges against brothers Lemaricus Davidson, 25, and Letalvis Cobbins, 24; Cobbins' girlfriend, Vanessa Coleman, 18; and George Thomas, 24. Their trials are set for next year, and officials have

Breaking down crime by race

The brutal murder of a white Knoxville, Tenn., couple, allegedly by three black men and one black woman, has become a focal point in the debate over what constitutes a hate crime.

Hate crimes are more likely to be committed by whites ...

HATE-CRIME OFFENDERS BY RACE



Blacks are more likely to be victims of violent crime ...

VIOLENT CRIME RATE Per 1,000 people age 12 and older



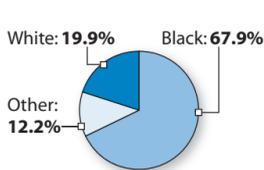
Note: All figures are for 2005, the most recent year available. Sources: FBI, Bureau of Justice Statistics

not yet revealed whether they will seek the death penalty. A fifth suspect was charged in federal court as an accessory.

Yet as brutal as the crime was, Knoxville authorities have strongly denied that it was race-

... while blacks are more likely to be victims of a hate crime.

HATE-CRIME VICTIMS BY RACE



... and interracial violent crimes are more likely to be committed by blacks.

INTERRACIAL VIOLENT CRIMES



Chicago Tribune

cially motivated. And they have sought to correct rumors, eagerly spread by white supremacist Web sites, that the couple had been sexually mutilated before they were killed and their bodies dismembered afterward.

"There is absolutely no proof of a hate crime," said John Gill, special counsel to Knox County District Atty. Randy Nichols. "It was a terrible crime, a horrendous crime, but race was not a motive. We know from our investigation that the people charged in this case were friends with white people, socialized with white people, dated white people. So not only is there no evidence of any racial animus, there's evidence to the contrary."

Newsom's parents do not accept that logic.

"If this wasn't a hate crime, then I don't know how you would define a hate crime," said Mary Newsom, Christopher's mother. "It may have started out as a carjacking, but what it developed into was blacks hating whites. To do the things they did, they would have to hate them to do that."

Conservatives cite examples

Official hate crime or not, to most conservative critics what the Knoxville case illustrates is the general reluctance of the mainstream media to report black-on-white crimes. As examples, many cite a 1999 incident in North Charleston, S.C., in which seven black youths attacked two white bicyclists rid-

ing through their neighborhood, leaving one permanently disabled; a 2000 mass-murder case in Wichita, Kan., in which two black brothers kidnapped and killed four white victims; and an attack last year in Long Beach, Calif., in which 11 black teenagers attacked and severely beat three young white women.

Only the Long Beach case was charged by local authorities as a hate crime, and none of the stories drew sustained national attention.

"You've seen a lot of people with impeccable credentials making the point that the press does play up white-on-black crime and play down black-on-white crime," said Glenn Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor who publishes political and media commentaries on his widely read Instapundit blog. "I think it's a fair criticism. And it just empowers the crazies when the mainstream media soft-pedals this stuff."

In reality, statistics from the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice offer a mixed picture of crime and race in America.

What the statistics say

On one hand, African-Americans bear the brunt of violent crime in the U.S.: In 2005, the most recent year for which statistics are available, blacks were more than twice as likely as whites to fall victim to serious violent crime, most often at the hands of other blacks.

Blacks are also the overwhelming majority of victims of attacks recorded by the FBI as hate crimes. In 2005, blacks were the victims in 68 percent of nearly 5,000 hate-crime incidents nationwide, while whites were the victims in 20 percent of the cases. Whites accounted for 60 percent of known hate-crime offenders, while blacks accounted for 20 percent.

But on the other hand, when overall cross-racial violent crimes are tabulated—including incidents not formally classified as racially motivated hate crimes—Justice Department statistics show that blacks attack whites far more often than whites attack blacks.

In 2005, there were more than 645,000 victims of cross-racial violent crimes between blacks and whites in the U.S. In 90 percent of those crimes, black offenders attacked white victims.

"In the old days," said Hutchinson, contemplating that statistic, "when you said 'hate crimes,' it was automatic—whites victimizing blacks. Today you have to pause for a minute and not make automatic assumptions."

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GRAPES: Small parcels are a good fit for vineyards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"The average size of land needed for an economically viable commercial vineyard is only about 5 to 8 acres. Today, we have a lot of small parcels, 7 to 14 acres in size, sitting idle that are much too small for other crops but ideal for growing grapes."

And the county's soil is conducive, Schneidewind added. "We just need to find people willing to make the commitment and investment."

The farm bureau and the University of Illinois Extension Service hope to capitalize on a growing interest in vineyards by conducting a workshop this fall to show that grapes can be grown successfully in northern Illinois' cantankerous climate.

Cassara, a stocky, tanned man whose energy belies his age, may be following trends, but for him they are steeped in family history.

He and his wife, Shirley, 75, have quietly and methodically built upon the grape-growing tradition begun in Crete in the 1940s by Frank's late father, Vincent.

In 1995, when Frank Cassara and his wife moved into his parents' home, he salvaged some of the few remaining grapevines in what had been his father's private vineyard, spent a couple of years clearing weeds that had invaded the land and, about five years ago, began growing grapes in earnest.

"It started out as a hobby after I retired as a laborer for a construction company and just grew," Cassara said, noting that he grows several kinds of grapes, including hardy Foch, Frontenac and Concord reds that can survive subzero temperatures.

"Last year, we produced enough quality wine grapes to make our first sale. We harvested 8 tons, two of which we sold to Cooper's Hawk Winery & Restaurant in Orland Park. The rest we're now using to make our own wine."



Tribune photos by John Smierciak

Frank Cassara has a small wine production room on his Crete property. He hopes to sell 990 gallons of wine he expects to make from last year's grape crop. Cassara said that more growers could draw tourists and help the county's economy.



Cassara's grapes are just beginning to fill out in his vineyard, where he grows hardy Foch, Frontenac and Concord reds.

Cassara, who has an infectious smile, said he would welcome more grape growers. One vineyard does not a wine tour make.

More growers, he said, could draw tourists and help the

county's economy.

"Vineyard tours and wine tasting have become very popular. But in Illinois you have to drive to the southern or western parts of the state to find most of the vineyards that regularly of-

fer such tourist attractions.

"No way that should be; Chicago is the third largest wine market in the country," Cassara said, noting that although he has the federal permits required for growing grapes and making wine, he's prohibited from having a wine-tasting room or selling the wine out of his back-yard winery because his land is zoned for residential use.

