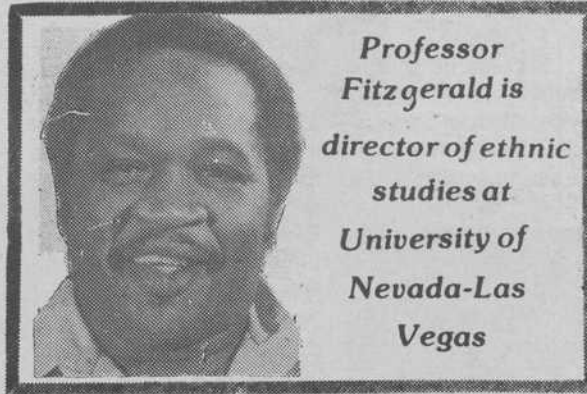


# THE USUAL SUSPECTS Part II

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald



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

Surprisingly, I'm sure, to some, I do not have a bone to pick with police officers. Using a '60s cliché: "some of my best friends are cops" and I'm not limiting that to black cops. The last time that I changed residences the only person who showed up to help was a cop. A few years ago when I had major surgery, more cops visited or called or sent cards or plants than people from the university community. I teach classes at the Police Academy and I hear from former students there much more often than from former students here. When my home was burglarized two years ago while I was out of town, when I phoned it in there was an officer on the scene in nineteen minutes. Even as he did his job he took the time to get me through the trauma. A fingerprint expert came half-an-hour later, and the next morning I got a call from a detective. I submitted a report of missing items and within days much of my belongings had been recovered and someone had been arrested on charges of

possession of stolen property. Some time later it was time to go to one of the Sub-Stations and retrieve my belongings. The day I went there, one of my closest friends -- a cop -- white -- on his off time -- drove in from Henderson to accompany me and make the process smoother.

Over the years, I have had occasion to write letters of complaint to Metro when something has occurred which I felt was police work. Conversely, I've written letters of compliment when something has occurred which I've felt was police work done over and beyond the call of duty. It is my contention that this latter is more important than the former. I believe this is so for two reasons: letters of compliment give credibility to letters of complaint and, just as in almost every job--including my own--once in a while it is imperative that we hear we've done something right.

Follow me through two

scenarios and an analysis. A convenience store is held up by a black man. For the next several days/weeks/months, each time a black man enters a convenience store--especially the one robbed--he is viewed as having culpability in the crime. He is viewed thusly simply because of the uniform he wears--skin color. This has happened hundreds of times and black people resent it. We resent the entire race being held responsible for the anti-social behavior of a few.

A police officer does something which brings dishonor to the badge. For the next several days/weeks/months, each time an officer shows his face--especially in the area where the wrong doing took place--they are viewed as having culpability in the offense. They are viewed thusly simply because of the uniform--blue/tan. This has happened hundreds of times and police officers resent the entire force being held responsible for the poor police work of a few.

treatment of others. To illustrate this phenomenon, I am reminded of a 1950s western movie titled "Wagonmaster." An out law family--the Cleggs--a father and his four or five sons are on a rampage in the old southwest. They rob banks, kill people and generally do anything they please. They took over a Mormon wagontrain, killed a few of them, raped an Indian woman and laughed through it all. Finally, they went too far--as if all of the above had not been too far--and the two gentile wagonmasters decided to fight back and in the process all of the Clegg boys are killed. Old man Clegg stumbled around, as in a daze, mumbling: "My boys, my boys, they killed my boys." Well, of course they killed your boys, Mr. Clegg. Did you expect that they ought to have more respect and concern for you and yours than you have had for them? You'd have to be an idiot to expect that, Mr. Clegg.

mistreatment in our town, it is difficult to establish truth. That is always the case even when there is an eye witness. What is truth for one might well be entirely different for another and this is especially true in matters having to do with black/police community relations. Both see the other through stereotypical eyes. Why these views exist and are worthy of comment there is neither time nor space to discuss here. Suffice it to say, however abominable conditions might have been as a result of the aforementioned charge, there are some black people who were and continue to be offended by the manner of the Sheriff in making the announcement that an investigation had been conducted and the officers cleared. His tone, choice of words, expressions in short, his entire demeanor was condescending. It was as though we were in one of those awful countries where people have no rights and may be spoken to, by public officials, in a threatening fashion. No effort to placate was made. He was certain that the public needed no convincing that that portion of the black community which had registered the complaints was unreasonable. We were being "uppity" and once again had to be put in our place.

