

# Police shooting has racial tensions at boiling point

By Josh Getlin, Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK — On a cool winter night, Amadou Diallo took a walk outside his Bronx apartment and returned after 12:45 p.m. This is all that is known of his last moments, except that he was suddenly cut down by a hail of police gunfire, 41 shots in all, as he stood in the hallway.

Seconds later, the four police gunmen, who said they were investigating a serial rapist in the area, discovered that the 22-year-old West African immigrant was unarmed. As they hurriedly radioed for assistance, several of the officers appeared dazed and stunned, according to police sources and onlookers who gathered at the scene last week.

Although few details have emerged since then, the story has shocked New Yorkers and triggered national protests. There have been furious street demonstrations by black leaders and bitter criticisms of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who has been accused of running a police department that routinely brutalizes and mistreats blacks and other

minorities. In recent days, the story has blown impeachment off the front pages of the city's tabloids, dominating local television and radio coverage.

Indeed, it has become a New York media circus and a defining moment in Giuliani's administration: Diallo's family have embraced the Rev. Al Sharpton as their spokesman, and retained O.J. Simpson attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Barry Scheck to represent them. Calling for the four officers' arrest, Sharpton told a rally that the shooting "was not a police action, it was a police execution. ... His (Diallo's) body was riddled with bullets. Not from hoodlums, not from thugs, but from people we pay to protect us."

For his part, Giuliani has tried to keep a cool profile, vowing a prompt investigation and calling for public calm until more facts are known. He has expressed remorse for the apparently senseless shooting of a man who had no criminal record. But the 19 bullets that hit Amadou Diallo, a softspoken street vendor from Guinea, have cast a shadow over the

record of a Republican mayor who has won national plaudits for greatly reducing crime in the nation's largest city, and who harbors ambition for higher office.

"I feel terrible about what happened," Giuliani told reporters at a City Hall news conference last week. "We're working very, very hard to assist the family and everyone in the community to understand it. But I am not going to subscribe to a notion that the police officers in New York City as some general matter are acting improperly."

Seeking to quell rising criticism, the mayor unveiled new statistics showing the number of police shootings in New York are down; city officers fired 856 shots in 1998, compared to 1,040 the year before, he said, and the 19 fatal shootings last year was the lowest since 1985. "There is a tendency of some people in our society to blame the police in broad strokes that is just as vicious a prejudice as any other prejudice," the mayor added, defending the department's overall record.

Yet critics are not convinced,

suggesting that Giuliani has turned a deaf ear to minorities. From 1993 to 1997, critics noted, new charges of police misconduct rose 45 percent, from 1,567 to 2,266 incidents, and they said the mayor's refusal to address this issue shows he has not built sufficient bridges to blacks, Latinos and other minorities.

"I certainly am not blaming Mayor Giuliani or Police Commissioner (Howard) Safir for the tragedy that took place," said Manhattan Borough President Virginia Fields, who is black. "But there is the sad reality that that the police department treats some communities in this city with more respect and consideration than others ... we need City Hall to listen more."

As the investigation continues, the four officers involved in the shooting have been reassigned to desk jobs, which is customary police procedure. Although they have not spoken to any local law enforcement officials yet, or to members of the U.S. Attorneys Office and the FBI, which are also probing the case, the policemen are expected to testify before a Bronx grand jury sometime this week.

Sources close to the officers suggest they may have fired in the belief that Diallo was reaching for a gun and did not respond to police orders.

The controversy is especially acute because the four officers are part of an elite, 380-member Street Crime Unit, which has been in the forefront of New York's battle to reduce crime. Roaming high-crime areas in unmarked vehicles, the plainclothes officers have been credited with major arrests; they have also been criticized as brutal enforcers.

