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Burris apologizes for using race reference to opponents

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — Roland Burris apologized Thursday for calling his three Democratic opponents in the race for governor "non-qualified white boys" and said his emotional outburst was prompted by what he considered unusual treatment as the only black candidate.

"I don't have a racist or sexist bone in my body," the former Illinois attorney general said at a candidates forum in Chicago.

But Burris added that critics in the news media had unfairly suggested he should get out of the race because of the large number of minority candidates on the Democratic ticket, even though he has had a good record over two decades in Springfield.

"The color of my skin — God gave me this," he said. "I had absolutely nothing to do with it."

Burris and all three other candidates said race should have no place in the campaign leading up to the March 17 Democratic primary for governor. But it erupted back into the forum when ex-Justice Department official John Schmitt said U.S. Rep. Glenn Poshard, D-Ill., had a weak record on gun

control. Poshard retorted that he has been endorsed by the Chicago chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police, one of the strongest supporters of gun control in the state.

"The TOP only endorsed you because you were prepared to stand up with them and say that you opposed Mayor (Richard M.) Daley's affirmative action plan," Schmitt shot back.

Poshard responded by saying he got the endorsement "because of my record on law enforcement."

The "white boys" comment brought to the surface months of awkward speculation among Illinois politicians on the potential impact on the Democratic Party if Burris wins the nomination and runs on a ticket headed by Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun, D-Ill., the first black woman to sit in the U.S. Senate.

Among the gubernatorial candidates, Poshard sought to laugh off Burris' remark as soon as it became public on Wednesday. Poshard cracked that after some names he had called following politically difficult votes the remark was "at most a compliment."

St. Louis woman offers reflections as a living example of black history

Grace Hill observance promotes cultural diversity

BY YVONNE SAMUEL
OF THE POST-DISPATCH

Margaret McClellon, 64, says Black History Month helps her to reflect on her life as a sharecropper's daughter.

When she was a young girl, McClellon, now of St. Louis, says she rose at 3 a.m. every day to pick cotton as part of her daily chores in New Madrid. When she finished, she walked more than two miles to school.

Now, McClellon said, it is liberating to tell her story. "I'm proud of my roots, and I won't ever forget where I came from," she said.

McClellon was one of a standing-room-only crowd that participated in a Black History Month celebration Thursday at the Murphy Blair Senior Center, 1220 Warren Street. The event was sponsored by Grace Hill Neighborhood

Services and AmeriCorps. Melrose Cornish, coordinator of special projects, said, "This is one of our many projects aimed at promoting cultural diversity. St. Louis is like a melting pot, and this is one way to express the culture and diversity within the Grace Hill community."

After a stirring rendition of "We've Come This Far By Faith," the audience was fired up for the guest lecturer, Alice Windom of the Public Policy Research Center of the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

Wearing a bright kente cloth head wrap, Windom started her lecture with a lesson on slavery. "When slaves came to America, they brought their spirits, their culture and their religious understandings with them," she said.

And they brought their music. One instrument brought to America from the slaves was the banjo, she said.

"It was first noted in the 1700s when Europeans described the instrument during their visit to the South," she said.

Africans constructed their instruments from gourds, wood and tanned skins, using hemp or gut for strings. This led to the emergence of the modern banjo in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Until the 1800s, the banjo was exclusively a black instrument played by families and gatherings. The instrument became famous because of grotesque representations of African-Americans by white performers in minstrel shows.

As part of her history lesson, Windom showed a slide of a popular piece of art titled "Banjo Lesson" by artist Henry Tanner. The art work shows an elderly man teaching a young boy banjo lessons.

She then read a poem titled "The Banjo Song" by Paul Lawrence Dunbar published in 1895. She noted that the festive music of the banjo was associated with African dance.

Traditionally, older adults danced with the younger children, Windom said. "In European countries, older adults watched as the young danced, but not Africans."

Windom's half-hour presentation

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Alice Windom spoke Thursday at the Murphy Blair Senior Center about African-American music and history.

was followed by a "mini food" feast: greens, corn, chicken, lamb, okra, corn bread, sweet potato pie and apple cobbler.

Rodney Wead, president and chief executive officer of Grace Hill, said, "We plan to eat with our fingers like the Africans out of salute to our ancestors."

Crash

Officer gets \$500 fine in fatal car crash in Alton

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car's lights and siren.

He said he used the crash as a warning when he taught at the police academy and hoped it would help new officers avoid such crashes.

Davis resigned from the department in Alton and went to work in Maryville after the crash. The firm family's wrongful-death suit against Davis and the city of Alton is awaiting trial in federal court in East St. Louis.

Special Prosecutor Joseph Brown said he decided that the misdemeanor or traffic charge was appropriate because Davis had no intent to drive recklessly or dangerously when he drove his police car through a red light at 65 to 72 m.p.h. on a rainy midnight. Brown said Davis did not know the call for assistance to officers searching for a stolen car had

been canceled minutes before. Stack convicted Davis on Thursday after hearing the evidence without a jury under an agreement between Brown and Davis' attorney William S. Deaty. Stack said he did not disagree with Brown's decision on the charge but acknowledged that the \$500 fine, the maximum sentence, seemed inadequate in a fatal crash.

Davis' car struck Flinn's car broadside. Flinn suffered head injuries when she was thrown through her car's glass T-top and landed 90 feet away. Police experts estimate that Flinn was driving 23 or 24 mph with a green light on Alby Street when Davis drove through the red light on Homer Adams Parkway with his lights and siren on.

Brown said Davis had violated the state law that requires officers to slow down and drive through a red light only if it is safe.

Brown was appointed prosecutor after State's Attorney William H. Haine stepped down because of his part-time prosecution. Keith Jones, filed the suit against Davis for Flinn's family.

