**Detroit:** 

**Casinos** 

to roll in

shutdown

City seeks to save revenue,

By ZACHARY GORCHOW AND CHRIS CHRISTOFF FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

LANSING — The City of Detroit will defy the state and keep its three casinos open if a budget impasse forces a partial shutdown of state government Oct. 1, a spokesman for Detroit Mayor

The privately owned MGM Grand, MotorCity and Greektown casinos are cash cows for Detroit and the state and employ 7,000 people, in-

"It's thousands of jobs and also revenue," said Kilpatrick press secretary Matt Allen. "If we have to go into violated status or be cited on this, that's fine. But we're not shutting the casi-

Greektown's attorneys are studying all options for staying open in a shutdown, including the possibility of going to court, said Roger Mar-

"We're hoping that what the mayor's office is saying is true," he said. "We don't want to close. It's not good for the city, it's not good for the

See STATE, 5A ■ Editorial: Solve this for our schools' sake. 14A

Offer on health

care gives auto

talks a nudge

Outside help is sought to

assess it; progress is slow

BY KATIE MERX AND TIM HIGGINS

General Motors Corp. and the UAW ap-

pear to be inching closer to a deal that would

transfer tens of billions of dollars of retiree

health care obligations from the automaker to

the UAW, but a tentative agreement on the

overarching contract is likely "days away,"

people familiar with the talks said Wednes-

Other people familiar with the talks indi-

If so, it would explain why outside financial

"They are making some progress but the

**Come back to freep.com** for updates on the

cated that GM made a significant proposal to

the UAW on Monday before bargaining re-

experts were asked Tuesday to evaluate the

negotiations are moving real slow. ... The fi-

See AUTOS, 3A

assumptions and financial expectations.

cessed for the night.

jobs if budget talks falter

Kwame Kilpatrick said Wednesday.

cluding many city residents.

tin, a Greektown spokesman.







ON GUARD FOR 176 YEARS

# Detroit Free Press

THURSDAY SEPT. 20, 2007 METRO FINAL ◆

## **PIT BULLS** Growing number wind up at shelters; many are destroyed

# Companions or killers?



The owner moved and abandoned this pit bull named Duke, which made a hole in a fence and went between the neighboring yard and his old home. That bothered neighbor Rose Gierada. Duke was destroyed.



Michelle Circoloff of Jackson loves her American pit bull terrier, Tank, which can sense when she's about to have a seizure. "He is my medical alert bracelet," she says. Some communities ban the breed because of its aggressiveness when not properly handled or trained. DETAILS, 12A.

## Breed has ardent defenders despite its reputation for vicious attacks

BY BEN SCHMITT FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Duke is in the driveway again. The hulking gray pit bull barks, gnashes its teeth and charges — as far as the chain around its neck will allow.

Abandoned in a backyard on Detroit's west side, Duke frequently crawls through a hole in a fence into Rose Gierada's neighboring drive-

"I tried to feed him," Gierada, 64, says as the pit bull barks. "But he's too

Many owners abandon the dogs because they're ill-prepared to take care of them. Some dogs end up roaming the streets after their fighting days are over. The problem plagues not only the city but also rural areas.

Like hundreds of other pit bulls abandoned in the city, Duke's fate is

Michigan Humane Society cruelty investigators Mark Ramos and Dave McLeod captured the dog a couple of days later, after a third failed attempt to find its owner.

When seven days expire, without an owner to claim it, the dog is put

"It's very sad, but from a safety perspective you can't put an animal

See PIT BULLS, 12A



Brenda Ashford's 6-year-old granddaughter, Cassidy Jeter, at the top of the photo, was killed by two pit bulls in 2005. "There's a killer instinct that's in those dogs," Ashford said.

## AT FREEP.COM: PIT BULL VIDEOS, PHOTO GALLERIES AND GRAPHICS

### bus to Jena, La., on Wednesday in Detroit. Some say the

case of six black students charged in a white student's beating after a racial incident is similar to what they lived through years ago in the segregated South.

Supporters board a



HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press

#### To metro Detroiters, rally in Jena is a fight for equality By NAOMI R. PATTON

ABOARD A BUS EN ROUTE TO JENA, La. — It all feels too familiar for Harvey Roberts, Don Johnson, Geraldine McConnell and Gwen Felder.

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

There used to be lunch counters they could not eat at and floors at Hudson's where they could not shop. Now, "history is repeating itself,"



Read Naomi R. Patton's blog from her trip to Jena at freep.com.

McConnell, 67, of Southfield.

"In the early 1960s, we couldn't eat at a lunch counter. Now ... our kids are going through the same thing," said Roberts, 68, of Detroit.

They were among several hundred people traveling Wednesday by charter

bus from Detroit to Jena, La., for a national protest today against what some believe is the disparate and excessive punishment of six African-American Jena High School students.

The group left Detroit at 10 a.m. Wednesday for the nearly 20-hour ride that will get supporters to town in time for a 9 a.m. rally. The group will head

See JENA, 6A



SEPTEMBER! Mostly sunny skies. Chuck Gaidica's forecast, 8B







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### What happened when in the Jena school incident

**Sept. 1**: Students at Jena High School find three nooses hanging from a tree on campus, days after black students asked administrators for permission to sit beneath a shade tree traditionally used only

Sept. 8: Three white students are suspended for hanging the nooses.

by white students.

