International Page

Senegal airlifts refugees

DAKAR, Senegal — Authorities banned May Day demonstrations and airlifted tens of thousands of Mauritanian refugees out of Senegal Monday in a bid to end ethnic unrest that has left scores dead in both countries.

Soldiers riding in armored cars patrolled Dakar and police reported only isolated skirmishes after three days of riots sparked by reports that hundreds of Senegalese were hacked or beaten to death in neighboring Mauritania.

Five transport planes sent by French President Francois Mitterrand made about 100 flights to ferry an estimated 20,000 terrified Mauritanian refugees back to their capital of Nouakchott and bring home hundreds of scared Senegalese.

Government officials said the airlift was virtually complete by Monday afternoon. Authorities banned May Day marches and rallies in Dakar as an additional precaution against further violence.

The unrest was ignited three weeks ago by a series of skirmishes over the rights of Moorish nomads to camel grazing land on the border between predominantly black Senegal and its largely Arab and Berber neighbor to the north in west Africa.

Thousands of Senegalese rampaged Friday and Saturday after Senegalese returning from Mauritania reported their countrymen were being killed in the Mauritanian capital.

Witnesses said 50 Mauritanians and about 150 Senegalese were killed in the rampages in Nouakchott.

Many of the victims in Dakar were lynched or stoned to death in the downtown residential neighborhood of Plateau. One witness said Mauritanian men were castrated. Official sources said 2,500 people were arrested in Dakar.

About 20,000 Mauritanians gathered at the International Trade Fair building, about midway between downtown Dakar and the airport, and were taken in military trucks to the airport Sunday.

The French planes were also being used to fly an estimated 7,000 Senegalese from Nouakchott, where many had sought refuge in the Koweiti mosque.

The airlift operation began one day after President Abdou Diouf appealed for calm and an end to the anti-Mauritanian "vendetta" in a national television and radio address Saturday night.

Rioting continued Sunday, despite Diouf's appeal, and some rioters turned their wrath on Senegalese who had hidden Mauritanians in their homes during the worst of the violence Friday and Saturday.

SENEGAL-MAURITANIA: Daker—Mauritanian refugees are ready to board a Moroccan C130 military aircraft as Senegalese refugees in the background disembark at Dakar Airport. Moroccan and French aircraft are flying between Mauritania and Senegal in a continuous airlift to evacuate refugees following the riots in both countries.

Soldiers fired tear gas into crowds downtown and some of the rioters piled rocks onto roads to block military access to the downtown area.

In his speech, Diouf referred harshly to the violence in Mauritania, saying he could not imagine "such inhuman and degrading treatment." He said May 3 would be a day of national mourning "for all of our dead."

"I understand the pain and anger felt by the Senegalese people," Diouf said.

70 still missing in mine collapse

NAIROBI, Kenya (UPI) — Thirty-one bodies have been recovered and a survivor said about 70 more people were missing in the collapse of a rain-weakened, illegal gold mine in Burundi's northeastern Muyinga district, the official Burundi News Agency reported Thursday.

"The rescuers are working around the clock to dig out bodies of other prospectors covered in the mass of earth," state-run Radio Burundi said in a separate report.

"This is the worst tragedy to happen in Burundi's mining history."

A reporter who visited the scene told United Press International that rescue crews had found four people alive and recovered another 31 bodies from the abandoned mine, which collapsed Sunday in a mudslide caused by heavy rains. Twenty of the bodies have been identified.

Three of the survivors ran away to escape arrest but the remaining survivor said there were about 100 people in the mine when it collapsed, reporter Salvator Mvuyekure of Radio Burundi said.

He said the survivor told him the miners had been seeking shelter from the rain when they saw rocks starting to fall and ran into another part of the mine, but were unable to escape when the roof fell in on them.

Local authorities said they could not yet tell how many people died in the collapse but they were officially estimating the toll at between 30 and 50 people.

Most of the victims had come in a group from neighboring Kayanza province and had been digging without permits for three months in the government-controlled area where private mining is prohibited, the news agency said.

Muyinga Governor Douglas Bayaga described the tragedy as "horrifying," according to the radio report monitored in Nairobi.

The radio said rescuers were forced to work with hoes and spades to scoop mud from the mine because the ground had become too soft to permit the use of modern earth-moving equipment.