"Zoning is something that's going to have to be looked at," he said.

Cassara hopes to eventually sell much of the 990 gallons of wine he expects to make from last year's crop.

A dry red wine made from his 2005 crop of Foch grapes this year won a gold medal in Wine-Maker magazine's amateur wine competition, which drew well over 3,000 entrants.

He has also entered this year's Illinois State Fair wine competition.

Because developing a vineyard is a time-consuming, labor-

intensive undertaking, few people locally have expressed interest in grapes, said William Shoemaker, a research specialist in the U. of I.'s natural resources and environmental services department, who's organizing the county's grape-growing workshop, the date of which has not been determined.

Cassara said it took five years before his grape crop reached the quality required by commercial wineries.

Requires a lot of hard work

"It's a constant job," said Tom Gilmore, who's married to Cassara's niece, Bernadette, and lives nearby. With Cassara's grandson, Nick Addison, 21, of Orland Park, they help maintain the vineyard.

"Frank's out here at least twice a day pruning vines, checking for insects, powder mold and dry rot," Gilmore said.

"He has four or five cats around to keep the birds away from eating the vines, but those

'With land for growing corn, wheat and soybeans becoming scarce, we think grape growing would be a viable option.'

—Mark Schneidewind, Will County Farm Bureau manager

that are more susceptible he has to cover with netting. Keeping deer away also is a constant battle.

"For him, though, it's a labor of love."

Cold snaps in the spring that endanger the grapevines just as they begin to bud also can be challenging, Cassara said.

The big vineyards employ smudge pots to protect their vines from frost. "Me, I just pray," he said.

The workload is especially heavy at harvest time in September.

"We'll have 30 to 40 or more family members, relatives and friends out here picking grapes by hand," he said. "They get to eat all they want as they pick and then enjoy my wife's cooking."

Costs \$10,000 per acre to start

The financial investment needed also might scare some potential growers, Cassara noted.

"It runs about \$10,000 an acre by the time you buy the grapevines, the posts and the wiring on which to place the grapevines," he said. "That's just to get an acre up and running."

As a result, those familiar with growing grapes advise starting out small.

"An acre is all that's really needed to start a commercial vineyard," said Nancy Kuhajda, the Extension Service's program coordinator for Will County.

Although no one is likely to get rich quick growing grapes—Cassara said his Concord grape crop last year sold for about \$600 a ton—the long-term potential for profits can be immense, Shoemaker said.

"Because of the growing interest in the nutritional value of specialty crops like grapes, the opportunity is there," he said.

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NATION

'Here in the piney woods of central Louisiana ... racism and bigotry are such a part of life that most of the citizens do not even recognize it.'

—Eddie Thompson, a Pentecostal preacher, in an essay he posted on the Internet



Thompson

Racial demons rear heads

After months of unrest between blacks and whites in Louisiana town, some see racism and uneven justice

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

JENA, La. — The trouble in Jena started with the nooses. Then it rumbled along the town's jagged racial fault lines. Finally, it exploded into months of violence between blacks and whites.

Now the 3,000 residents of this small lumber and oil town deep in the heart of central Louisiana are confronting Old South racial demons many thought had long ago been put to rest.

One morning last September, students arrived at the local high school to find three hangman's nooses dangling from a tree in the courtyard.

The tree was on the side of the campus that, by long-standing tradition, had always been claimed by white students, who make up more than 80 percent of the 460 students. But a few of the school's 85 black students had decided to challenge the accepted state of things and asked school administrators if they, too, could sit beneath the tree's cooling shade.

"Sit wherever you want," school officials told them. The next day, the nooses were hanging from the branches.

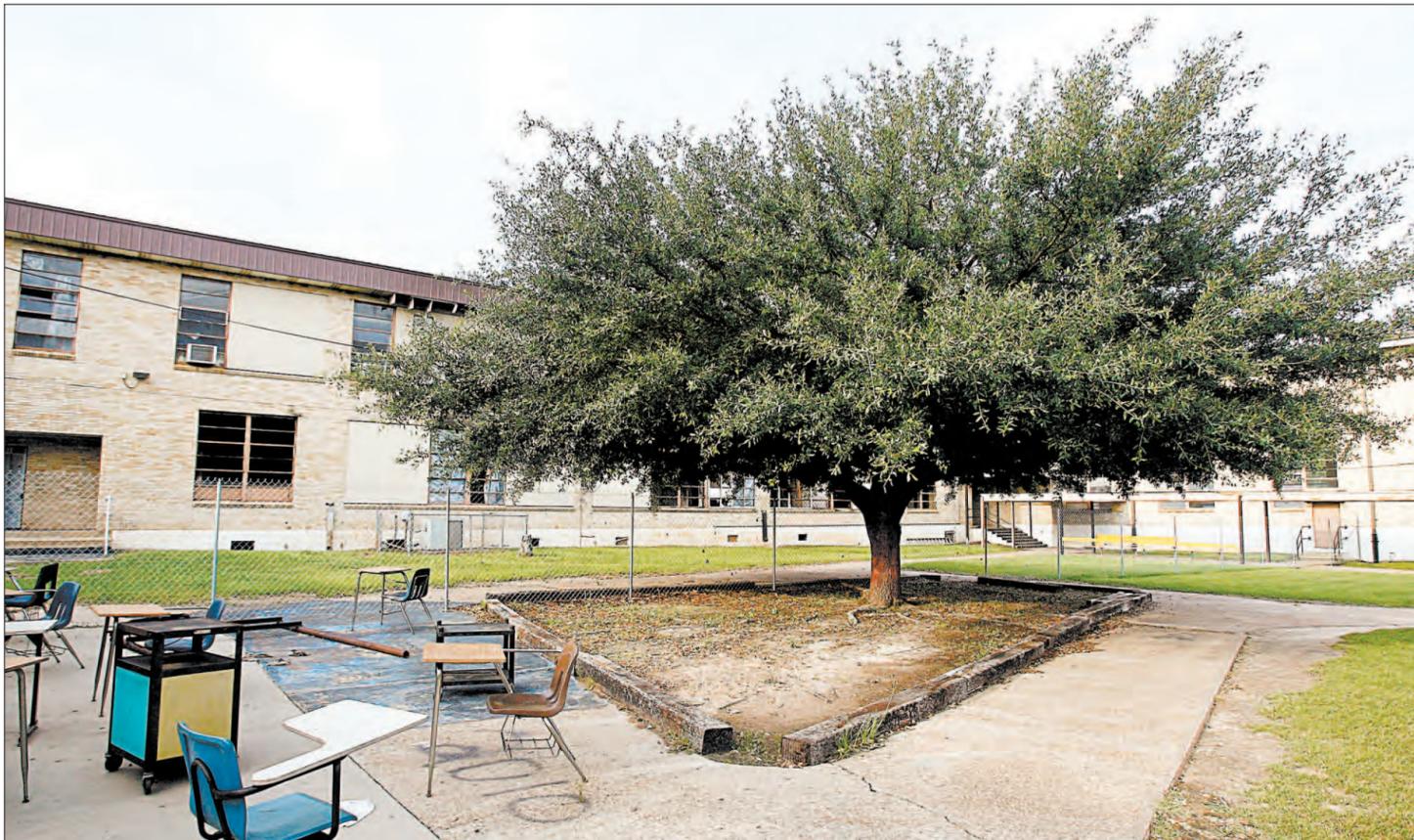
African-American students and their parents were outraged and intimidated by the display, which instantly summoned memories of the mob lynchings that once terrorized blacks across the American South. Three white students were quickly identified as being responsible, and the high school principal recommended that they be expelled.

