

## POINT OF VIEW

## Our View

## Where's the justice?

Another man dead. Another cop absolved.

The man: unarmed 19-year-old Timothy Thomas, a black man, shot in a dark alley April 7. The cop: Officer Stephen Roach, who is white.

Roach had been charged with negligent homicide and obstructing official business and faced up to nine months in jail if convicted of both charges.

Wednesday's acquittal of Roach has Cincinnati on alert, even though protestors gathered outside the courthouse chanting "No justice, no peace" didn't cause any trouble and black religious leaders have urged calm. They're hoping to avoid a repeat of recent history.

Thomas' death in the Ohio River city sparked the area's worst racial unrest since the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Thomas' shooting sparked three nights of rioting that injured dozens, led to the arrest of more than 800 and prompted city leaders to issue a temporary citywide curfew.

Thomas was the 15th black male killed by Cincinnati police since 1995, though the police union noted that 10 of those men had fired or pointed guns at police officers, and two of the victims drove at officers or dragged them from cars.

Sadly, Thomas joins the notable victims such as Rodney King, Amadou Diallo and others whose names we know because cops assaulted them or bullets unnecessarily cut their lives short.

Sadder still was Hamilton County Municipal Judge Ralph E. Winkler's interpretation of the case as reported by the media.

"This shooting was a split-second reaction to a very dangerous situation created by Timothy Thomas," Winkler said. "Police Officer Roach's action was reasonable on his part, based on ... the information he had at the time in that dark Cincinnati alley."

Winkler went on to contrast Roach's pristine record with that of Thomas' troublesome past: Thomas had been wanted on 14 warrants, including traffic charges and previously fleeing police. Roach testified that Thomas failed to respond to an order to show his hands.

Such verdicts only serve to foment minority distrust of the judicial system. Time and again stories surface of minorities being gunned down by cops, only to have police departments' Internal Affairs Bureaus and grand jury to rule the shootings justifiable.

As if like magic, some of the rulings flout conventional logic: victims have frontal exit wounds, showing they were shot in the back—thus blowing holes in officer testimony that the subjects were attacking them—others are pumped full of an inordinate amount of bullets—41 shots were fired at Diallo, 19 struck the target as officers claim a the object he was pulling out of coat resembled a gun; the Western High School student shot to death by a police officer after he and a friend led the cop on a chase in a stolen vehicle—the cop says he was in danger, the boy's friend denies it.

Countless stories exist, including more than 80 in Clark County, where only a handful of officer-involved shootings have resulted in findings critical of the cops. It's exactly that type of arrogance that prompts law-abiding citizens to attack officers. When coupled with apparent judicial indifference, it's easy to see why violence becomes the preferred mode of expression for the helpless.

Hopefully, cooler heads will prevail in Cincinnati as unrest merely gives cops an unabashed license to increase the black body count.

That Roach could lose his job offers only some solace, but that's muted by his words outside the courtroom: "Unfortunately, this is a tragedy for everybody involved."

Easy for him to say... he's alive.



## We are all equally American

Special to Sentinel-Voice

While American society wrestles, still, with the question of who is an American — that is, with who is entitled to equal opportunity in this society — we have discovered again that practitioners of Terror know who is an American. They know that we are all equally American.

Timothy McVeigh, born and raised in America, understood that. So, Americans of African, Hispanic, Asian, Arabic, Native American, and European descent who worked in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City died that awful day in April 1995.

So, too, did those murderers who struck at the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August 1998; Americans (and Africans and Europeans) of all backgrounds died that day also.


And so did the practitioners of Terror who have now brought so much agony, death and destruction to America's shores.

Like Timothy McVeigh, they deliberately struck not just at the "symbols" of the American nation. They attacked the World Trade Center — which stood less than a mile from the National Urban League's headquarters — and the Pentagon at the beginning of the workday, when both places would be filled with people of America: people of African, Hispanic, Asian, Arabic, Native American, and European descent. Those who died and were injured were members of our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

Thus, the practitioners of Terror have shown once again

## To Be Equal

By **Hugh B. Price**  
President  
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that while they often condemn America for its history of discrimination against Americans of color, they do not hesitate to target Americans of color for murder, too.

They understand that we are all equally American, whether our ancestors arrived on the *Mayflower* or the slave ships; whether they fled pogroms in Europe or tyranny and poverty in South America, Africa, or the Middle East; whether the governments of our ancestors' country of origin were democratic or authoritarian; whether our families came three centuries ago or yesterday.

(Of course, we know that these murderers don't value the lives of any human beings. Citizens of forty countries worked at the World Trade Center, a crossroads of the world. They, too, are among the missing and dead.)

One piercing question this tragedy and its aftermath illuminates is: Do we Americans understand that we are all equally American?

This has been the great question of the American Experience. Despite the soaring, visionary rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence about the "self-evident truths" of human existence, and the rules and safeguards

of liberty laid out in the Constitution, the struggle of various groups of Americans for equality of opportunity has in fact been the defining characteristic of this nation.

For most of this nation's history, the majority's pledge of allegiance to the principle of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness was defined in such a way as to deny opportunity to entire groups of Americans. That denial was commonplace in too many sectors of American life right up to September 11.

But now, tragically, we see how American we all are — in the equality of the loss of life, and in the equality of the grieving that has been so poignantly on display in such mass ceremonies as the prayer gathering in New York's Yankee Stadium and in New

Jersey's Liberty State Park this past Sunday, and in smaller ceremonies throughout the nation, and, of course, in many private homes.

That is why this great question should be asked now as our government prepares to wage war against those who have declared war against us. Will the great surge of compassion and patriotic feeling be a mechanism for truly pulling all of America together?

In the first days after the attack, some commentators pushed the morally repugnant notion that the need for increased security justifies racial profiling, whether based on suspicion of terrorism or a suspicion of some other criminal intent.

Yes, the need for increased security justifies a heightened state of watchfulness of everyone in the public sphere.

But there is no excuse for singling out some Americans for no reason other than the color of their skin or their ethnic background or the way they dress. Such a policy and practice would make a mockery of "national unity."

Fortunately, President  
(See *Equally*, Page 19)

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