

OUR VIEW

Justice Scaled

While a jury's decision to spare the life of Lee Boyd Malvo, the teenage accomplice of convicted D.C. Beltway sniper John Muhammad, doesn't signal an end to what amounts to a protracted, centuries-long open season on Black men, it's nonetheless heartening. If anything, it signals that the scales of justice can be, and should be, weighted according to peculiarities of a case.

Prosecutors argued that the 18-year-old Malvo was little more than a brainwashed, violent pawn of the 42-year-old Muhammad. He was 17 at the time of the shootings. Some will no doubt think Malvo's defense team juiced the system by playing the "age card," however, age factored mightily in the case, as it should have.

Only in the last 20 years, with advent of tough-on-crime laws, has the line between juvenile and adult punishment become nearly indistinguishable. These days, more youth, some as young as 14, find themselves tossed inside full-fledged prisons for criminal indiscretions (some egregious, some not) and forced to fend for themselves among predatory adults. The effect has been the criminalization of an entire generation of minority youth, Black and Hispanic in particular.

At the same time, the largely Republican lawmakers who championed get tough on crime worked to make it easier for their friends to profit off the burgeoning prison industry complex. Lucrative business contracts were funneled to associates, who convinced governments that private industry could run more efficient lock-ups, thus hogging millions in federal subsidies. Again, at the expense of Black and Hispanic youth.

Indignant over this reality, activists, parents of incarcerated youth (and some who've lost family and loved ones to youth violence) have been mobilizing to repeal our Soviet-era prison system, focus on inmate rehabilitation and create a new set of standards for dispensing justice to juveniles.

Alas, Malvo isn't out of the woods yet. He could face the death penalty if tried for other slayings linked to the snipers in Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana and Virginia.

Westside Glory

News of the nation being put on "orange alert" status in response to intelligence reports about possible terrorist plots against U.S. cities such as Los Angeles, New York and Las Vegas-got you down? Then come to West Las Vegas.

Why? Because it's unlikely that terrorists will target the area.

Now this is as much a reason to rejoice as it is to be upset. You can rejoice because West Las Vegas has been summarily left out of the boom that has put Las Vegas into the global spotlight and onto the world's to-do list. You won't find chic lounges, world-famous nightclubs, trendy casinos, billion-dollar replicas of great cities, gondolas, water shows, sirens, pirates, faux lions, real tigers, sharks, blue men, Celine or Caesar, Picasso or Renoir (or other top-notch restaurants), a human zoo or knights on horses.

Nor will you find master-planned suburbia, golf courses, restaurant rows, malls, huge regional parks.

Nor will you find multimillion-dollar outlets, a swank, new Miami-theme lounge, a burgeoning arts district, and a billion-dollar under-construction furniture mall.

A target, West Las Vegas is not.

Which gives you reason to be upset. While the rest of the city experiences growth and obtains the trappings of a world-class metropolis, the West Side has experienced molasses-slow improvement. It's not that area leaders aren't working hard to change the texture (they are), it's that they're not getting much help from the outside world. So, if you're worried about being vulnerable in your part of town, come on over to the West Side, where things are safe.

POINT OF VIEW



Exploitation is as American as...

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

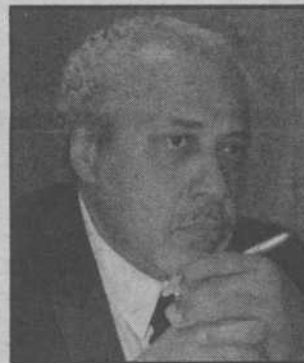
Did you read the ridiculous comments made a week or so ago by pro basketball player Rasheed Wallace, a \$17-million-a-year athlete, about African-Americans who are talented enough to go straight from high school to the NBA are being exploited?

His comments caused me to reflect on the various forms of exploitation that are taking place in our society whether oppressive or consensual in nature.

For certain, however, anytime an 18-year-old can leave high school and start a job paying millions of dollars a year "ain't" an exploitative arrangement. Basketball players drafted in the first round receive a guaranteed three-year contract for at least \$10 million.

If Brother Wallace were as smart as he is talented, then his comments would reflect a different reality. In capitalistic America, there are only four conditions that need to be satisfied in order for a contract to be valid: (1) capacity of parties; (2) mutual agreement or consent; (3) consideration; and (4) legality.

While I have observed some fools playing basketball, I do not recall seeing any crazy people in the game. Thus, students graduating from high school can easily



LOUIE OVERSTREET

satisfy the first condition of a valid contract. Mutual agreement condition is another easy condition of contract law to satisfy. The exchange goes something like this. The team owner states, "I want you to play basketball for my team." The high school kid says, "I would like to play for your team, if you are lucky enough draft me."

The third condition of contract (consideration) is the easiest to satisfy. I will validate this condition by illustration. If you were offered a \$3.33 million a year salary to perform duties that you enjoy doing, wouldn't you think this salary to be fair consideration? Finally, playing basketball is a legal activity in America. Unlike entering into a contract with someone to commit murder, it would be an illegal activity and an unenforceable contract.

To understand just how ridiculous it is for your boy Wallace to suggest that an 18-year-old being paid \$3 million a year is an exploit-

ative exercise, consider the following fact. The average per-capita income for working adults in Las Vegas is \$19,000 a year. Thus, what a first-year African-American NBA player will make would pay the salaries of 175 working adults in Las Vegas.

The ridiculous argument about any Black athlete earning millions of dollars a year being exploited has been put to rest. Now let's discuss several of the exploitative things that are really taking place here in America.

In too many instances females in our society by consent or otherwise, when it comes to what is euphemistically referred to as being employed in the adult entertainment industry, are being exploited.

Young people, who idealistically are volunteering for military service, are being exploited due to our country's imperialistic attitude towards

non-industrialized or non-technological countries thousands of miles from our shores. This attitude, based on some ill-defined foreign policy under a succession of presidents, often results in the need to declare war against and/or occupy these countries. Dating back to the Vietnam conflict, thousands of young people have given their lives without ever really understanding why they were on foreign soil. Given the world situation today, one could make the argument that these lives in far too many instances were sacrificed in vain.

The thing that is being most exploited in America is the workforce being used as a wedge issue. The powers that be have done a masterful job of convincing unemployed white factory workers that the reason they do not have jobs is due to affirmative action.

(See Overstreet, Page 12)

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