"Hanging those nooses was a hate crime, plain and simple," said Tracy Bowens, a black mother of two students at the high school who protested the incident at a school board meeting.

But Jena's white school superintendent, Roy Breithaupt, ruled that the nooses were just a youthful stunt and suspended the students for three days, angering blacks who felt harsher punishments were justified.

"Adolescents play pranks," said Breithaupt, the superintendent of the LaSalle Parish school system. "I don't think it was a threat against anybody."

Yet it was after the noose incident that the violent, racially charged events that are still convulsing Jena began.



Photos for the Tribune by Chris Graythen

After some black students in Jena, La., sat under the tree on the "white" side of campus in September, nooses were found hanging from it the next day. That summoned memories of the lynchings that once terrorized blacks across the South. Then, in late November, unknown arsonists set fire to the central wing of the school.



Caseptla Bailey's son was beaten, arrested and charged with attempted murder in separate incidents. She thinks the black kids were singled out.

First, a series of fights between black and white students erupted at the high school over the nooses. Then, in late November, unknown arsonists set fire to the central wing of the school, which still sits in ruins. Off campus, a white youth beat up a black student who showed up at an all-white party. A few days later, another young white man pulled a shotgun on three black

students at a convenience store.

Finally, on Dec. 4, a group of black students at the high school allegedly jumped a white student on his way out of the gym, knocked him unconscious and kicked him after he hit the floor. The victim—allegedly targeted because he was a friend of the students who hung the nooses and had been taunting blacks—was not seriously injured and spent only a few hours in the hospital.

But the LaSalle Parish district attorney, Reed Walters, opted to charge six black students with attempted second-degree murder and other offenses, for which they could face a maximum of 100 years in prison if convicted. All six were expelled from school.

To the defendants, their families and civil rights groups that have examined the events, the attempted murder charges brought by a white prosecutor are excessive and part of a pattern of uneven justice in the town.

The critics note, for example, that the white youth who beat the black student at the party was charged only with simple

battery, while the white man who pulled the shotgun at the convenience store wasn't charged with any crime at all. But the three black youths in that incident were arrested and accused of aggravated battery and theft after they wrestled the weapon from the man—in self-defense, they said.

"There's been obvious racial discrimination in this case," said Joe Cook, executive director of the Louisiana chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, who described Jena as a "racial powder keg" primed to ignite. "It appears the black students were singled out and targeted in this case for some unusually harsh treatment."

That's how the mother of one of the defendants sees things as well.

"They are sending a message to the white kids, 'You have committed this hate crime, you were taunting these black children, and we are going to allow you to continue doing what you are doing,'" said Caseptla Bailey, mother of Robert Bailey Jr.

Bailey, 17, is caught up in several of the Jena incidents, as both a victim and alleged perpe-

trator. He was the black student who was beaten at the party, and he was among the students arrested for allegedly grabbing the shotgun from the man at the convenience store. And he's one of the six students charged with attempted murder for the Dec. 4 attack.

The district attorney declined repeated requests to be interviewed for this story. But other white leaders insist there are no racial tensions in the community, which is 85 percent white and 12 percent black.

"Jena is a place that's moving in the right direction," said Mayor Murphy McMillan. "Race is not a major local issue. It's not a factor in the local people's lives."

Still others, however, acknowledge troubling racial undercurrents in a town where only 16 years ago white voters cast most of their ballots for David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan leader who ran unsuccessfully for Louisiana governor.

"I've lived here most of my life, and the one thing I can state with absolutely no fear of contradiction is that LaSalle Parish is awash in racism — true rac-

ism," a white Pentecostal preacher, Eddie Thompson, wrote in an essay he posted on the Internet. "Here in the piney woods of central Louisiana ... racism and bigotry are such a part of life that most of the citizens do not even recognize it."

The lone black member of the school board agrees.

"There's no doubt about it—whites and blacks are treated differently here," said Melvin Worthington, who was the only school board member to vote against expelling the six black students charged in the beating case. "The white kids should have gotten more punishment for hanging those nooses. If they had, all the stuff that followed could have been avoided."

And the troubles at the high school are not over yet.

On May 10, police arrested Justin Barker, 17, the white victim of the Dec. 4 beating. He was alleged to have a rifle loaded with 13 bullets stashed behind the seat of his pickup truck parked in the school lot. Barker told police he had forgotten it was there and had no intention of using it.