Lyons

Baptist leader is free on bail, will address meeting

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support of Western Baptist Bible College in central Kansas City. The Rev. Manuel Dillingham, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church of Kansas City, is the college president and will also talk. The school, owned by the Missionary Baptist State Convention of Missouri, was nearly closed after it lost its accreditation and is celebrating its growth to 100 students, both lay students and seminary students.

The 112-year-old college is the oldest college west of the Mississippi founded exclusively by African-Americans. Jones said Saturday's event is also sponsored by the Missionary Baptist State Convention of Missouri and Mount Zion. About 750 seats are available, Jones said. The event is open to the public.

Lyons was released from the Pottawattami County Jail on Wednesday on \$100,000 bail. Authorities charged him with one count of violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization Act, a first-degree felony, and two counts of grand theft. Bernard Edwards, a convicted embezzler and former employee of the National Baptist Convention, is named as a co-defendant in the racketeering count. They have been under investigation since July. No date has been set for trial.

Lyons has been accused of raising money for historically black colleges from corporations and then not turning all the funds over to them. One of the charges against the minister revolves around a fund drive he started in St. Louis at America's Center. During the denomination's 1996 annual congress there, he kicked off a campaign to raise money for burned churches.

Prosecutors in Florida say Lyons stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from the convention and defrauded the Anti-Defamation League of nearly \$250,000. It had donated to rebuild churches in the South that had been burned last year.

Lyons opened a secret bank account and diverted church funds to himself and two mistresses, according to a criminal complaint filed in Pottawattami County. It also alleged that Lyons inflated church membership by as much as 8 million people to increase donations.

Saturday night, Lyons may echo remarks he made to his Florida congregation Wednesday night and at a Nashville press conference Thursday. He told his church members that he did not understand the charges against him.

"My name will be cleared," he said.

Many area Baptists support him. "I think most of us still support Reverend Lyons; they're shocked in Denver, and all the mess was going on then," said Andrew McKenzie, a trustee at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church. "The only reason I am not going Saturday is that I am going out of town."

Lisa Taylor, pastor's secretary at West Side Missionary Baptist Church here, said, "Everyone has an opinion, but we can't judge him. Nobody knows for sure but him. It does affect the church as a whole."

Guilty

Man is guilty of robbing bank, murdering guard

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In his closing argument to jurors earlier Thursday, U.S. Attorney Edward L. Dowd Jr. called Allen's crime one of "absolute violence and intimidation."

During the bank robbery March 17, Hefflin, 46, of Belleville, had no chance against Allen and co-defendant Norris Holder and their semiautomatic SKS rifles, Dowd said.

Authorities allege that Allen and Holder dashed into the bank, at 6900 Clay Avenue, and immediately opened fire. Investigators believe Allen gunned down Hefflin as Holder climbed over a counter and scooped more than \$50,000 from tellers' drawers.

Dowd said Allen and Holder had been "armed for war."

"They were armed to kill for money," he added.

Allen shot Hefflin in the legs and as the guard lay bleeding and helpless on the floor, stepped closer and fired some more, Dowd said. Shags ricocheted off the floor and tore into Hefflin's body. He died a short time later at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Both masked robbers fired shots inside the bank as employees either ran or dove for cover, the U.S. attorney said.

"This was a murderous assault on everyone at that bank," he said.

Defense attorney Richard Sindel told jurors that Allen had been subjected to improper questioning by police after his arrest the day following the holdup. He pointed out that some witnesses had given varying accounts of the robbery.

"Every circumstance in this case requires careful evaluation," Sindel told jurors.

He suggested that Allen had not meant to kill Hefflin, noting that the guard's fatal wounds resulted from bullets that hit the floor first.

"It would have been very easy not to miss (Hefflin)" Sindel said.

Authorities allege a scheme in which Holder, 22, of Country Club Hills, and Allen planned to rob the bank, flee in a stolen van, switch to

another stolen van waiting for them in Forest Park, then get away in Holder's car, which was parked at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

That plan went up in flames. Police believe Holder had doused the inside of the first getaway van with gasoline. The plan had been to burn it to destroy evidence. But the van caught fire moments after the holdup as Holder, the driver, tested his cigarette lighter, authorities said.

"It's the media's fault, it's never Henry Lyons' fault," Bowman said.

"We have forgiven him, but that doesn't stop us from wanting his resignation, because he has not been a good steward of what we have given him. He has violated a sacred trust."

Florida bail bondswoman Judy Stines said Thursday, "It's my decision completely where he goes, and wherever he goes, his lawyers go with him."

If Lyons is convicted, he could spend up to 30 years in prison.

Wire services provided some information for this story.

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Suburban KC couple say they have Powerball win

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INDEPENDENCE, Mo. — A suburban Kansas City couple claimed Thursday evening to hold the winning ticket for the \$54.4 million Powerball jackpot, but Missouri lottery officials said they had yet to validate the ticket.

Dave and Rose McLeod of Blue Springs said they were bought the winning ticket, Kansas City television station KCTV reported.

The winners' names won't be announced until this afternoon, Missouri Lottery officials said.

The winning ticket was bought at a QuikTrip convenience store in Independence. The ticket matched all six numbers — 2, 26, 38, 43 and 46 and the Powerball 19.

The McLeods said they'd chosen the option of receiving the prize in one lump sum, instead of a series of yearly payments. The store gets \$58,000 for selling the winning ticket.

QuikTrip's phone was ringing constantly with inquiries, said Mary Bookoff, assistant manager. "This is the first time we sold one that really won," she said.

The \$55.4 million prize is the second-biggest jackpot in Missouri. The largest, \$69 million, went to Jerry Sue Hurling of St. Charles in 1995.