What Mr. Clegg did not understand is that the time to cease mistreatment is before the people discover a remedy themselves, because, once they do, they no longer need a reprieve. Mr. Clegg, as head of that family, conveyed to his sons that he would support anything they did and he did. He did not fully appreciate the responsibility of leadership. The leader sets the standards, establishes the philosophy and everyone else who is a part of the group or organization must abide by that standard or go join some other group or organization or take over.

The cockalorum is always impenitent and always expects others not to be. Here again there is an absence of reciprocity and in the immediate instance there is a great need not to be, even if it is not sincere. Sometimes, as *The Prince* tells us, illusion is at least as important as reality.

In the recent case of police

## THE NAACP AND YOU!



Rev. Jesse D. Scott  
President  
Las Vegas, NAACP



### -Winners Don't Quit-

Are West Las Vegas quitters or winners?

This question is being asked in the establishment community.

"Will the Black people in West Las Vegas take a stand for what is right or will they get tired, quit and run away?"

The answer is, quitters never win and winners never quit.

Enough is enough.

We are told by a very reliable source that a remark had been made by an officer of the Metro Police Department, who said "just give the Blacks in West Las Vegas a little while and you won't hear from them anymore."

In other words, this officer was saying that Black people are crisis oriented. As soon as the crisis is over, you won't hear from them until there is another crisis.

I sincerely believe that this officer is wrong this time

because I believe that our cause is just and we are determined to follow through. We are very familiar with the Biblical inscription that says "The race is not given to the swift or the strong, but to them that will endure to the end." I quote the late great World Heavyweight Boxing Champion Joe Louis, when he characterized America's involvement in World War II. Joe said, "We are going to win because God is on our side."

Enough is enough.

We cannot ever quit as long as the present conditions exist. U.S. Senator Harry Reid in his recent Town Hall Meeting at Doolittle Center stated that we have 50 percent unemployment among our Black youth in West Las Vegas. The hotels in Las Vegas are hiring people from across this country and around the world, while this condition exists. Enough is enough.

Fight back, West Las Vegas. Stop putting your money in banks that will not loan you your own money, while you live in the redline area of postal zones 89106 and 89030. Your money is being loaned out to other people to build their side of town, while yours looks rundown.

Enough is enough.

Too many of our young boys are chased out of school and sent to opportunity school after being placed in the computer. The next step is Spring Mountain, then Jean or Indian Springs and then on to Carson City. Blacks represent 12 percent of the population in the state of Nevada and 60 percent of those in prison.

Now we learn that the system is getting ready to build more prisons, creating more middle class jobs for people who are not in prison. To be sure, there are those who must be put in prison, but there are others who should not be there. Crimes of misdemeanors and those who have committed non-violent crimes should not be there. We have more Black men in prison than we have in college. It costs \$5,000 yearly to educate them and \$25,000 yearly to keep them in prison. We are not convinced that randomly putting people in prison reduces crime.

I've been told that I'm the world's best customer for a commodity called oversimplification. That may well be so. However, I do not understand why someone or some group who is bothered by being stereotyped seem to have little reluctance in doing so to others. It is that refusal which diminishes reciprocity in interpersonal relationships and also invalidates what I consider the most important right--human right--that any of us have; the right to become angry. We lose that right, I believe, when we are insensitive or cavalier in our

If you want to know more about what is taking place in your community, then you should come to the NAACP Community Meeting Monday, April 2, 1990 - 7:00 P.M. - at New Jerusalem Baptist Church, 1100 N. "D" Street.

Winners don't quit. Join the NAACP today, at 940 W. Owens Ave., 646-1662.



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