

Point of View

The views on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one depicted as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication

TO BE EQUAL

JUSTICE IS SERVED — FINALLY

By John E. Jacob

The conviction of two police officers who assaulted Rodney King was a gratifying indication that the American system of justice, however flawed and subject to error, does work.

More was at stake here than the outcome of one case. At stake was the credibility of a justice system that, in the first King trial, acquitted wrongdoers in the face of overwhelming evidence, convincing many people that the system was rigged.

It seemed too ready to con-

vict blacks of crimes, send them to prison, and throw away the key. But when whites were in the dock for crimes committed against blacks, as in the King case, it would find ways to avoid a guilty verdict.

The first King trial, with those tapes of policemen relentlessly beating an unarmed and helpless man, reinforced that widespread feeling.

But let's not get too smug about the verdict in the second trial. Sure, the system finally worked. But that doesn't always

happen.

In general, African American men enter the criminal justice system with the odds stacked against them.

Ingrained prejudice, even racism, presumes their criminality. Evidence that might be less than compelling if the accused were white becomes unassailable when the accused is black.

In every aspect of it's workings, the criminal justice system operates to the disadvantage of African Americans.

Blacks are more likely to be

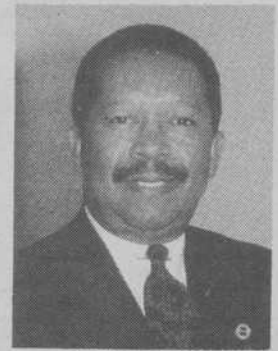
arrested than whites, more likely to be found guilty, more likely to be imprisoned, more likely to get longer sentences.

I'm prepared to concede that at least some of that disparity is related to statistically greater black involvement in crimes, no surprise given widespread poverty and discrimination.

But that hardly accounts for all of the disparity. I'm sure that as many white youth engage in criminal activities, especially when you control for socio-economic status.

But police seem to be more prone to arrest black youths. They fit the "profile" police tend to associate with offenders, and their presumed guilt means they are more likely to be picked up as suspects, whether guilty or not. And once caught in the system, it's hard to get out.

That helps account for more African American young men being caught in the criminal justice system than attending college. And it helps explain much of the bitterness against law enforcement officers and the



JOHN E. JACOB

criminal justice system.

I have little sympathy for those who condemn the system as an excuse for their own predatory actions against other black people.

But they do have a point when they say the system doesn't work fairly. The prime task for law enforcement agencies and for the community is to make it work fairly.

The starting place has to be within the law enforcement organizations. They can no longer act above the law, as the thugs who beat Rodney King did.

Nor can they expect to operate effectively without the confidence of and the cooperation of the communities they are supposed to serve.

It shouldn't take fear of riots to blanket high crime areas with patrols and make them safe havens for a day. Poor black neighborhoods want to be as safe as affluent white ones, and they want the police to be protective agents, not oppressive forces.

The trend toward community policing is a healthy step in that direction, but it will take a lot more — and more good will and cooperation on both sides — before police and community are finally reconciled.

If the tragic King case brings that closer, it will not have been in vain.

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

IN MEMORY OF CHRIS HANI

By Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.

Once again, all freedom-loving people throughout the world are in a state of shock and disgust over the tragic assassination of Chris Hani, young gifted

leader of the African National Congress (ANC). This is another painful reminder of the racist brutality of the apartheid regime in South Africa. It is important that we not let the

memory and living spirit of Chris Hani fade.

On April 10, 1993, immediately after returning home from buying a newspaper, Chris Hani was shot to death by a racist coward named Januz Waluz. Official South African government explanations now reveal that Chris Hani's assassin has direct ties to the most radical faction of the neo-Nazi conservative party in South Africa.

Although Waluz was arrested shortly after he drove away from Mr. Hani's home, it was not until several top leaders of this racist faction were subsequently arrested that one top South African police official acknowledged that Hani's killing may have been part of a coordinated, assassination conspiracy.

African-American civil rights leaders in the United States, as well as the masses of millions of our brothers and sisters, mourn the loss of this great South African leader. Chris Hani, at the prime age of 50 years, was one of the bright, shining stars of an emerging new South Africa. Yet, the pains and sacrifices necessary to transform South Africa into a democracy appear to be increasingly fatal.

The history of the freedom movement in the United States, Africa, and throughout the world well documents the necessity not to let assassins silence the movement. We must therefore

lift our voices — not only to mourn this loss, but to increase the volume of our outrage against the hideous spectacle of the institutions of apartheid in South Africa. The origin of Chris Hani's murder weapon substantially implicates South Africa's President and his government. It was too easy for these white, right-wing extremists to steal this particular gun from the military in Pretoria. Although Hani's assailant reportedly had licenses for four guns — including a machine pistol — the one he used to kill Hani was not among them.

Moreover, reliable sources point out the South African police found a "hit list" in the home of Hani's murderer which contained the names of other African political leaders in South Africa. To date, those names have not been revealed. Such startling revelations can only have a very chilling effect on the negotiating process to end white rule there.

In fact, it would be more accurate to characterize this brutal murder as a staggering blow to the progress already made in South Africa's transition to majority rule. Chris Hani had the best credentials to succeed Nelson Mandela. Not only had he held several prominent leadership positions in the ANC, but he also had the most charismatic appeal to angry, young



BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS, JR.

Blacks. He earned credibility for the ANC among the disgruntled Black youth in South Africa. In fact, Hani was viewed by most public opinion polls as the person to lead the ANC into the 21st century.

Now that Hani is no longer with us, the transition journey to majority rule in South Africa will be rougher than ever.

Nevertheless, we must be ever vigilant and keep the faith. Chris Hani has not died in vain and the 'free South Africa' movement will continue and succeed. Long live the memory of Chris Hani.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir:

It is my hope that you can answer some questions that persist in my mind. I have definitely perused information about the N.C.A.A., and would like a response to the following:

1. The N.C.A.A. was originally formed when and by whom?
2. Where is the N.C.A.A.'s power base, is it the educational system, Congress, state regulated or private interest?
3. Who sets the rules and how often are they updated?
4. Are the Board of Directors nominated or appointed and if so by whom?
5. Who is the current chairman of the board? Are the board members salaried and if so how are the salaries funded?
6. To my knowledge there has never been as much controversy about college players and the violations of N.C.A.A. rules as we see today. More often than not this generally involves young black men who have a chance for the pros and quite possibly a better life?

According to what is printed and reported in the news, only black young men commit these

violations. Is this so?

7. Are there any members of the board who publicly acknowledge membership in groups that advocate white supremacy such as the K.K.K.?

8. Why is it that these people seem to be so clandestine? By no means are they silent as they go through the process of destroying lives, case in point Coach Tarkanian.

The attack on him seemed to be provoked because he had a desire to help some young black men succeed.

9. Are the UNLV Board of Regents under the thumb of N.C.A.A. or are they acting independently in the J.R. Rider case? Did this fiasco originate with the teacher coming to the board or did someone approach her? What took so long for the board to investigate?

I have prepared these questions and statements and submitted them to individuals who have insight and knowledge in the hopes of pertinent information. Thank you for what ever help and cooperation you are able to give me.

— Julius Curry

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