

# Los Angeles Times

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COLUMN ONE

## Keeping justice's scale in balance

L.A. County's top public defender grew up intending to be a prosecutor but found his calling in fighting for the accused.

JACK LEONARD

Growing up in some of South Los Angeles' toughest neighborhoods, Ron Brown was an easy target for bullies. The scrawny kid wore glasses, earned A's in class and was no good at sports.

"Hey, Poindexter!" older children shouted before snatching his lunch money or roughing him up.

The bookish Brown was afraid to go to school. He sought refuge in a library and carried a switchblade knife that his mother bought him for protection. But the violence continued through his teens. Brown was kicked unconscious in one beating and, on another occasion, was robbed at gunpoint.

Fear and anger stoked a desire for justice and to protect vulnerable people like himself. He would make sure that the kind of thugs who had terrorized him and his family wound up in prison. He vowed to become a hard-charging prosecutor.

Brown, the second of six children, was raised by his mother after his parents divorced when he was about 5. The family survived on welfare, and his mother fed her children from 50-pound sacks of rice and pinto beans. When the food ran out, Betty Sue Brown would look her oldest boys in the eye.

[See Lawyer, A12]

## Lakers are speaking Latino fans' language

The team is at the forefront of the NBA's efforts to connect with a fast-growing market.

KEVIN BAXTER

The Lakers just scored a slam dunk in the Latino market.

On Monday the team announced a 20-year agreement with Time Warner Cable to create the nation's first Spanish-language regional sports network, with the Lakers as its centerpiece, starting with the 2012-13 season.

The groundbreaking partnership is just the latest in a series of efforts by the Lakers and the NBA as they reach out to the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population.

"If you're not able to connect with [Latinos], then where's your sport going to be in 30 years?" says Adam Jacobson, a Miami-based marketing strategist focusing on Latinos.

The NBA, which has seen attendance drop for 14 of the league's 30 teams this season, has reached out to Latinos since 1995. But it began targeting the market with new focus 16 months ago when it launched *éne•bé•a* — Spanish for NBA — an initiative of Spanish-language websites and ad campaigns, specially branded merchandise and an expanded

[See Lakers, A14]



RAOUF MOHSENI Mehr News Agency

### CALLS FOR REVENGE AND REFORM

Members of Iran's parliament cry out for the execution of opposition leaders a day after a violent protest in Tehran. Elsewhere in the region, a fifth day of unrest unfolded in Yemen, where supporters of the president showed up in force, and thousands of demonstrators swept into Bahrain's capital. **WORLD, A9**

## Egypt opposition splinters

Young activists split into rival camps, and both groups distrust their predecessors.

JEFFREY FLEISHMAN, BOB DROGIN AND NED PARKER REPORTING FROM CAIRO

They brought down an autocrat and now hunch over position papers, microphones, BlackBerrys and meals from McDonald's. Revolution is messy but lasting power is won, young activists are learning, in meticulous battles of negotiations, egos and intrigue.

The new breed of professionals who helped topple President Hosni Mubarak is watching its rebellion turn into a political struggle among the country's splintered opposition forces, remnants of the former ruling regime and the army, which has taken control of the nation until the constitution is amended and elections are held.

Not wanting to be left out of the future government, two competing groups of young activists are meeting



RICK LOOMIS Los Angeles Times

**A PROTEST LEADER:** Nasser Abdel Hamid, right, says only his coalition represents youth groups, distancing himself from a prominent Google executive.

with the military and distancing themselves from longtime opposition figures they regard as inept and weakened from years of oppression by Egyptian security forces.

Egyptian politics under Mubarak was dominated by his National Democratic Party, which stifled secular opposition groups and the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. But this political universe is changing as an emboldened youth movement, some of which represents a progressive wing of the tra-

### 10 days to rewrite a constitution

The short time frame suggests changes to Egyptian law won't be as extensive as some critics had hoped. **WORLD, A6**

ditional opposition scene, is demanding a wider role in forming a new democracy.

These emerging dynamics are likely to alter Washington's relationship with a strategic ally and the Arab

world's most populous nation. Many young activists view the U.S. regional policies more skeptically than did Mubarak's government, which was supported by Democratic and Republican administrations despite its poor record on human rights.

