Hastings impeachment trial approved

WASHINGTON — The Senate voted overwhelmingly Thursday to order a trial of federal Judge Alcee Hastings on impeachment charges that he sold the honor of his office in a bribery and conspiracy case.

Hasting, a U.S. district judge from Miami, appealed to the Senate in an open session Wednesday to dismiss the articles of impeachment based on the findings of a jury that acquitted him of the charges in 1983.

Hastings said the Senate should dismiss the charges on the basis of the Constitution's protection against double jeopardy and fundamental fairness.

The Senate discussed the motions for dismissal in a closed session Thursday, and then voted in public to reject the request and order a trial.

It voted 92-1 to reject the motion to dismiss 15 articles of impeachment alleging Hastings conspired to obtain a bribe. Only Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, D.-Ohio, voted with Hastings.

The Senate then voted 93-0 to reject Hasting's motion to dismiss an article of impeachment that he undermined confidence in the judiciary and betrayed the trust of the people by his actions.

Hastings, 52, a judge in the Southern District of Florida, did not contest a trial on a 17th charge, that he improperly disclosed confidential information about a 1985 wiretap over which he presided. Hastings said legitimate concerns had been raised about his action.

The House voted for the articles of impeachment last year, 413-3.

The Senate leadership sent the charges to 12 senators, who will act as the jury in the impeachment trial. The senators will hear the evidence and make a recommendation to the full Senate.

If he is impeached, Hastings will be ousted from his lifetime position with an annual salary of $89,500.

At his 1983 trial, Hastings was acquitted of charges he conspired with a lawyer to solicit a $150,000 bribe from two convicted racketeers who were seeking to reduce their prison sentences to probation. The lawyer was convicted of the charge in a separate trial.

A federal judiciary committee later investigated the trial, ruled that Hastings lied and conspired in winning the innocent verdict, and sent the matter to Congress for the impeachment process.

WASHINGTON—Federal Judge Alcee Hastings before the Senate impeachment proceedings. The photo was taken from the Senate closed-circuit television.

Keeping families together

By Sharon A. Morgan

Twenty-six years ago, my family held a vigil into the wee hours of the morning. We wept. We laughed. We caught up on old family news with relatives we hadn't seen in years.

We hugged the babies, kissed the cousins and recounted our personal triumphs and defeats.

The occasion was the death of my grandmother. Earlier in the day, all of us had attended her funeral.

Immediately after, we repaired back to the family homestead to reminisce. That was the only kind of reunion my family knew.

We only got together when somebody died. Finally, my mother wondered "Why?" Thus began an effort to bring the clan together in happier times — for a reunion.

Family reunions have a long and noble tradition in the black community.

Just ask Rohulamin Quander, Washington, D.C. attorney. He heads a family organization that has hosted reunions for the last 60 years — since 1929. The Quanders are the oldest documented black family in America.

Their 1,200 members have an ancestry that goes back ten generations, emerging out of Africa's Gold Coast in Ghana.

You could also talk to the Martin clan. They are said to be the largest black family in America. Hailing from South Carolina, they arrived in America in 1764 on a slave ship.

Today, they are 1,500 strong and growing. When they organized their first family reunion in 1966, only 30 people gathered in Hampton, Virginia.

By 1982, over one thousand relatives made their way to Detroit.

Then, of course, there was the historic event organized in 1986 by Dorothy Spruill Redford which brought together the descendants of both her family and their slavemasters at Somerset Place in North Carolina.

After reading Alex Haley's **Roots**, Redford set off on a ten-year journey of discovery to trace her own beginnings.

The fruit of her efforts was a reunion attended by 2,000 people and a 300 page limited edition book of family history that reads like a juicy novel.

You might want to enter the Kool-Aid "Family Reunion Sweetstakes." The grand prize is $25,000 worth of travel and hotel accommodations for your next family reunion. Entry forms will appear in the AFRO along with money saving coupons, beginning this month.

Alpha's acquire cable outlet

The Department of Justice has announced an agreement between the Howard Cable Television Associates, Inc. (HCTA) and the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity's Columbia, Md. Chapter to restore WHMM-TV Howard University Television to the cable system. The mediation agreement was reached with the assistance of Community Relations Service (CRS) mediator Henry C. Mitchum from CRS's Philadelphia Regional Office.

Under the agreement signed March 2, HCTA will return WHMM to its cable television system and place WHMM on cable channel 32 on April 1.

