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**NEWS IN BRIEF**  
**McDonald's CEO to retire at year's end**

CHICAGO (AP) — McDonald's Corp. is replacing its chairman and chief executive, Jack Greenberg, as it struggles to emerge from a deep, two-year slump.

The fast food chain said Thursday that Greenberg, 60, decided to retire at the end of the month after 21 years at the company. McDonald's board elected the company's president and vice chairman, Jim Cantalupo, 59, to take over the top two spots.

McDonald's has reported lower earnings in seven of the past eight quarters and recently announced it is slowing its expansion pace as it grapples with a crowded restaurant market, sluggish economy, complaints about poor service and a depressed stock price.

**Michael Jackson absent from trial**

SANTA MARIA, Calif. (AP) — Michael Jackson failed to show up in court Thursday, after two days of testimony in which he caused a stir by hobbling in on crutches and making comical faces at observers.

Jackson was scheduled to testify for a sixth day in a \$21 million lawsuit alleging he backed out of two millennium concerts. It was the third time Jackson was a no-show at the trial.

Jackson's lawyer, Zia Modabber, told the court the latest absence was due to an unspecified medical problem. The attorney did not immediately return calls for further comment.

**Alabama reacts**



Members of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity at the University of Alabama adorn their house with a sign that reflects their sentiments toward former Tide Head Coach Dennis Franchione. Franchione said Thursday that he will not be returning as head coach.

**D.A. asks for convictions in jogger case to be thrown out**

NEW YORK (AP) — Citing DNA on a sock, prosecutors asked a judge Thursday to throw out the convictions of five young men found guilty of beating and gang-raping a jogger during a 1989 "wilding" spree in Central Park that exposed the city's deep racial divide to the rest of the nation.

District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's recommendation came 11 months after a convicted rapist who had never before come under suspicion in the case confessed. Also, DNA tests confirmed that his semen was on one of the socks the victim was wearing 13 years ago.

Morgenthau stopped short of declaring the five innocent, but said the confession and the tests create "a probability that the verdicts would have been more favorable to the defendants." And he said no purpose would be served by retrying them.

The decision of whether to throw out the convictions rests with state Justice Charles Tejada, who is expected to rule by Feb. 6.

The attack on a white 28-year-old investment banker, allegedly by a gang of black and

Hispanic boys from Harlem, became emblematic of New York City's struggles with crime and race relations in the late 1980s.

The five defendants, who were 14 to 16 at the time of the attack, are now mostly in their late 20s and have already completed prison terms ranging from six years to 11 1/2 years for the crime.

But throwing out of their convictions could clear the way for them to sue the city and would free them from having to register as sex offenders for the rest of their lives.

Their families and lawyers called for an immediate ruling from the judge.

"We are truly moved by this decision," said Sharonne Salaam, mother of one of the youths. "But we also feel like we've been victimized, like the Central Park jogger. We all feel we were denied justice."

Through a spokeswoman, the victim declined comment. Despite remarkable recovery from severe brain injuries, she has said she remembers nothing of the attack and was unable to help police identify suspects.

The victim was left for dead in a pool of mud and blood on April 19, 1989, after dozens of teenagers descended on the park to mug runners and bicyclists in a crime spree dubbed "wilding." She was in a coma for 12 days.

The randomness of the spree terrified many New Yorkers. It was another blow to a city struggling with a soaring crime rate and it came during a string of high-profile racial incidents, including Bernhard Goetz's shooting of black youths on the subway and attacks in the Howard Beach and Bensonhurst neighborhoods.

Some questioned whether the Central Park youths were rounded up because of their skin color and suggested police would not have pursued the case so aggressively had the victim been black or Hispanic.

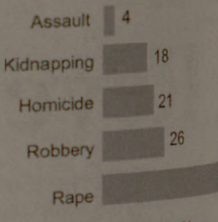
Police said all five confessed — four of them on video — and that evidence proved devastating at trial.

"We all took turns getting on top of her," Antron McCray, then 15, told police in one tape.

Defense attorneys said the youths were coerced into bogus confessions by police who kept

**DNA exonerations**

Inmates exonerated on the basis of DNA evidence were most commonly charged with rape.



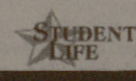
NOTE: Based on the first 81 exonerations nationwide, which occurred between 1989 and 2001, most cases the defendant was convicted of a combination of the above offenses.

SOURCE: Innocence Project

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