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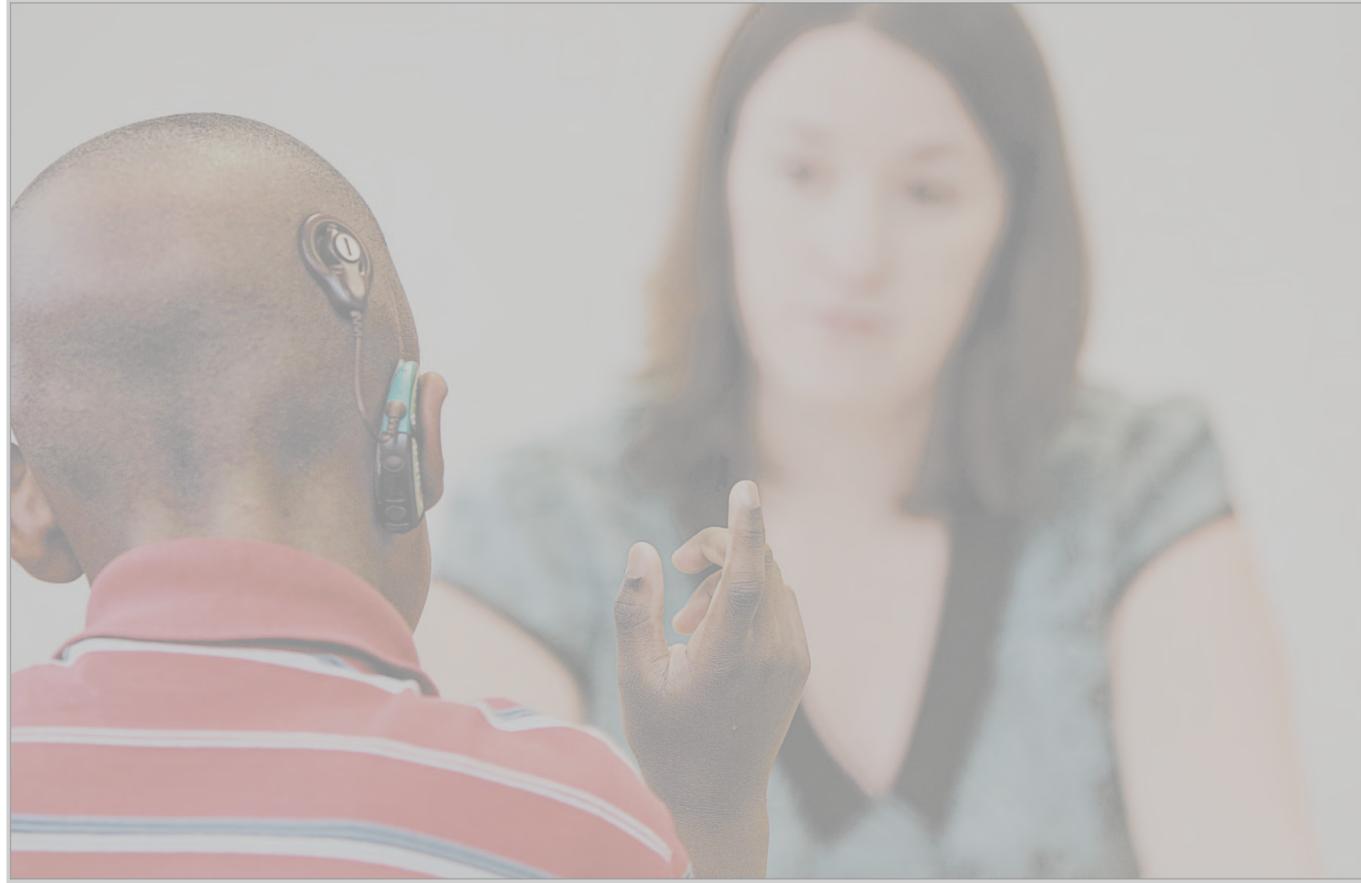


Friday September 21, 2007

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Thanks to technology, and new teaching tools that help students use it, deaf children are excelling in mainstream classrooms

Lending ears to learners



Ahmad Muhammad of Forest Park, who has a cochlear implant, works with teacher Nicke Crissy during kindergarten at Child's Voice in Wood Dale. Tribune photo by Jim Prisching

By Megan Twohey Tribune staff reporter

A beige plastic device the size of a quarter that peeks from his sandy blond hair is the only visible sign Adam Ballent is profoundly deaf. He takes notes as his teachers lecture in class at Naperville North High School. He hollers on the soccer field when his club team scores. He recites the Boy Scout pledge with other members of his troop. "Sometimes, when it's really noisy, I can't hear what people are saying," said Ballent, his words easily understood. "But most of the time, I can."

Ballent never learned sign language. He has no deaf friends. And at age 16, the sophomore is at the forefront of a wave of deaf children with cochlear implants who are entering mainstream classrooms across the country, following a path paved with high hopes and bitter controversy. In 1996, after major advances in the revolutionary technology — which stimulates auditory nerves in the inner ear and costs about \$50,000 — the first "oral deaf education" school in Illinois opened to teach young children with cochlear implants how to speak and hear. Since then, Child's Voice, in Wood Dale, has served more

than 130 children, with many graduates going on to school districts throughout northern Illinois. Several similar programs have sprung up. Meanwhile, the Illinois School for the Deaf, which serves students through high school using sign language as a teaching method, has seen sharp declines in enrollment. So have the public schools' special-education programs for the deaf. "The first waves of deaf children [with implants] are starting to hit mainstream schools," said Barbara

PLEASE SEE DEAF, PAGE 22

State tiff delays tax bills in Cook

Schools gird for shortfalls as governor revises plan

By Mickey Ciokajlo and Whitney Woodward Tribune staff reporters

Cook County property tax bills will be further delayed after Gov. Rod Blagojevich on Thursday overhauled legislation designed to extend relief on rapidly increasing home values. The governor's action would make permanent the so-called 7 percent assessment cap and it also would increase the amount of exemption granted to homeowners.

The move is yet another round in the bitter feud between Blagojevich and Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago), who had won passage of a compromise version of the bill.

The measure now goes back to the House, where Madigan's spokesman Thursday questioned whether the governor had overreached in his authority to alter legislation.

The uncertainty over the measure's future means taxpayers from Lincolnwood to the Loop don't know when they will get their bills, school districts don't know when they'll get their money and homeowners don't know whether their breaks will continue.

Cook County's complicated property tax system nearly guarantees that every year second-installment tax payments will be due later than the Aug. 1 date mandated by state law. Last year payments were due Sept. 1, which was the earliest in more than a decade, and in 2004 they were due Nov. 15, the latest in at least 20 years.

The first installment, which is always simply half of the prior year's amount, is due annually on March 1. But tax in-

WHAT'S NEXT?
OCT. 2: Date lawmakers are due to return to Springfield, when they will decide how to respond to the governor's proposal.

Changing landscape

40,000
Number of children in U.S. who are deaf or hard of hearing

15,000
Number of children who have received cochlear implants

PLEASE SEE TAX, PAGE 19

Mexico nabs fugitive with City Hall ties

By Dan Mihalopoulos, Oscar Avila and Ray Gibson Tribune staff reporters

Marco Morales was locked in a Mexican jail cell Thursday, facing possible extradition to Chicago nearly a decade after he fled the U.S. to avoid testifying about bribery in Mayor Richard Daley's administration.

His arrest renews questions about what impact his return could have on Chicago's political scene, which has been roiled by the aggressive anti-corruption tactics of U.S. Atty. Patrick Fitzgerald.