In addition, HCTA will relocate Financial News Network/Black Entertainment television (FNN/BET) from channel 32 to channel 21 with each service maintaining its current hours. HCTA will continue to evaluate BET's products; if it is later determined that BET hours can be expanded to seven days a week and 24 hours daily programming, those changes will be made at an appropriate time.

Effective with the signing of the agreement, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity announced cancellation of a planned boycott of cable television services in Howard County.

In signing the agreement, both parties agreed to resolve any future differences through mediation conducted by the Community Relations Service.

Principal Clark going on leave

PATERSON, N.J. — Joe Clark, the New Jersey high school principal who carried a baseball bat and bullhorn and gained fame as the subject of the hit film, "Lean on Me," said he will take a leave of absence and is considering working for President Bush.

"The Bush administration has been in contact with me through drug czar William Bennett and we are in preliminary discussions over a position in Washington," Clark said through his personal manager, Vincent Fusco.

Clark said he would take a sabbatical when school ends in June.

"I could come back after the year respite, but I would say it's unlikely. I doubt I'll ever come back. My soul is tired and fatigued from fighting an educational system that is rotten to the core," the controversial educator said.

The Eastside High School principal's announcement came a day after he finished serving a five-day suspension that was ordered after students at a school assembly performed an act in which a scantily clad female dancer stripped three male dancers down to their G-strings.

Clark, who was in Los Angeles promoting the film "Lean on Me" on the day of the assembly last month, claimed he knew nothing about the steamy performance. Nonetheless, district Superintendent Frank Napier suspended Clark last week.

That action failed to satisfy city officials, who have been clamoring to get the principal fired. Last week, three members of the Paterson School Board called for Clark's resignation and the Paterson City Council voted 5-4 to ask the Board of Education to fire him.

Clark's boot-camp tactics won both praise and criticism alike from parents, politicians and fellow educators. But despite his innovative approach to discipline, Clark's students' performance scores still rank among the lowest in the state.

The 50-year-old educator said he made his decision after consulting with his doctor and family.

"My blood pressure is up and my doctor says I'm headed for an early grave if I don't slow down," Clark told New York's Daily News.

Joe Clark

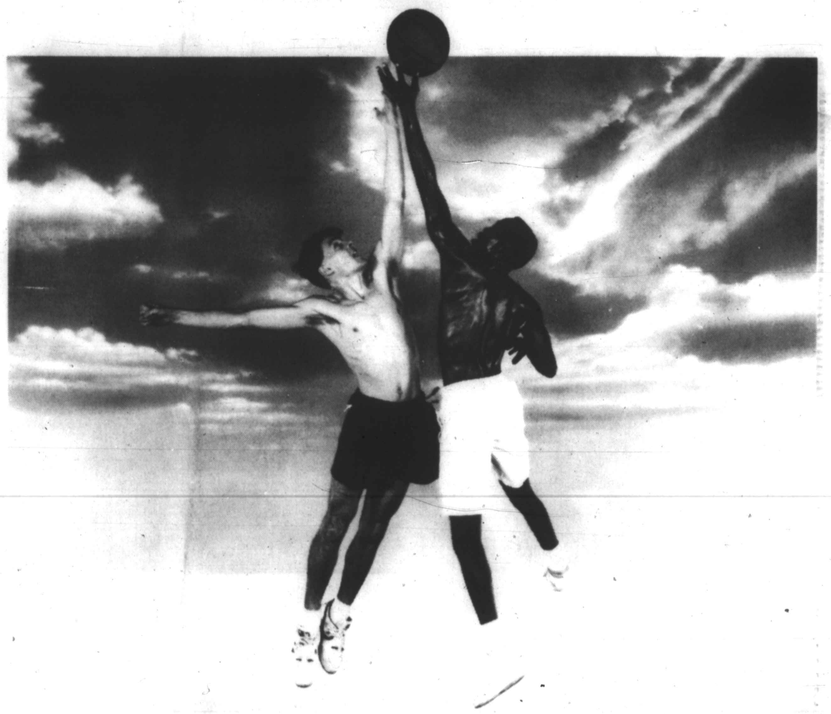
His wife, Hazel, and their three children have urged him to quit.

"They see me coming home angry every day from fighting a bureaucracy that doesn't care about educating minority youth," Clark said. "It doesn't make for great family relations."

Clark said his future plans include developing videos to instruct others in his "no-nonsense" approach to education. He said he also plans to earn money on the lecture circuit.

