

LAW & JUSTICE

Honest Discussions on Race Urged

First black A.G. addresses issue

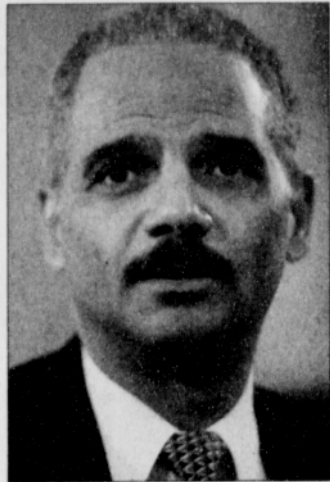
Attorney General Eric Holder described the United States Wednesday as a nation of cowards on matters of race, saying most Americans avoid discussing awkward racial issues.

In a speech to Justice Department employees marking Black History Month, Holder said the workplace is largely integrated but Americans still self-segregate on the weekends and in their private lives.

"Though this nation has proudly thought of itself as an ethnic melting pot, in things racial we have always been and I believe continue to be, in too many ways, essentially a nation of cowards," said Holder, nation's first black attorney general.

Race issues continue to be a topic of political discussion, Holder said, but "we, as average Americans, simply do not

talk enough with each other about race."



Eric Holder

He urged people of all races to use Black History Month as a chance for honest discussion of racial matters, including issues of health care, education, and economic disparities.

Race "is an issue we have

never been at ease with and, given our nation's history, this is in some ways understandable," Holder said. "If we are to make progress in this area, we must feel comfortable enough with one another and tolerant enough of each other to have

Even when people mix at the workplace or afterwork social events, Holder argued, many Americans in their free time are still segregated inside what he called "race-protected cocoons."

"Saturdays and Sundays,

landmark speech on race relations during the hotly-contested Democratic primaries as he tried to separate himself from the angry rhetoric of his then-pastor. Holder cited that speech by Obama as part of the motivation for his words, saying Americans need to overcome an ingrained inhibition against

talking about race.

"If we're going to ever make progress, we're going to have to have the determination, to be honest with each other. It also means we have to be able to accept criticism where that is justified," Holder told reporters after the speech.

"If we're going to ever make progress, we're going to have to have the guts, we have to have the determination, to be honest with each other."

frank conversations about the racial matters that continue to divide us."

He told hundreds of Justice Department employees gathered for the event that they have a special responsibility to advance racial understanding.

America in the year 2009 does not in some ways differ significantly from the country that existed almost 50 years ago. This is truly sad," said Holder.

As a presidential candidate last year, Barack Obama gave a

Chimp Cartoon Echoes Past

(AP) -- The New York Post is apologizing for a cartoon that critics say links President Barack Obama to a raging chimpanzee shot dead by police in Connecticut. But the newspaper also says the image was exploited by its longtime antagonists.

After two days of protests, the paper posted an editorial on its Web site Thursday saying the cartoon was meant to mock the federal economic stimulus bill, but "to those who were offended by the image, we apologize."

The editorial also says some people who have long-standing differences with the paper saw the cartoon "as an opportunity for payback."

The drawing was published Feb. 18. It shows a dead chimp, with the caption reading: "They'll



New York State Senator Eric Adams stands in front of the New York Post building holding a cartoon that ran Feb. 18 in the Post. The cartoon drew outrage from civil rights leaders and elected officials who said it echoed racist stereotypes of blacks as monkeys.

have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill."

Hundreds of demonstrators

rallied to boycott the paper, branding it as racist.

Demonstrators led by civil

rights activist Al Sharpton chanted "End racism now!" outside the parent company's skyscraper in midtown Manhattan and called for the jailing of Rupert Murdoch, whose international media conglomerate News Corp owns the Post.

Because Obama promoted the \$787 billion economic stimulus that he signed into law on Feb. 17, critics of the cartoon interpreted the dead chimp as a reference to Obama, the first black U.S. president.

"I guess they thought we were chimpanzees," Sharpton said. "They will find out we are lions."

Latinos March to Protest Hiring Law

(AP) — Several hundred Latinos and supporters marched through St. Helens to protest a Columbia County ordinance punishing employers for hiring illegal immigrants.

The ballot measure passed in November, but a judge has put it on hold pending a legal review after a challenge by social activists and business owners represented by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Yesenia Sanchez, presi-

dent of a new group, Latinos United for a Better Future, said racial tensions in the county have soared since signatures began to be gathered for two ballot measures.

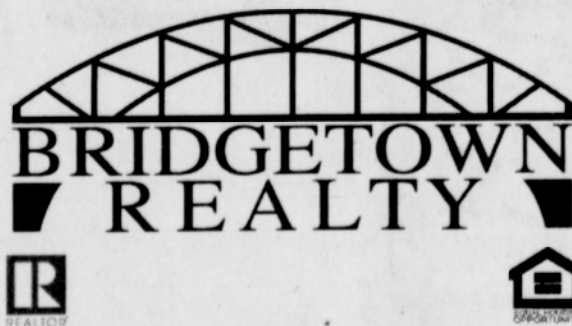
The second ballot specifically, requiring billboard-sized signs on county job sites claiming "Legal Workers Only," failed.

Latinos in the march said the employment measure has led to insults, intimidation and open discrimination and tension in schools.

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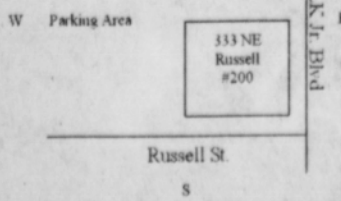
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