Bayaga has appealed for medicine for the rescueworkers who have been overcome by the stench of the decaying bodies, the report said. He was quoted as saying that many of the bodies appeared to have been crushed by heavy rocks.

Mvuyekure said there are a number of abandoned government gold mines in the area because of the lack of commercial value and the danger of mining in the region's soft earth.

The victims were working in one such mine and had dug small side passages where they would take shelter whenever it rained, the radio said. The governor was quoted saying some of the bodies were found in holes up to 25 feet deep.

Mvuyekure said authorities told him they had already arrested several people in the nearby region of Butihinda who bought gold from the illegal prospectors. It was believed only small amounts of gold had been found.

Bayaga said security forces patrolling the area made regular arrests of illegal prospectors but had apparently failed to discover the people involved in the tragedy.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT

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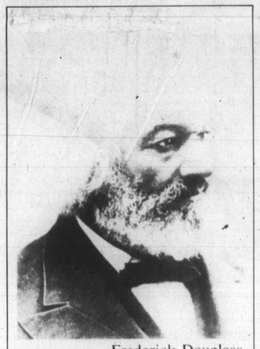

Frederick Douglass

Langston Hughes

Saluting The Black Press

Guardians Of Our Birthright

When the U.S. Constitution was first written, our founding fathers believed that freedom of the press was so important that it was written and guaranteed in the very first article in the Bill of Rights.

From the founding in 1847 of The North Star newspaper by Frederick Douglass to the writings of James Baldwin, newspaper reporters, authors, poets and playwrights have protected, recorded and taught black history to each successive generation.

Freedom cannot function without the free expression and communication of ideas. We salute the men and women of the Black Press and their noble profession. Perhaps Langston Hughes said it best . . .

"There's a dream in this land with its back against the wall. To save the dream for one, it must be saved for all."

Langston Hughes

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King Holiday Commission receives $300,000 from Congress

By Olive Vassell and Hamil Harris
AFRO Staff Writers

The trouble-plagued Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission will now receive federal funding for the first time since its creation, but in awarding monies for King's birthday, a group a conservative Senators has actually limited the role of the King Commission.

The legislation, which calls for the King Commission to receive $300,000 annually for the next five years, was passed in the Senate, partly because of the efforts of conservative Democratic Senators Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Charles Robb (D-Va.).

But these Senators, in a compromise agreement with Senator Jesse Helms, put in a resolution that the King Commission could not take part in any type of protest or act of civil disobedience, something that was a vital part of Martin Luther Kings legacy.

Helms had tried to block the funding Bill because, "never before — not for George Washington, not for Abraham Lincoln, not for anybody — for who there is a federal holiday, is there a federal expenditure."

But Senator Nunn, lead a rare attack from Southern Senators against their own to say, "the federal money was needed to help dramatize King's birthday and to make known to younger Americans the slain civil rights leader legacy."

As a result, the body voted to reject two amendments to a Senate bill, by Helms. The first which would have cut federal funds to the Commission was defeated 82-11 and the second — which would have reduced the organization's extension to two years — was rejected in a 92-6 vote.

It was apparent that the King Commission has gotten an early start on being non political, as they refused to comment on their much-needed financial bailout.

The Commission was created by Congress in 1983. Although the creation of the bill was a lifetime victory for black America, the Republican controlled Senate created the stipulation which nearly guaranteed its eventual failure.

Senator Bob Dole (R-Ka) was the floor manager of the King Holiday Bill when it passed the Senate. To avoid a floor fight with conservative North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, Dole allowed a Senate Resolution to pass which stipulated that no funds would be provided for the King Holiday.

The business community had no commercial or retail connection for the holiday as in the case of a George Washington birthday sale so the holiday suffered from a lack of publicity.

The Martin Luther King Holiday Commission had many prominent names in the black community, but these people did not raise any money either.

It was also common knowledge that Coretta Scott King herself was not raising money because she was engulfed in trying to raise a multi-million dollar endowment for the MLK Center for Non-Violent Social Change.

Ironically, the largest fund raiser for the holiday was Senator Dole whom sources say literally financed the holiday out of his back pocket.

This also changed when Dole sought the Republican nomination for President in 1988 and needed to raise money for himself.

Housing and Urban Development Secretary Samuel Pierce provided space for the King Commission in the HUD building, but again the only money Commission Executive Director Lloyd Davis had was from private donations.