But these new voices have their own differences.

The major rift in the youth movement is between the Coalition for the Jan. 25 Revolution Youth and a clique of urban professionals led by Google executive Wael Ghonim and dentist Mustafa Nagar. The two groups had shared strategies in a ransacked travel agency and under a tent during protests in Tahrir Square that began in late January. But talks with the government involving members of the latter group in the last days of Mubarak's rule angered some members of the coalition.

"The guys from the coalition didn't like it," said Nagar, who has a persistent cough after inhaling tear gas during demonstrations. "They accused us of selling out the blood of the martyrs. And now that same coalition is trying to meet and talk to

[See Egypt, A8]

## PENSION PERK IS PRIME BUDGET TARGET

Critics want to halt state employees' ability to buy service time to fatten payouts.

ANTHONY YORK AND JACK DOLAN REPORTING FROM SACRAMENTO

Tens of thousands of California state workers are taking advantage of a perk that pays them pension benefits for years they don't actually work, and reformers looking for places to cut have put it at the top of the list.

State law allows the employees to increase their retirement benefits by tacking up to five fictitious years — known as "air time" — onto their public service. Although they pay a fee for the privilege and officials say it is high enough to cover the eventual payouts, critics of air time note that the boost can cost taxpayers millions when the state pension system's investment income falls short, as it has in recent years.

Air time offers a return nearly twice as generous as a similar benefit — known as an annuity — that can be purchased on the private market, said Dan Pellissier, who advised former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on pensions. Pellissier, who as a state employee purchased five years' credit, is now pushing to eliminate air time as president of California Pension Reform.

Private financial advisors agree.

"It's a phenomenal deal for retirees, but it's an absolute fleeing of the taxpayers," said Scott Hanson, a principal in the Sacramento-based investment firm Hanson McClain.

Hanson said he gets calls about air time frequently and advises nearly all state employees to sign up. It offers a guaranteed 7% to 8% return, as opposed to a 3% return available for similar investments in the private sector, he said.

Gov. Jerry Brown zeroed in on the benefit after mentioning pension reform in his

[See Pensions, A11]

## HUFFPO'S MOJO

Arianna Huffington's next mission is to inject some of her cachet — and magic — into the editorial content of AOL's faded Internet brand

ROBIN ABCARIAN REPORTING FROM NEW YORK

Elegantly clad in black lace, her famously copper hair now blond, Arianna Huffington was surrounded by friends and well-wishers as she arrived Saturday at a fundraising dinner for Columbia University's student newspaper. Everyone wanted to congratulate her on AOL's \$315-million purchase of the Huffington Post.

"You're in the big show now," said David Stone, Columbia's executive vice president for communications.

Huffington gently shook her head, widened her eyes and replied, "It's all a little too much, isn't it?"

With Huffington, you could say, it's *always* been a little too much. The native of Greece has never taken a minimalist approach in her many New Worlds — Cambridge, New York, Washington, D.C., Montecito, Brentwood. She came with ambition, smarts, charm, letters of introduction and an unflinching sense of whom to cultivate for maximum success.

The best-selling polemicist,



DARREN CALABRESE Canadian Press

**BIG PLAYER:** Huffington Post could have fetched more money, but AOL was "the best home" for it, Huffington says.

biographer and pundit, whose friends told her she was too old to start an Internet venture when she launched the Huffington Post six years ago, has now conquered a corner of cyberspace.

After several unprofitable years, Huffington's website — combining news from traditional journalism sources, unpaid blog posts, fluffy photo galleries and a smattering of original stories — says it turned a profit last year, and expects revenue to double to \$60 million in 2011.

With about 25 million monthly visitors, the Huffington Post is one of the Web's most popular news sites. But how much that will help AOL transcend its dial-up roots, its ill-fated acquisition of Time Warner and its hemorrhaging bottom line is the subject of debate in the blogosphere and beyond. (Last year, AOL's ad revenue dropped 29%, said Chief Executive Tim Armstrong, and the company laid off a third of its workforce, which is now about 5,000. HuffPo employs 210.)

Huffington said she persuaded co-founder Kenneth Lerer, a former AOL Time Warner

[See Huffington, A15]

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