Nov. 30: Arson destroys the main school building. **Dec. 4:** School reopens in an undamaged wing. A white student, Justin Barker, is attacked by several other students, rushed to a hospital, treated and released. That evening, he attends a school ceremony.

Dec. 7: Authorities announce charges against six black students arrested in the Dec. 4 case. They include attempted seconddegree murder and conspiracy to commit seconddegree murder.

Dec. 15: Authorities say one of the students, Mychal Bell, 16, will be charged as an adult. Later, the charges are reduced to aggravated second-degree battery and conspiracy to commit the same.

#### 2007

May 2: Demonstrators in Jena shout "Free the Jena Six!" — the name given to the students charged in the Dec. 4 fight. Two of

the six remain jailed. May 10: Barker is arrested for bringing a gun to

school. He is expelled. June 26: An all-white jury is selected to try Bell after only 50 of 150 people called to jury duty show up. None of the prospective jurors are black.

June 27: LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters calls 17 witnesses to testify. Bell's courtappointed public defender, Blane Williams, calls none. June 28: Bell is convicted of aggravated seconddegree battery and conspiracy to commit the

same.

**Sept. 4:** Bell's conviction on conspiracy charges is thrown out. Charges against two other students are reduced.

**Sept. 14:** An appeals court overturns Bell's conviction. He remains jailed.
- GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

## JENA | Rally seen as protest of injustice

From Page 1A

back at 2 p.m. today. Known as the Jena Six, the students are facing possible prison sentences of 15-22 years in the beating of a white student in connection with a racially motivated school fight. Their case has become a national cause célèbre in the past two weeks. Pop star David Bowie has contributed \$10,000 to their legal defense fund with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Thousands are expected to descend on the small Louisiana town of about 3,500.

Roberts, traveling with a contingent of more than 100 on two buses from Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, called the trip "a reality check to let us know we haven't come as far as we thought we had."

The two buses, also carrying members of BAMN (By Any Means Necessary), a group of student activists from Detroit and Ann Arbor, left Detroit about 10 a.m. Wednesday and picked up 16 riders from Toledo and Cleveland in the parking lot of a Meijer store in Toledo.

#### Similarities and differences

There was a bit of a generational divide on the buses to Jena. The riders on the lead bus skewed older, while the second bus contained more riders in middle school, high school and college.

On the lead bus, many of the riders had experienced firsthand the Jim Crow-segregated South and the civil rights era, while most in the group on the second vehicle had only read about it, or seen a documentary or two.

"What we're seeing today in teen was booked as a juvenile. Jena is no different than what we or our parents saw," said John- high in Jena since three nooses

son, 60, of Detroit.

"We're separate, but not equal," he added, invoking the language of the Plessy v. Ferguson case the U.S. Supreme Court decided in 1896 that declared "separate, but equal" facilities for black people and white people

"I'm not condoning the Jena Six if they've done something wrong," Johnson emphasized, adding that the law should be applied "fairly and honestly."

"I couldn't fathom going to jail for 15 years for a fight I didn't start," said Tony Walker, 20, a junior studying finance at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

The argument about fair punishment is at the crux of those supporting the Jena Six. They see a disparity between the punishment three white students got for hanging a noose on a tree, and the expulsion and felony charges the six black students got for a subsequent fight.

"We dropped the ball for Nathaniel Abraham," Felder said. "I would like to think that the world would rally when there's an in-

#### Student jailed, but in good spirits

The Rev. Al Sharpton spoke with Mychal Bell, one of the Jena Six, in a Wednesday meeting arranged at the courthouse in the Louisiana community.

"It breaks our hearts to see him in handcuffs and leg shackles, but his spirit is high," Sharp-

ton said afterward. Bell and four others originally faced trial as adults on attempted second-degree murder charges in connection with a December attack that left their white schoolmate Justin Barker bloodied and unconscious. Another

Racial tensions have been

were found in a tree on the high school campus a few months before Barker was beaten. Three white students were briefly suspended over the incident, but no charges were filed.

Bell, the only one of the Jena Six tried so far, was convicted of aggravated second-degree bat-

Today's rally and march were to have coincided with his sentencing, but a state appeals court threw out his conviction last week, saying Bell, 16 at the time of the beating, should have been tried as a juvenile.

He remains jailed while prosecutors prepare an appeal.

#### Supporters rally in Detroit

rally Wednesday night at the report.

Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and İnjustice on Second Street north of Wayne State University. The event was organized in connection with ColorofChange.org, a national advocacy organization that is coordinating the National Day of Action in support of the Jena Six.

"I came here because I think it's really important for people to understand that even though it's 2007, there is still a lot of institutional racism in our region and throughout the country," said 26year-old Sarah Mercury of De-

Contact NAOMI R. PATTON at  $npatton@freepress.com\ or\ 313-223-4485.$ Staff writer Ben Schmitt and the About 40 people attended a Associated Press contributed to this

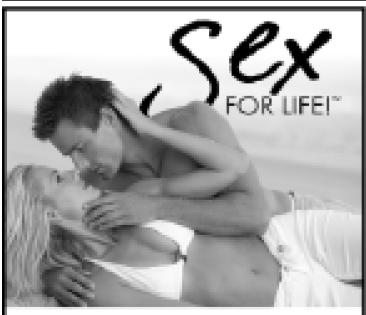


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