

Point of View

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CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

THE LIVING LEGACY OF THURGOOD MARSHALL

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Supreme Court Justice, NAACP leader, freedom-fighting lawyer, social visionary and strategic genius on civil rights, yet in life, Thurgood Marshall was even more than all of these accurate descriptions. He lived his entire life as a committed servant to the cause of equal justice and human dignity for all.

Keep in mind that during the 1940's and the 1950's it was not only unpopular but extremely dangerous for an African American to give consistent public voice in opposition to American racism and exploitation. As

millions of persons paid tributes to Marshall after his death, we believe it is fitting to remind especially our youth that the spirit and legacy of this great man must live on in how well and how excellent we all continue the struggle for equal justice and empowerment.

Down in the deep South of the United States as well as in other regions, there are many persons who still remember that the very name of Thurgood Marshall when spoken would invoke the notion of him being a modern "Moses." He was in fact a prophet who did not just make

a forecast about the future but who seized the present moment for prophetic legal action making a critical difference in the national social order.

In a sense, 1993 offers profound challenges to all of those who have inherited the societal contributions of Marshall and other freedom fighters. The question is, Will we let the memory of Justice Marshall disappear or fade away in the midst of new challenges surrounding the same old problems of racial discrimination and bigotry?

There could not be a better method of honoring the memory

of Thurgood Marshall than picking up the baton of the ongoing Civil Rights Movement and making more progress for the cause of freedom and justice. In too many communities today there is the profound reality of hopelessness and despair because of the increasing racial and economic inequities throughout all aspects of society. In other words, there are more reasons today which demand a revitalization of the "Movement" that Marshall dedicated his life and energy toward. Again, the question is, Will we rise to the occasion and con-

tinue to "fight the good fight?"

As always, there are those who would attempt to mis-state the true legacy of Marshall. Revisionists by definition never stop attempting to tell another people's story their own reformulated way and thus distort the facts.

One writer in a major national daily newspaper attempted to paint Marshall as an elitist who often criticized his contemporaries like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. But the truth is Thurgood Marshall was a team player who knew the importance of the unity of the "Movement." Yes, different leaders have different assets and gifts. The key is to work together and to promote unity and the common good toward the goal of justice and equitable economic empowerment.

The struggle that Thurgood Marshall led lives on and the issues of racial inequities today are more profound than was the



BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR

case thirty years ago. Covert racism is more difficult to combat. Institutionalized racial discrimination sometimes will make the victims think that they are themselves the only reason why they are victimized. But we should not permit the 1990's to continue to be the decade of "Blaming the victim for their victimization." The living legacy of Thurgood Marshall demands that the Civil Rights Movement return to an activist, positive posture. There are literally millions of sisters and brothers who today should be rank and file members of a revitalized "freedom movement."

Thank God for the life of Thurgood Marshall and may we keep his legacy strong, viable and victorious.



SHOOT TO KILL

Las Vegas City Councilman Frank Hawkins' position on the killing of Gregory Warren is right on time. The councilman is now the part of a ever growing list of Southern Nevadans who are sick of the outright killing of humans. One would have to be seriously concerned for themselves and others when it seems that the only tactic that the police knows is Bang! Bang! Dead! Even more frightening is how the police department consistently resists any opportunity, real opportunity I might add, to explore ways of preventing this distrust and barbaric image that they have. In fact, its hard to believe that they do not enjoy this presto mancho mindset.

Las Vegas is a young, fast-growing city. However because of this growth, its important that the city no longer accept this gangland style of policing where those who care about law enforcement are viewed as the enemy and in turn, treated that way. Las Vegas must not accept or in

no way tolerate this aggressive and constant move by law enforcement to create a psychological or physical state of apartheid right here in this city. It seems as if the first thing that some of them learn in academy is the word "justifiable." Maybe not, but someone please explain to us how every single time a citizen is shot or choked to death by a police officer it is ruled as justifiable. Everytime. We must stop accepting unacceptably high rates of crime against people in silence. There must be a single standard of patrol in all areas of Clark County, a single standard of arrest and bail, and a single standard of prosecution and judgment. At this point there is no choice but to all pull together for a call to action. A call to permanent action.

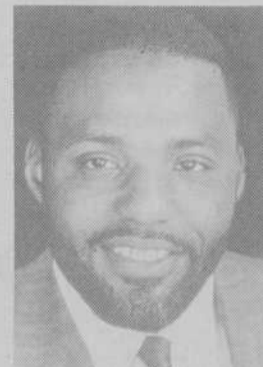
There is no need, especially under the circumstances, for us to argue over different approaches to the problem. The problem is so massive, it affects us and so many dimensions of our lives, and threatens so many of our institutions and values, that there is room, and work

here for everybody.

The greatest injustice that could be served as you read this, is to view this writing as simply a reaction to the shooting and killing of Gregory Warren. Nothing could be further from the facts. However, because of that killing, it is time to be responsible enough to stand up, I mean really stand up and deal with this the right way. This situation is nothing new, it has hampered our survival as people since our kidnapping hundreds of years ago. If this is a reaction, its a reaction that extends far beyond last Sunday.

In order to survive, we must never again give in to a system daily degrading us and telling us to be patient and wait until the morality of this oppression decides that we have endured enough.

During the 1991 session of the Nevada Legislature, I introduced assembly Bill 306, which would give local governments the right to establish review boards to oversee police departments. This bill would only give local governments the options



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

to create such panels, not to direct them to do so. However, wouldn't you know, Metro even opposed this concept, and was successful in getting the bill killed. Now that the legislature is back in session, its important to monitor closely what is happening with attempts to create new laws that will govern us all. Keep an eye on the "legislative briefs" featured in this newspaper by my intern Steven Horsford.

I agree with Councilman Hawkins, and we all should on this one. Remember the words of Frederick Douglass, "This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will."

Don't you think that because this time it ain't you, does not mean that next time you couldn't be on the other end of a gun of someone who shoots to kill!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

I have a comment to make about the article '24/7 And 365' dated February 4, 1993 by Ray E. Willis. Mr Willis stated "Black History Month should be done away with." Though I respect Mr. Willis' right to his opinion, I'm sure he will respect my right to disagree.

I am proud to be Black 24/7 and 365 days a year, and, no I do not need Black History Month to

feel good about my Blackness. However, what Black History Month does is to recognize African-American accomplishments that have previously been taught from a Eurocentric perspective, for hundreds of years.

I graduated Class of 84' Western High School without one single course in Black history. Why, because it was not offered. The closest thing we (See Letters to Editor, Page 7)

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