

COMMENTARY

Road to bombing justice finally ends with triumph

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It was the summer of 1963, only three weeks after the March on Washington.

Martin Luther King, Jr. and other leaders of the civil rights movement were still elated from that great day when 250,000 people came to Washington, DC in support of equal rights for black Americans. On the morning of September 15, a Sunday morning, Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins and Carole Robertson went to Sunday school and never came home again.

They were the four who were killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.

That horrible action turned the joy of the March into untold sadness for Dr. King and the leaders of the movement.

Now, nearly 40 years later, two more of those long-suspected in the bombing and murder have been indicted for the murder of the four girls. Bobby Frank Cherry and Thomas Blanton, Jr. now join the ranks of Robert Chambliss, who finally was convicted in the bombing in 1977.

Both Cherry and Blanton were suspected of aiding Chambliss from the beginning, but authorities claimed that they did not have enough evidence.

But originally the case, which horrified millions of Americans, was not investigated because of political pressure from both George Wallace and J. Edgar Hoover, both of whom detested the civil rights movement. Blanton and Cherry's indictment



ment comes after a four-year reinvestigation conducted by the FBI and the U.S. Attorney's office.

According to newspaper accounts, Cherry's former wife and a granddaughter have come forward to say they heard him admit to helping in the bombing. Testimony at the Chambliss trial 20 years ago placed Blanton's car at the scene of the crime, but now it seems authorities are ready to press forward.

Stories of Blanton's life in the 37 years since the bombing paint a picture of an angry man who has held a series of security guard jobs and lived in a tiny trailer.

He blamed his job loss on the publicity of the case and blamed civil rights leaders for keeping him from passing the Alabama bar exam after he graduated from an unaccredited law school.

The son of one of Alabama's most notorious

racists, Blanton was a member of the Eastview Klavern No. 13 of the Ku Klux Klan, along with Cherry and Chambliss. His car, Confederate flag flying on the antenna, was probably used to carry the bombers to the church.

Cherry, who moved to Texas in the 1970's, when the bombing case was first reopened, is reported to have been married five times and to have 15 children. He has seemed unrepentant through the years.

The bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church may seem like ancient history to some, but it is very real to the parents of the four little girls. It is very real to all who were in the church that Sunday morning. It is very real to those African Americans who

lived in the city called "Bombingham" throughout the 1950s and 1960s. It is one of the most horrible cases in the horrid annals of racism in which hundreds of civil rights workers and southern blacks who dared to try to vote or to stand up for their rights were killed; thousands of black men, women and children were lynched; tens of thousands died in slavery and millions of Africans and African-Americans suffered untold hardships.

No matter how old, no matter how ill, these two men, if found guilty, should spend the rest of their days in prison. And they should have to look at pictures of those four innocent little girls every one of those days. Only then can we close the chapter of that terrible book.

Are African-Americans getting a fair deal in the gaming industry?

*Louie Overstreet
Sentinel-Voice*

What's your opinion of the gaming industry? Has your opinion changed now that Gene Collins, President of the Las Vegas Branch, NAACP demonstrated the courage to challenge the industry about its contracting practices?



LOUIE OVERSTREET

So that we as a community can have an informed opinion, let me share with you some additional information. The gaming industry is enjoying record earnings. Quoting from a report of earnings for the gaming industry in April "Nevada casinos won \$785.6 million from gamblers in April, a 13.9 percent increase and the third consecutive month the industry posted double digit gains. Stronger still were gains on the Las Vegas Strip, where winnings rose 19 percent to 388.5 million."

Over two million African-Americans visited Las Vegas last year and spent well over a billion dollars.

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority spends over 100 million dollars a year marketing Las Vegas as a tourist and convention destination.

One of the mega hotel/casinos has spent hundreds of millions on goods and services over the past three years: yet only 1/4 of 1 percent of this money was spent with Afri-

can-American businesses and professionals.

Check through this current addition of this newspaper, do you see any advertisement from the gaming and tourism industries?

Folks, your understanding of these facts is critical to your developing an informed opinion about whether the gaming industry is giving us a fair deal or is the deck being stacked against us?

The opinions you form and actions you take are going to be as critical to our collective economic well being as the action African-Americans took back in the late early 1970s to gain the right to work on the "Strip." Fighting to gain the right to work on the Strip in itself is ironic in that Las Vegas' reputation as the "Entertainment Capital of the World" was built on the backs of Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis Jr., Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and Lena Horne in the 1960s.

The NAACP and Gene Collins are going to need the support of all 112,000 of us that live in Clark County, if they are going to be able to carry the day in championing the cause for equitable participation of black businesses in the gaming and tourism industries, three decades after the struggle for fair employment was won.

March to redeem King's dream of peace, equality

*The Rev. Al Sharpton
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a visionary. He believed in a world where equality and justice are the founding principles upon which society rests.

On Aug. 28, 1963, he led The March on Washington—a peaceful and public declaration to the United States that it had defaulted on its promissory note that guaranteed all citizens to the "unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King declared that America could not honor this sacred obligation until it rid itself of the ills of injustice, particularly police brutality.

Thirty-seven years have passed since Dr. King's march and it is time to re-examine his vision. An abhorrent number of people of color are stopped and searched on our nation's thoroughfares and on neighborhood streets because their skin is of a darker hue.

An abominable number of people of color are still subjected to uncontrolled police rage because America allows the pattern to sustain. Citizens of this country should no longer be forced to endure the discriminatory practices of racial profiling in the 21st century. No longer should citizens be the victims of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality. If Dr. King were alive today, he would undeniably call us to action yet again.

On Saturday, Aug. 26, Martin Luther King, III and I, along with other religious, civic and community leaders from across the country, will come together to heed that call.

We are calling for every conscious, non-violent citizen to gather with us at the Lincoln Memorial to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On this day we will stand as a united front, imploring President Clinton and Congress to enact legislature that penalizes offenders of racial profiling and police



REV. AL SHARPTON

brutality.

We'll march until the world hears the magnitude of our cries, and we'll gather until the nation feels our urgency. We'll stand together to protest our perpetual victimization. We'll peacefully assemble to demand a stop to human suffering at the hand of the nation's police. We must let the government know that we will not wait any longer for them to enact legislation that punishes every offender that violates the human and civil rights of American citizens.

In order to insure a successful march, it is imperative that everyone heeds the call.

Whether you are black or white, heed the call. Whether you are rich or poor, heed the call. Despite your occupation — transit worker, postal worker, clerk, lawyer, doctor, civil servant, educator, religious leader, student, as well as the unemployed — heed the call. We want every man, woman, and child to take a stand to oppose injustice by joining us to "Redeem the Dream!"

This is an opportunity for every "dream redeemer" to regain their voice - let us shout out in unison against racial profiling and police brutality.

Let us shake the Capitol with a loud cry because Abner Louima, Tyisha Miller, Anthony Baez, Amadou Diallo, Gidone Busch, Patrick Dorismond, and other nameless people have been wrongly victimized.

Although the struggle is sometimes bleak, the vision that Martin Luther King, Jr. once possessed must continue to live on. It must live on inside each one of us. And it is up to each person to tap into that vision.

It is our responsibility to continue to cultivate the creative, talented, and strong people that we are. But as we move toward our vision, we cannot, and will not, bow to injustice. We will not break against the oppressive rod of cruel police. We will march on to redeem the dream.

We accept letters to the editor

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