

Cross burnings require quick, serious response

By Ken Morgan
Special to Sentinel-Voice

On a recent summer evening, a 5-x-8 foot cross was burned on a field not far from my Baltimore, Md. home. Since Skinhead and Ku Klux Klan recruiting and activity have roots in Remington, as well as in adjacent Hampden, this is not surprising.

For some time, white working class Remington residents have felt hemmed in by their town's changing complexion. Ironically, they have a lot in common with the blacks moving into the area. Even before blacks began moving there, the cops treated "poor white trash" (marginalized working class whites) like "n—rs."

So what has been the official response to the cross burning?

The police investigated it for as long as it took to douse the emotional flames, then closed the case in less than a week, calling it a prank and an isolated incident. Not surprising.

But surprisingly, black politicians have remained mum. This, in Baltimore, a city that is 62 percent black, has a black mayor and a majority black city council. In addition, the state has many black legislators and the black working class vote put the governor in office and heavily supported the state's two U.S. senators.

Meanwhile, the media has also ignored the problem.

But a cross burning can never be ignored. It is never a prank. It cannot be dismissed whether in Tupelo, Miss., or Baltimore. It requires a call to action. After the incident, some residents demanded that police reopen the case. The message: cross burnings are unwelcome anywhere in Baltimore.

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Photo special to Sentinel-Voice
Students Sala Noloan, left, and Carrie Lucas are two of several Iliff School of Theology students engaged in a hunger strike over the school's lack of commitment to racial diversity. Iliff is a Denver, Colo.-based theological seminary.

Students want divinity and diversity

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Five students at a tiny, serene theological college, tucked in one of Denver's oldest neighborhoods, have fasted for more than two months in an effort to introduce diversity to a place of divinity.

Since May, four women and one man at Iliff School of Theology, have lived on water and communion in protest of what they think is the school's non-committal stance on racial diversity.

Only three of Iliff's 18 professors are minorities, and there are no minorities in administrative positions. Iliff, one of 13 United Methodist seminaries nationwide, offers master's degrees in divinity, religion, arts and social work.

Police arrested eight students May 14 while protesting in the school chapel after closing hours. Dubbed the "Iliff Eight," they are awaiting a July 30 hearing on trespassing charges.

Dr. Donald Messer, Iliff president for 16 years, said security concerns in the chapel prompted the arrests.

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Texaco lawyer absolves company

Special to Sentinel-Voice

An independent investigator said Texaco executives neither uttered racial slurs nor shredded evidence relating to a discrimination lawsuit launched last year by minority employees.

Michael Armstrong, who was hired by Texaco to analyze the tapes and determine what happened to the files, blamed the perceived racial slurs on a poor copy of the original tape made by former executive Richard Lundwall.

The White Plains, N.Y.-based oil and gas giant has since suspended Lundwall's benefits. He and retired treasurer Robert Ulrich face

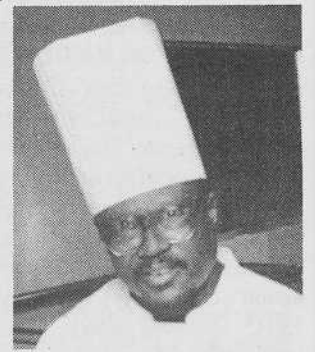
federal charges of obstruction of justice. Lundwall's lawyers refute a tape expert's assertion that he deliberately erased portions of the tape. Both men have pleaded innocent.

Armstrong also said he found no evidence that executives shredded files. The documents they did withhold, he said, were labeled "Documents withheld from Legal."

Minority employees filed suit against Texaco after audiotape recordings surfaced which appear to show executives mocking black employees and planning to shred papers relating to the lawsuit. Last year, Texaco settled the suit for a record \$176 million.

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