Morales Fled to Mexico As reported in 1997 Thursday at chicagotribune.com, Mexican authorities took Morales into custody Wednesday night, almost a year after federal prosecutors in Chicago indicted the longtime fugitive on a 13-year-old drug-trafficking crime. Under a 1997 plea bargain deal, that charge was dropped, and Morales agreed to testify against two Daley administra-

PLEASE SEE MORALES, PAGE 20



Protesters poured into Jena, La., from all over the country Thursday for a peaceful six-hour rally. Tribune photo by José M. Osorio

Protesters pack racially tense town

Echoes of civil rights era in defiant march

By Howard Witt Tribune senior correspondent

JENA, La.—Drawn by the disturbing symbol of three lynching nooses dangling from a tree and greeted by Confederate flags displayed along their route, tens of thousands of African-Americans poured into this racially tense Deep South town

Thursday to stage the largest civil rights demonstration in years against what they regard as glaring racial injustices here. Protesters from across the nation cheerfully defied obstacles placed in their way by town officials, such as a line of portable toilets put directly in front of the courthouse steps where the demonstration was held. They celebrated what Rev. Al Sharpton described as the birth of a "new civil rights movement for the 21st Century," driven by black blogs, e-mail and talk ra-

dio more than by a traditional civil rights leader. Many of the participants traveled 20 hours or more by bus from both coasts and even Alaska to arrive at dawn for the peaceful six-hour rally, which featured Sharpton, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Martin Luther King III, radio personality Michael Baisden and dozens of other black leaders and celebrities. "The civil rights movement is finally catching up with Jena,"

PLEASE SEE JENA, PAGE 22

In China, shoppers are becoming savvier

Growing middle class flexing new might, 'voting with its feet'

By Michael Oneal Tribune staff reporter

BEIJING — Deep within the chaotic toy section of this city's vast Dong Jiao Wholesale Market, 31-year-old Wang Ru knelt on one knee to inspect an impossibly cheap mini-car built for toddlers like her 2-year-old son. Wang had seen an almost identical toy at a higher-end retailer, but this was less than a quarter of the price. It didn't take her long to discover why. The car appeared to have low-quality paint — toxic, she feared — and small, removable parts

that could cause her child to choke. Satisfied she wasn't missing anything, Wang moved on to another stall to buy a few pairs of socks. But even those she planned to soak in a special solution to "detoxify" them before putting them on her son. "Things are really cheap here," Wang said of the Dong Jiao market. "But for some things you shouldn't try to save money." As worried as U.S. consumers are about Chinese-made toys, food and medicines, interviews with shoppers on this side of the Pacific show that Chinese consumers have even deeper concerns. Counterfeit products of all kinds are rampant in China

PLEASE SEE CHINA, PAGE 23

INSIDE

- NATION**
Bush vows veto of kids' health bill
Threat reflects stakes as issue resonates in '08 campaigns. **PAGE 3**
- BUSINESS**
Macy's puts toys in play
FAO Schwarz to occupy 4,000 square feet inside State Street flagship.

Weather: Mostly sunny, becoming windy; high 89, low 65
Index, Page 2



Tribune photos by José M. Osorio

Deloris Phillips of Dallas addresses a crowd gathered around the spot where a tree once stood at Jena High School. A year ago, white students hung nooses from the tree's branches.

JENA: 'Our town is not racist,' resident says

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

declared Ella Bell King, 59, of Alexandria, La., who slept overnight in front of the courthouse with relatives. "Something like this should have happened here 40 years ago."

"I have young teenage sons, so this is an injustice that I could really feel," said Carnell Howard, 40, an autoworker from Chicago's Beverly neighborhood who rode 15 hours on a bus with other Chicagoans. "Being here was just something I had to do. I wasn't around for the Martin Luther King era. But this feels like the beginning of the next civil rights movement."

The protesters came to decry the prosecution of the Jena 6—six black high school students who were initially charged with attempted murder for beating a white student last December, even though the student was treated and released at a local



Rev. Al Sharpton walks with Melissa Bell (left), mother of Mychal Bell, one of the Jena 6. Sharpton described the rally as the birth of a "new civil rights movement for the 21st Century."

hospital. The charges were later reduced to aggravated second-degree battery.

Seeking to defy symbolism

The demonstrators came as well to criticize the decision of the local district attorney, Reed Walters, not to press similarly serious charges against white youths who attacked blacks.

And they came to defy the symbolism of Jena's "white tree"—a shade tree at the high school, traditionally reserved for whites, where, as the Tribune first reported last May, all of

Jena's troubles began.

One year ago, after a black student asked an administrator's permission to sit under the tree—and was told he could sit wherever he liked—three white students hung nooses from the tree's branches. The local school superintendent dismissed the incident as a youthful prank and refused to expel the white students involved, outraging blacks. Months of racial unrest followed, culminating in the December beating.

School officials cut down the infamous tree in July, hoping to

eliminate it as a focus of protests. But the demonstrators were undeterred, chanting and marching 12 abreast in a mile-long procession through the streets from the courthouse to the high school courtyard, where they ringed the spot where the tree used to stand.

Louisiana state police estimated the crowd at 15,000 to 20,000, but organizers said they believed there were at least twice that many filling this two-street town of 3,000.

"Everybody should be able to sit under a tree if they want," said 13-year-old Alonte Carpenter, who rode for 11 hours from Nashville with his parents and siblings to attend the march.

"I have growing boys," said his father, Karl Carpenter, 43, an executive with a semiconductor company. "What happened to the Jena 6 could happen to my kids. ... This is an opportunity for our kids to see other people like themselves stand up for what is right."

The demonstrators, nearly all of them African-Americans wearing black T-shirts with slogans like "Enough is enough" and "Free the Jena 6," marched past white residents who glared at them from their porches.

"They have the freedom to march and freedom of speech, but our town is not racist like

this is being depicted," said a white resident who would identify himself only as Jay. "The nooses were just a joke."

No officials of the town, which is 85 percent white, offered any comments about the march. In the past, they have angrily insisted that Jena suffers from no racial tensions.

But some of the demonstrators, eyeing the wall of portable toilets and the town's failure to set out any trash receptacles to accommodate the crowds, sharply disagreed.

"They want to see a mess left so they can complain how we trashed the place," said Earnestine Hodnett, 58, of Virginia Beach, Va. "They want this demonstration to fail."

Bush speaks out

Yet even before the marchers began heading home Thursday evening, there were already signs that the demonstration was having real effects.