Sean Carroll, one of the four, told The New York Daily News: "I'm just deeply sorry for everything that's occurred. We're going to cooperate 100 percent." But those comments seemed to inflame the situation even more. Giuliani has been rebuffed twice in his efforts to meet with Diallo's parents, who flew here from Africa to bring their son home and are constantly at Sharpton's side. Mindful of public perceptions, the mayor canceled a fund-raising trip this weekend to Texas, where he was supposed to be the guest of Gov. George W. Bush.

None of this has quieted a rising chorus of protest. On Friday, Giuliani was heckled as he attended a memorial service for Diallo at a mosque in Harlem; activists plan more demonstrations in coming days. "I have no patience for that megalomaniac Giuliani," said a visibly angry Carol Taylor, at Diallo's memorial service. "He is sitting at the head of an organization which is systematically engaging in a slaughter of black African males. The mayor can burn in hell."

The Diallo case is only the most recent protest over police brutality in New York. Last year, the city was rocked by the story of Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant who was allegedly sodomized by police with a toilet plunger in a Brooklyn precinct station. The trial of those officers on civil rights charges begins next month.

As the city braces for another week of tension, some have said the larger problem lies with white New York officials and residents, who have not generally been part of the protest.

# So far, Brazilian economic crisis having limited global impact

By Paul Blustein, The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Well, maybe it doesn't matter that much if the eighth-largest economy in the world goes down the chute. That's the verdict global financial markets appear to be rendering on Brazil's economic crisis, which so far, at least has had a remarkably mild impact on other countries and regions.

Exactly one month has passed since Brazil was forced to devalue its currency, the real, and Brazil's outlook has gone from bad to wretched since then, with interest rates soaring, the real tumbling and the nation's economy predicted to contract by as much as 6 percent this year.

Yet in marked contrast with the worldwide upheaval in stock, bond and currency markets that followed the crises in Russia in August and Asia in the months before that,

markets have quickly shrugged off their initial jitters over Brazil's collapsing economy.

The Dow Jones industrial average is hovering close to the same level as it was right before Brazil's devaluation, and in some Latin American countries that were believed vulnerable to Brazil's "samba effect," stock prices have rebounded, an example being Mexico, where the main stock index is up 18.5 percent over the past month. The Argentine and Mexican governments were even able to raise foreign funds on international bond markets in recent days.

"We've had a 35 percent devaluation of the currency of a big economy, something we were very frightened about last fall, and now from a global point of view it seems to be something of a nonevent," said Desmond Lachman, managing director of emerging markets research at Salomon Smith Barney Inc. in New

York.

All of which is prompting economists, policymakers and market analysts to ask some tantalizing questions: Is the Brazilian flu less contagious than the Asian or Russian strain? Has the global financial crisis finally reached a more stable phase in which turmoil no longer spreads across borders and oceans with such frightening speed?

Or, alternatively, are investors simply in denial over the implications of events in Brazil? Will markets and economies eventually succumb to Brazil's gravitational pull with a sort of delayed reaction, as they have on some other occasions during the global crisis? For example, two weeks after the crisis started in July 1997 with the devaluation of the Thai baht, the Hong Kong stock market soared to a record high before crashing three months later.

It's not that Brazil's neighbors have escaped unscathed. Much of Latin

America is expected to fall into recession this year, and Brazil's woes are significantly adding to the region's troubles.

Large corporations in countries such as Argentina and Mexico, unlike their governments, are shut out from raising international money unless they are willing to pay punishingly high interest rates. Moreover, the slump in demand from Brazil, an important market for many Latin firms, is hitting some exporters hard. But the financial impact has been far less severe than the panic that ensued last fall when Russia abruptly devalued the ruble and effectively defaulted on much of its debt.

Following the Russian debacle, worldwide bond markets almost ceased to function. One key barometer of investor nervousness roughly doubled the "spread" in emerging market bond yields above U.S. Treasury bond yields, which reflects lenders' reluctance to put their

money into such risky investments. By contrast, in the month since Brazil's devaluation, the spread, though still very wide by historical standards, has eased, from more than 15 percentage points above U.S. Treasuries to about 12 percentage points.