The money appropriated by the Senate faces little opposition in the House and is expected to be signed by President George Bush.

But this money can only help the commission for four years as Senator Nunn said now, "The Commission has had only four short years in which to institutionalize the federal holiday honoring Dr. King."

Collins cites Smithsonian hiring bias

The Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum, has been told by Rep. Cardiss Collins (D-IL) that it is time to clean up its act, following a report that the institution has a dismal record of hiring blacks and other minorities at senior level management, curator and research positions.

"The Smithsonian's Equal Opportunity Reports paint a dismal picture, with the vast bastion of minorities trapped in positions that have the least amount of security, the lowest amount of pay and limited opportunities for advancement."

In addition, she said, minorities are virtually excluded from many of the Smithsonian committees and councils.

Collins, who chairs the House Government Activities and Transportation Subcommittee of the Government Operations Committee, was joined in admonishing Robert McCormick Adams, Smithsonian secretary who testified before her panel, by House Government Operations Chairman John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich).

Adams admitted the Smithsonian "has been slow to address itself fully and squarely to the universality of the mandate for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge", but he "blamed most of this on 'the low turnover' of the organization's personnel," and by "the complexities and delays inherent in the federal personnel system."

The Smithsonian has a total of 6,176 employees; of that 1,381 are in the senior level, professional and administrative personnel categories, Adams testified. Of the 1,381 professionals, 434, or 31 percent are women; 178 or 13 percent are minorities (92 minority women but only 86 minority men.)

Not much, he said, but better than when he became secretary two years ago. "I have been determined to push forward the commitment of the Institution's Board of Regents to increase both the quality and diversity of the professional staff," he said.

But Mrs. Collins asserted: "Even though the Smithsonian has recently hired a number of minorities for middle management positions the fact remains that (it) employs no minority assistant secretaries, and there are only six minorities among the heads of more than 80 major divisions and offices at the Institution. These are key positions that shape the complexion of the Smithsonian and determine or heavily influence where the Institution's $300 million in resources will be allocated." About 70 percent of the Smithsonian's budget come from federal dollars.

The Smithsonian Institution was created by an Act of Congress in 1846 to carry out the terms of the will of James Smithson of England, who bequeathed his entire estate in 1826 to the U.S. "to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men."

But the Smithsonian's equal opportunity practices short circuits the "diffusion of knowledge" by restricting minorities in policy making areas where persons sensitive to cultural diversity could impact positively on research projects and exhibitions, Collins said.

NAFEO cites Dr. Bridges

Eloise Avonne Bridges, Ph.D., ACSW, was one of 300 of the nearly one-million graduates of historically black colleges and universities honored recently by the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO).

NAFEO honored Dr. Bridges during their 14th National Conference at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Bridges was nominated by her alma mater, Langston University, Langston, Okla.

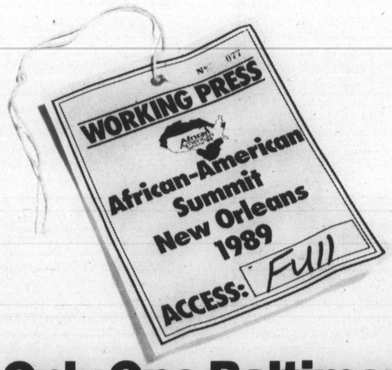
Joining in the festivities were her husband, architect Leon Bridges, two sons, Leon, Jr. and Elliott; a daughter, Vanessa; an aunt Lillian Elliott of Washington, D.C., and a sister and brother-in-law, Drs. John and Dorista Goldsbery of Worcestor, Mass.

Dr. Bridges is an associate professor/director, of the social work program, Coppin State College, and adjunct associate professor at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

She received her B.S. in Sociology, summa cum laude from Langston University, her Master of Social Work from Boston University and her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Maryland.

Although she has published extensively and is highly respected by her peers for her academic and professional acumen, Mrs. Bridges (her preferred title) is most proud of her husband and four children, her church membership at Douglas Memorial Community Church and her community activities.

These activities include Baltimore City Foster Care Review Board, Baltimore City Public School's Advisory Committee on Ethics, Baltimore Urban League Black Needs Assessment Roundtable Consultant, Citizen's Advisory Board for Cylburn Children's Home, Maryland Foster Care Review Board, Marylnd Association for Children with learning Disabilities, Florence Crittenton Home for Girls and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.



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