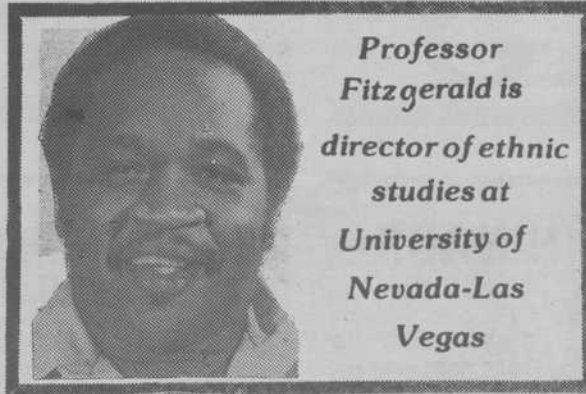


# BLACK AND BLUE

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald



Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethnic studies at University of Nevada-Las Vegas

Seven years ago or so, while driving to work one morning, I heard on the radio that there had been an attempt on the life of President Reagan. It came as such a shock that I almost hit brakes right in the middle of early morning traffic. I paid rapt attention to everything the announcer said about the event. Had he been hit by a bullet or bullets? Was it critical? Serious? Had the suspect been apprehended?

My mind tumbled back into the past to eighteen years earlier to Dallas, Texas--the scene of the assassination of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. It then rolled slowly forward for five years to the scene of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and shortly thereafter of presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy. I then thought of that song with lyrics having to do with Abraham, Martin and John. I was outraged. I was mad. I was fit to be tied. But, more than any of those, I was scared. I was scared because the attempt on President Reagan had been made in Washington, D.C. I was afraid because he had just recently been elected President of the United States by the widest margin of victory in the history of American politics. There was something else that made me scared but some part of my unconscious did not allow me to acknowledge what it was.

I arrived at school, met my classes, did my lectures, had lunch, chatted with a number of colleagues about the events of the day, did a little reading and a bit of writing and finally it was early evening and time for the news. I don't remember which of the networks I watched or who the newscasters were. I do recall that some, maybe David Brinkley, had a commentary following the news reports.

It was because of this commentary that I discovered why I had been scared since first having learned of the assassination attempt on the President. I never thanked Brinkley (or whoever it was) for bringing the matter to my attention, so I do so now. The following, in a nutshell, is what he had to say.

"Earlier today in front of a hotel in Washington, D.C., an attempt was made on the life of President Reagan. When the word of this attempt went out over the airways, there were many Americans who became afraid. Jewish Americans prayed that the assassin was not Jewish. Hispanics prayed that it was not Hispanic. Blacks prayed that he was not black. Native

Americans prayed that he was not Native American and every other minority group in America prayed that the culprit was not a member of its racial/ethnic/religious group.

When the picture of the assassin, David Brinkley, was finally shown on the television screens of America, it was almost as though a giant, collective sigh of relief could be heard escaping around the country. Everyone who was or is a member of a minority group felt much better at seeing that the would-be assassin was a white male."

Some of you might remember that broadcast. If you do, see if you don't also remember how you felt at the end of it. Relieved, best describes the way I felt. I was relieved because I knew that in such matters as those where something negative would have taken place, and you cannot get much more negative than attempting to assassinate the President of the United States, the whole group--the entire race--is held responsible. On the other hand, unfortunately, when one of us happens to do something wonderful, the entire race is not given credit. You've probably heard it before--in the case of the former it is: "...that's just like then" and in the latter case it is: "...he's not like the rest of them."

Now that you're in the right frame of mind, I'll write what this little essay is really supposed to be about.

Last week I heard a news bulletin which informed me and the rest of the community that a police officer had been slain. It was a thoughtless bulletin, especially in the manner in which it was presented: "Cop killed. Details at five." Notwithstanding the lack of sensitivity on the part of the announcer, I suddenly experienced a similar set of

mental calsethentics as I had on the occasion of the assassination attempt of President Reagan several years earlier. No thought was given to the officer. My entire consciousness centered around the questions: "Who did it?" "Was the killer black?" Why should those things matter? A man had been murdered. That should have been my first concern but it was not. There is something perverse in the mental processes which took place with me, but, then, perversity is sometimes spawned by hostile racial climates.

That day, I did not leave the campus until after I had found out the color of the culprit. When I saw the report on the evening news, I was greatly relieved to see that it was not a black man in a "black" neighborhood but a white man in a "white" neighborhood who had done the dastardly deed. After the relief came the nausea. Why? Because a human being had been killed and the state of the racial climate is still such that such an event as that has to be placed on a back-burner until some resolution could be brought to a racial concern--who did it?

You see, I was, without thinking, more concerned about the possible affects the shooting would have on me

and other black men if the perpetrator had been black. I suppose it is inevitable that sooner or later all of us become more conscious and more thoughtful. Part of the process has to do with our willingness to reflect on matters that we might not have allowed ourselves to do so with in the past. By doing so, we become more complete human beings ourselves. What is the difference when a white person is murdered as opposed to when a black person is murdered? There is none. Everyone is a part of a family and when one is mur-

dered the members of that family loses a part of itself. Every family is part of a larger family and every larger family is part of mankind. Whenever any one of us, whoever we might be, is murdered, all of us are affected and all of us lose something whether we realize it or not.

When I watch Star Trek and see Kirk, Spock, Uhuru, Chekov, Sulu, Bones, Scotty and the others aboard the Enterprise going to places where no one has gone to before and having to deal with the Cleones and all of those other strange beings from planet in far away galaxies, the one thing that is always driven home when those beings refer to the crew of the Enterprise--that crew is referred to as "Earthlings."

There seems to be some suggestion in this age of space shuttles and other space explorations that before we--all of us--can become merely "Earthlings" as we truly and actually are, we must first find some form of life somewhere out there.

"I don't know if we can

wait until then. We need to put a value on ourselves whether there is anyone out there in outer space or not. Policemen must be affected when we, as black people, are murdered and we must be affected when they are murdered and everyone must be affected when anyone else is.

I watched the ensuing reports and saw the man--a man like me--who went to work one day and had plans for the evening, the weekend, the rest of his life. He had no idea that the rest of his life would come before the end of that day. He was so dead there in the street and had been so alive that morning. Is there anyone who is reasonable who is happy at this death? No. No reasonable person is ever happy at the death of another.

Thousands attended the funeral. Many others sent cards, flowers and made contributions to the family. Many more will do so. Are we reasonable enough to do so? Anybody?

## Petals of McRoy



## Petals of McRoy

Your Full Service Flower Shop

Weddings, Parties, Etc.

Fresh Flowers

Silks

Plants

Trees

Wedding Rentals

Arch & Baskets

Owner: Freddie McRoy

Manager: JoAnn Johnson

1020 West Owens L.V. Nev. 89102

Phone 702-647-1087

LAW OFFICE OF  
**Geraldine Kirk-Hughes**  
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR  
AT LAW



233 South Fourth Street  
Las Vegas, NV 89101

Telephone (702) 384-4117  
(702) 382-2522

General Practice includes:

- Bankruptcy
- Divorces
- Corporation (Information)
- Work-related Accidents (SIIS)
- Automobile Accidents
- Criminal Matters
- Wills