President Bush offered his first comment about the Jena case at a news conference, following three of the Democratic presidential contenders—Sen. Barack Obama, Sen. Hillary Clinton and former Sen. John Edwards—who last week questioned justice in the town.

"The events in Louisiana have saddened me," the presi-

IN THE WEB EDITION

For past stories on the Jena 6, go to chicagotribune.com/jena

dent said. "And I understand the emotions. The Justice Department and the FBI are monitoring the situation down there. And all of us in America want there to be, you know, fairness when it comes to justice."

Meanwhile, a Louisiana state appeals court ordered that a bond hearing must be held within 72 hours for Mychal Bell, 17, the only one of the six black students to have been tried so far and the only one still in jail, unable to post a \$90,000 bond.

Last week, the same appeals court vacated Bell's June conviction for aggravated second-degree battery, ruling that Walters had improperly prosecuted him as an adult rather than a juvenile. Walters has vowed to appeal that ruling and has already initiated juvenile proceedings against Bell. The prosecutor also said Wednesday that he would vigorously pursue his cases against the rest of the teenage defendants, insisting that their white victim had been forgotten amid the controversy.

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DEAF: Critics warn implants are not cure-alls

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Sims, who oversees deaf and hard-of-hearing programs for the Illinois State Board of Education.

The shift is occurring across the country, said Thomas Kluwin, director of institutional research at Gallaudet University that serves the deaf in Washington, D.C.

Nearly 40,000 children in the U.S. are deaf or hard of hearing, including close to 3,000 in Illinois, according to a Gallaudet survey. Thirty years ago, 80 percent were in residential, specialized programs for the deaf, while 20 percent attended public school. Today, those numbers have flipped, Kluwin said.

Some 22,000 adults and 15,000 children in the U.S. have received the implants, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

Deafness, in general, has proved to be a major obstacle to academic success. Historically, deaf children on average graduate from high school with a 3rd- or 4th-grade reading level.

Proponents of oral education say the new technology and mainstream classes have significantly reduced learning barriers. But critics say the approach could be harmful to some deaf children.

Some say it's a mistake to bar



Tribune photo by Abel Uribe

Adam Ballent, 16, (center) who wears a cochlear implant to help him hear, talks with teammates Craig Cochran (left) and Matt Pickett during a break in soccer practice in Naperville.

children from learning sign language, a guaranteed method of communication, which they see as the best path to academic success. Others point out that it can be extremely isolating to be the only deaf child in a mainstream setting.

A state task force on deaf education, formed by the Illinois legislature last year, is closely following the oral-deaf experiment.

Adam Ballent had just turned 1-year-old when hospital tests revealed that he is profoundly deaf.

"I'll never forget that night," said his mother, Alice Ballent, as she sat in her Naperville home recalling the 1992 diagno-

sis. "I felt like someone had broken into my house and stolen part of my child away."

Determined to fill in the missing piece, she and her husband, Tom Ballent, decided to have doctors at Children's Memorial Hospital install a cochlear implant in their son's left inner ear.

But afterward, the boy needed a way to learn how to make sense of the sounds hitting his brain.

At the time, there were no schools in Illinois that taught children with cochlear implants how to speak and hear. The closest were in St. Louis.

So in 1996, the Ballents and two other families with deaf

children banded together to establish Child's Voice. It started with one teacher and four students.

Today, its sprawling one-story building in Wood Dale bustles with nearly 80 children ranging in age from several months to 7 years. Half have cochlear implants, half regular hearing aids.

Prohibited from learning sign language, the pupils are submitted to constant auditory training.

It begins with sound recognition. Young children are asked to hold a block, then drop it to the ground every time the teacher makes a sound. From there, it's on to articulating—over and

over and over—the "tick" of a clock, the "moo" of a cow.

On a recent day, a teacher sat at a low table with two 6-year-old boys. She had an array of stickers in her hands. The boys were asked to select one and place it on his lunch box.

"What is this?" the teacher asked.

"It's a sticker," said a boy with shaggy brown hair, an orange T-shirt and a mischievous smile.

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it on my lunch boxch."

After two more tries he nailed it.

"Put it on my lunch box."

A four-year-old state law requiring that all newborns be screened for deafness has resulted in early intervention for more children. It's helped put more children on a path to mainstream schools, experts say.

In the 1970s, dozens of local school districts in Chicago's north and northwest suburbs formed an agency to serve deaf students. It offers sign language instruction in self-contained settings in select schools as well as support services to students attending mainstream classes.

Within the last five years, the number of students in those programs has dropped from 120 to 75, while the number of those in mainstream settings has grown from 160 to 240, said Becki Streit, the agency's executive director.

Similarly, since 1995, the number of students with cochlear implants attending Chicago public schools has increased from 8 to 89, said Eileen Andrews, with the district's office of specialized services.

In Adam Ballent's case, a hearing specialist visits him

once a month to discuss his progress. The teen, who enjoys English and history more than math and science, is part of his high school's enriched language arts program. When asked what is the hardest part about being deaf, he shrugs.

"I really don't know," he said, seemingly bored by the topic.

Three years ago, Child's Voice invited 30 of its graduates ages 6 through 12 who had entered mainstream schools to come back for a day of academic testing. They scored at levels comparable to their hearing peers.

Some schools say that children with cochlear implants are performing notably higher than deaf children who communicate and learn through mostly sign language.

"Their language levels and vocabulary are much higher," said Joann Kort, special services coordinator for the Schaumburg School District. "So are their reading levels."

But not everyone with cochlear implants enjoys such success, experts say.

Some students with implants have failed to graduate from Child's Voice and go on to mainstream schools. Some turn out to have other disabilities, which hinder their progress, said Child's Voice executive director Michele Wilkins. Others, for unknown reasons, cannot translate their implants into successful language skills.

The results of the oral deaf experiment, experts say, won't be known for years, even decades.

For Adam Ballent and his family, that's fine. They're thrilled with the results they are witnessing.

"It's been a miracle," Alice Ballent said.

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House panel demands answers in Jena case

Justice Department considers probe of racial bias allegations

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

WASHINGTON — Under pointed questioning from Democratic House members who decried the lack of federal intervention in the racially charged Jena 6 case, U.S. Justice Department officials revealed Tuesday that they are weighing an investigation into allegations of systemic bias in the administration of justice in the small, mostly white Louisiana town of Jena.

U.S. Atty. Donald Washington also said for the first time that the hanging of nooses from a shade tree in the Jena High School courtyard in September, 2006, by three white students—a warning to stay away from the tree directed at black students that triggered months of interracial fights in the town—constituted a federal hate crime. However, he said federal authorities opted not to prosecute the case because of the ages of the white youths involved.