Clark added that he plans to promote his new book, "Laying Down the Law," which was expected to hit the book stores in May.

Some changes are made one-on-one.



Competing against each other in a basketball game can teach kids a lot of respect for the other guy's ability. And sometimes the changing of a whole society begins as simply as that. The exchange of an idea between a student and teacher. The common concerns of neighbors.

At the Adolph Coors Company, brewer of Coors, Coors Light and Coors Extra Gold,* we're encouraging positive change through our support of community events, education, athletics and cultural activities. We believe the more people get together, the better things get.

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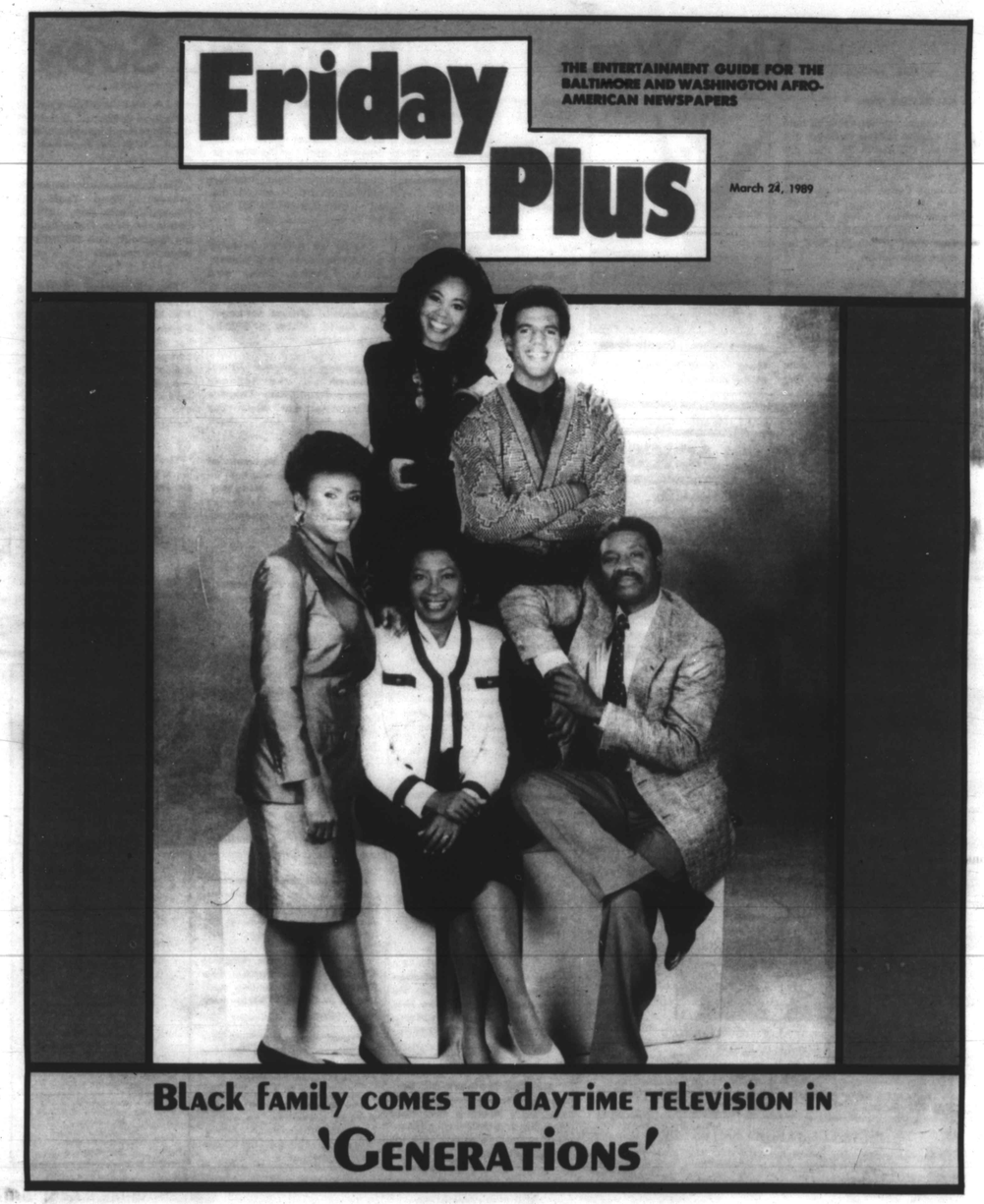
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