The explanation that many analysts give offers hope that the global crisis may be abating rather than merely taking a brief respite. In the months after the Russian default, experts say, international investment firms have sharply cut back their borrowing, which has made the entire financial system much less susceptible to panic selling. That's a major change from last summer, when many firms were borrowing heavily, "leveraging" themselves, in Wall Street jargon, to invest in Russian bonds, which offered extremely attractive interest rates. Those investors were effectively betting that the International Monetary Fund and the Clinton

administration would never let Russia run out of cash to pay its debts.

It proved to be a shockingly wrong bet, and the firms' huge losses sparked a massive scramble to liquidate all sorts of stocks and bonds to raise cash and pay off loans.

Some economists offer another explanation for the relatively benign aftermath to the turbulence in Brazil: The decline in the real won't hurt other countries' economies as much as the fall in Asian currencies did.

But while the drop in Brazil's currency hurts competing manufacturers in other Latin nations, the impact won't be as large, according to a recent analysis by Bridgewater Associates Inc., a Connecticut-based research firm. That's because Brazil's manufactured exports; footwear, auto parts and steel being the biggest categories, don't overlap much with the exports of most other Latin American countries.

# Russian premier insists Yeltsin must finish term

By David Hoffman, The Washington Post

MOSCOW — Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, facing Russia's restive political and financial elite, insisted Saturday that ailing President Boris Yeltsin be allowed to complete his term despite widespread criticism that he is no longer able to lead.

Yeltsin's second term runs until summer 2000, but his long absences because of illness in recent months have set off an intense scramble among his would-be successors and renewed calls for Yeltsin to step down to make way for early elections. If Yeltsin resigned, Primakov would become acting president under the constitution and elections would be held within three months.

"I oppose the idea that the president should step down before his constitutional term expires," Primakov told reporters at a meeting of the influential Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, a private, elite group of politicians, analysts, scholars and businessmen. Yeltsin should remain in office "for the sake of stability in Russia, for the normal running of the elections, so that all the conditions can be created for the elections," Primakov said.

His comments were significant because some council members prepared a discussion paper, to be debated behind closed doors, suggesting that Yeltsin's leadership has become so weak that he is dragging down the Russian state. The paper was drafted by a working group coordinated by Sergei Karaganov, deputy director of the Institute of Europe, and chairman of the council.

Among other things, the discussion paper concludes that the

power of the Kremlin is waning rapidly and says Yeltsin is to blame. The paper calls for Yeltsin to step down for health reasons, followed by early elections. It suggests that Primakov lead a coalition including another major presidential contender, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov. However, Karaganov said later that the council had not adopted this approach in its closed debate, the Interfax news service reported.

Primakov also told the council that he was optimistic about reaching agreement with the International Monetary Fund. Russia owes the fund about \$4.5 billion this year from earlier loans that it cannot afford to repay. After recent talks on a new program—which would basically involve loans to Russia large enough to allow it to pay back the debt due this year—a delegation from the fund left Russia without a return date.

"I think we will reach agreement with the IMF," Primakov said. "The IMF and we will arrive at the conclusion that we are doing what we can but will not do what we cannot," he added. For example, Primakov said Russia cannot meet the IMF's demands for a bigger budget surplus.

Primakov, who has been running the government and meeting foreign visitors while Yeltsin is recovering from a bleeding ulcer, recently floated a plan for a political truce between the executive branch of the Russian government and the opposition-dominated lower house of parliament, the State Duma. The document was viewed by some analysts as an irritant to Yeltsin. But Primakov denied that there was a rift with the president.