Jena school officials dismissed the noose incident as a youthful prank and issued brief suspensions to the white students involved, angering black residents of the town.

“Yes, hanging a noose under these circumstances is a hate crime,” Washington, the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, told a House Judiciary Committee hearing convened to examine the Jena case. “If these acts had been committed by others who were not juveniles, this would have been a federal hate crime, and we would have moved forward.”

But during the four-hour hearing, boycotted by most Republican members of the House panel, many African-American committee members said they remained dissatisfied with the reluctance of Justice Department officials to intervene more forcefully in what they regard as the excessive prosecution of six black Jena students for a Dec. 4 attack on a white student.

The white student was knocked unconscious and treated and released at a hospital, but LaSalle Parish District Atty. Reed Walters initially charged the blacks with attempted murder. After outcry about the case, Walters reduced the charges.

But Walters’ refusal to charge other whites in the town who attacked blacks with similar crimes prompted national civil rights leaders, joined by more than 20,000 demonstrators who marched through Jena on Sept. 20, to assert that the town’s justice system was biased.

“Shame on you!” Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas) shouted



AP photos by Susan Walsh

‘Mr. Washington, tell me why you did not intervene. Six broken lives could have been prevented if you had taken action.’

—Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas)



‘I was also offended’ [by the noose incident] ... But at the end of the day, there are only certain things that the United States attorney can do.’

—U.S. Atty. Donald Washington

TRIBUNE UPDATE

at Washington. “Mr. Washington, tell me why you did not intervene. Six broken lives could have been prevented if you had taken action.”

‘Child of the ‘60s’ defends steps

“I was also offended” by the noose incident, Washington replied. “I too am an African-American. I am a child of the ‘60s, of the desegregation era. ... But at the end of the day, there are only certain things that the United States attorney can do.”

Events surrounding the prosecution of the first of the Jena 6 defendants to go to trial, Mychal Bell, 17, have drawn scrutiny from civil rights leaders and members of Congress.

Walters first prosecuted Bell as an adult on aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy charges in June. But a Louisiana appellate court vacated that conviction in September, ruling that Walters and LaSalle Parish District Judge J.P. Mauffray had improperly tried Bell as an adult.

The appellate court then compelled Mauffray to release Bell, who had been jailed for nearly 10 months on the charges, on bail on Sept. 27. But two weeks later, Mauffray sent Bell back to jail, sentencing him to 18 months on four prior juvenile convictions for simple battery and criminal destruction of property.

“As we all know, it is illegal under the guarantees of our Constitution and our laws to have one standard of justice for white citizens and another, harsher one for African-American

citizens,” Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, said in opening the hearing. “We come to this hearing inquiring as to how we can correct this situation in our nation.”

Several representatives and witnesses noted copycat noose incidents that have occurred in New York, Maryland, Louisiana and Illinois in recent weeks and suggested that they were proliferating because of inaction by the Justice Department in Jena.

“What happened in Jena is not isolated,” Charles Ogletree Jr., a Harvard University law professor and civil rights expert, told the committee. “The

fact is there is a cancer in Jena and we tried to treat it with aspirin and good wishes and hope. The reality is that it requires a radical solution.”

A Justice Department official told the hearing that conciliators from the department’s civil rights division had visited Jena in recent months and that officials were considering whether further action is warranted.

“The Department of Justice is aware that there are requests to investigate the judicial system in Jena,” Lisa Krigsten, an official of the civil rights division, told lawmakers. “At this time, the Justice Department is gathering information and review-

ing that information and taking that request very seriously.”

Added Washington: “If we can prove that charging decisions [by Walters] were made in a racially discriminatory manner, that leads to the strong possibility that we can move forward.”

That is what happened in Jena, according to Richard Cohen, president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Did whites get ‘a pass’?

“In Jena, it seems as if black children were hammered and white children were given a pass or a slap on the wrist,” Cohen said at Tuesday’s hearing.

Walters has denied in previ-

ous public statements that race was involved in his prosecution of the Jena 6. Conyers said he had invited Walters to testify but that the district attorney had declined.

But another Jena resident did appear. Rev. Brian Moran, coordinator of the Jena branch of the NAACP, told House members that his town remains bitterly divided across racial lines.

“Throughout Jena’s history, there have always been two systems of justice, one for blacks and one for whites,” Moran said. “That is simply un-American, and we believe it is no longer acceptable.”

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IN THE WEB EDITION



For past stories on the Jena 6, go to chicago-tribune.com/jena

Chicago Tribune

A TRIBUNE PUBLISHING COMPANY 435 N. MICHIGAN AVE, CHICAGO, ILL. 60611

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Oct. 16 Mega Millions jackpot \$24 million		
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Chicago Tribune (USPS 104-000) is published daily (7 days) at Tribune Tower, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611-4041, Chicago Tribune Company, Publisher; periodicals postage paid at Chicago, Ill., and at additional mailing offices.

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Oct. 16 Daily 4	6455	0235
Oct. 16 Fantasy 5	01 04 22 29 37	
Oct. 16 Keno	04 06 21 26 27 28	30 31 32 37 38 39
	40 42 44 47 54 61	62 71 75 80
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NATION

What of the Jena 6 funds?

Questions grow over use of donations made to aid teens' defense

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

HOUSTON—Just weeks after some 20,000 demonstrators protested what they decried as unequal justice aimed at six black teenagers in the Louisiana town of Jena, controversy is growing over the accounting and disbursing of at least \$500,000 donated to pay for the teenagers' legal defense.

Parents of the "Jena 6" teens have refused to publicly account for how they are spending a large portion of the cash, estimated at up to \$250,000, that resides in a bank account they control.

Michael Baisden, a nationally syndicated black radio host who is leading a major fundraising drive on behalf of the Jena 6, has declined to reveal how much he has collected. Attorneys for the first defendant to go to trial, Mychal Bell, say they have yet to receive any money from him.

Meanwhile, photos and videos are circulating across the Internet that raise questions about how the donated money is being spent. One photo shows Robert Bailey, one of the Jena 6 defendants, smiling and posing with \$100 bills stuffed in his mouth. Another shows defendants Carwin Jones and Bryant Purvis modeling like rap stars at the Black Entertainment Television Hip-Hop music awards last month in Atlanta.

The teenagers' parents have strongly denied that they have misused any of the donated money. Bailey's mother, for example, insisted that the \$100 bills shown in the photograph were cash her son had earned as a park maintenance worker.