# Actor Will Smith, Michael Jordan honored at NAACP Awards

By John L. Mitchell, Los Angeles Times

PASADENA, Calif. — Actor Will Smith was named Entertainer of the Year and former Chicago Bulls star Michael Jordan was honored with the Jackie Robinson Sports Award at the 30th annual NAACP Image Awards Sunday evening at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

A collection of some of the most famous African Americans in the entertainment industry turned out for the star-studded gala hosted by the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization, which celebrates its 90th birthday this year.

# The Tinky Winky stink continues

By Lisa de Moraes, The Washington Post

Jerry Falwell is making babies cry, and the mayor of West Hollywood, Calif., is hopping mad. Mayor Steven Martin, whose city council has a homosexual majority, is angry about Falwell's assertion that Tinky Winky, a character in PBS's "Teletubbies" show, is gay.

Martin said Falwell "has single-handedly crushed the hearts of many children by viciously casting Tinky Winky into a sexual controversy. It's embarrassing that Falwell is so obsessed with gay issues that he forced the discussion of Tinky Winky's sexuality upon parents and their children." But Falwell seems to think keeping children from their favorite TV character is a small price to pay for spreading the gospel.

"Who would ever have predicted that the little parental warning in the February issue of the (National Liberty) Journal would open such a world of opportunity to share the eternal Hope of Christ?" the religious right leader said in his "Falwell Confidential," a weekly briefing for pastors and Christian leaders.

Founded in 1909 in New York City by a group of African American and white citizens committed to righting social injustice, the organization started the Image Awards to honor outstanding achievements and positive portrayals by African Americans in film, TV, music and literature. The award also was meant to encourage the entertainment industry to do a better job of creating opportunities for African Americans. The first NAACP Image Awards were presented by the Beverly Hills/Hollywood branch in the 1960s.

Besides Jordan, who announced his retirement from professional basketball this year, honorees

included entertainer Harry Belafonte, who received the Chairman's Award, selected by the chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors, to recognize special achievement.

Opera singer Kathleen Battle and blues legend B.B. King both received the Hall of Fame Award, and Grammy-nominated singer Lauryn Hill was given the Presidential Award. NAACP President Kweisi Mfume described Hill as "a hip-hop humanitarian who has used her own success to uplift the lives of others." One of the evening's highlights included a musical tribute to King by guitarists Eric Clapton and George Benson in which King picked up his

guitar and joined in the number.

Meanwhile, across the street from the celebration, a dozen picketers led by Najee Ali of Project Islamic Hope protested the Image Awards. They objected to the awards' long relationship with Fox-TV, which is home to "The PJs," a new animated satire co-created by actor-comedian Eddie Murphy. Some African Americans have accused the show of stereotyping members of their community with a character who is a crack addict and scenes showing men guzzling 40-ounce bottles of beer.

# Painting of nude man displayed in legislature banned

By Matthew Mosk, The Baltimore Sun

BALTIMORE — The painting that was pulled from the walls of the Maryland House office building in Annapolis was a classical depiction of a male nude, legs crossed discreetly, eyes in contemplation. But it did draw some protests from the more easily offended. So they took it down.

The decision was viewed as benign in the corridors of the Lowe House Office Building, where virtually all of the art depicts sailboats, landscapes, birds and other innocuous scenery. But, as often happens when decisions about art are made in government circles, controversy tagged along.

Melissa Shatto, the 28-year-old Harford County artist who painted the offending canvas, feels the artwork's abrupt removal was not only rash, but an act unbecoming freedom of expression. "I'm completely aghast at this whole situation," Shatto said. "Heaven

forbid you glorify the human form. It's like we're heading back to Victorian times."

Far from a provocateur, the young mother was once the butt of criticism at the Maryland Institute, College of Art for not including enough social commentary in her work. This particular painting, called "The Evolution of Leif" (the model's name), shows a nude man seated on some rocks, leaning on his right elbow, with a misty meadow and a river in the background.

"You don't even see his navel," Shatto protested. Whatever. In place of "Leif" now hangs a giant, acrylic bovine portrait, simply titled "Cow." It's also naked.