But civil rights leaders who helped organize support for the youths say they are concerned about the perceptions that are spreading.

"There are definitely questions out there about the money," said Alan Bean, director of a Texas-based group, Friends of Justice, who was the first civil rights activist to investigate the Jena 6 case. "I hate to even address this issue because it inevitably will raise questions as to all of the money that has been raised, and that is going to hurt the defendants."

Only one national civil rights group, Color of Change, has fully disclosed how the \$212,000 it collected for the Jena 6 via a massive Internet campaign has been distributed. The grassroots group, which has nearly 400,000 members, has posted images of canceled checks and other signed documents on its Web site showing that all but \$1,230 was paid out in October in roughly equal amounts to at-



Jena 6 defendants Carwin Jones (left) and Bryant Purvis (right) join host Katt Williams last month at the BET Hip-Hop Awards in Atlanta. Photos and footage of the Jena 6 teens have fueled speculation about how legal defense donations have been disbursed.

'There are definitely questions out there about the money.'

—Alan Bean, director of a Texas-based group, Friends of Justice

'We are trying to clear our good name.'

—Mervyn Marciano, spokesman for Color of Change

torneys for the Jena youths.

Yet that transparency did not halt acrimony over the fundraising from breaking into public view on Baisden's popular radio show last week, when Baisden invited Bell's father, Marcus Jones, to accuse Color of Change founder James Rucker of misapplying the funds.

Jones offered no evidence for his assertion. But Baisden told his listeners that Rucker "sounds shady to me," before promoting his own fundraiser, scheduled for this weekend, which aims to collect at least \$1 million for the Jena 6 and other black defendants nationwide.

On the eve of the Sept. 20 civil rights march, Baisden advertised a book-signing and solicited cash donations for the Jena 6 families at an Alexandria, La., rally, but his business manager, Pamela Exum, declined to specify how much was collected or

how the money was distributed.

Color of Change officials call Baisden's broadcast comments slanderous and say they are contemplating legal action.

"We are trying to clear our good name," said Mervyn Marciano, the group's spokesman. "It's distressing that right now the conversation around the Jena 6 is on a 'Jenagate' that doesn't exist, not the actual issues of how justice is administered in that town."

On Friday, after several prominent African-American bloggers criticized Baisden for his comments, the radio host issued a statement apologizing to Color of Change "for not seeking more reliable sources."

Civil rights groups report that donations to the Jena 6 defendants had slowed to a trickle in recent weeks as the story fell out of the headlines.

A spokesman for the NAACP, which collected nearly \$20,000, including a \$10,000 check from rock star David Bowie, said it is winding down its Jena 6 fund and preparing to distribute the remaining cash to the attorneys for the six youths after deducting some of its expenses.

The case, now a national civil rights touchstone, grew out of a September 2006 incident at the high school in Jena when three white students hung nooses from a tree in the school's courtyard in a warning directed at black students not to try to sit in its shade. School officials dis-

IN THE WEB EDITION

To read earlier coverage of the Jena 6, go to tribune.com/jena

missed the nooses as a prank, angering black students and their families who regarded the incident as a hate crime.

A series of fights between black and white youths ensued, culminating in a Dec. 4 attack in which the six black students are alleged to have beaten a white student, knocking him briefly unconscious. Although the white student was not hospitalized, the prosecutor initially charged the six teenagers with attempted murder, while declining to charge white youths who had earlier attacked blacks with similarly serious crimes.

The prosecutor, Reed Walters, later reduced the charges against the black teenagers to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy. But civil rights groups have denounced the prosecutions as excessive and say they reflect racial injustice in the mostly white town.

Exactly how much money has been collected for the Jena 6 defendants is impossible to know, because many donors did not go through Color of Change, the

NAACP or other mainstream groups and instead contributed directly to the defendants' families. Many Internet operators raised money by selling T-shirts or otherwise invoking the Jena 6 cause, but much of that money disappeared without a trace.

Tensions over the money have begun to surface among the Jena 6 families, most of whom are impoverished. Marcus Jones broke with the other families, for example, in criticizing Color of Change.

The largest remaining Jena 6 account, said by some activists close to the families to contain up to \$250,000, is under the control of Tina Jones, mother of defendant Purvis.

Jones said her attorney had advised her not to reveal how much was in the account or how it had been disbursed so far. But she said the families recently agreed to transfer the funds into a trust account under the control of an outside trustee, to ensure the money was tracked and distributed properly.

"I think there are a lot of organizations out there collecting money on behalf of the Jena 6 that we didn't give authorization for," Jones said. "So when we're called and asked, 'Did you receive this money?' and we know nothing about it, then it becomes a problem. The finger is being pointed at us. We're not criticizing anybody. We're just trying to get a handle on it."

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Stagehand strike means lights out on Broadway

More than 2 dozen NYC shows affected

By Michael Kuchwara
Associated Press

NEW YORK—From "Wicked" to "The Phantom of the Opera," from "Mamma Mia!" to "Rent," most shows did not go on as Broadway stagehands walked off the job, shutting down more than two dozen plays and musicals.

It was a dramatic, uncertain day in the Times Square area for disappointed theater-goers, who mingled on the streets Saturday while striking Local 1 stagehands picketed in an orderly fashion behind barricades. The union had no official comment on the walkout.

No new negotiations have been scheduled between Local 1 and the League of American Theatres and Producers, so the outlook for a quick settlement looks murky.

The two sides have been in contentious negotiations for more than three months. Much of their disagreement involves work rules and staffing requirements, particularly rules governing the expensive process of setting up a show. The producers want more flexibility in hiring; the stagehands don't want to give up benefits without something in return.

"We must remain committed to achieving a fair contract," said Charlotte St. Martin, executive director of the league. "Our goal is simple: to pay for workers we need and for work that is actually performed."

City officials said Saturday that it was too early to estimate the economic impact of the strike.

The work stoppage first affected "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical," a holiday attraction for families that had 11 a.m. matinee tickets.

School counselor Vicki Michel, with teacher husband Pat, came to New York from their home in Puyallup, Wash., for a weekend of Broadway shows. The three shows they intended to see were all canceled: "Grinch," "Hairspray" and "Mamma Mia!" They managed to nab tickets to "Young Frankenstein" and the "Radio City Christmas Spectacular," and were headed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Saturday instead of the "Grinch."

Eight Broadway shows are still performing because they have separate Local 1 contracts. Besides "Young Frankenstein," they are "Spelling Bee," "Mary Poppins," "Xanadu," "Mauritius," "Pygmalion," "The Ritz" and "Cymbeline."

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