

# For sake of justice, case needs to be reopened

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Just recently nearly 1,800 Mississippians and other Americans gathered in Philadelphia, Mississippi, at two ceremonies to speak to each other and call forward, as one said, the tide of justice.

They gathered because forty years ago, on the night of June 21, 1964, a terrible wrong was done there.

On that night, three young men—one, African-American and a native Mississippian; the two others, White and Jewish from New York, united by their belief that all Americans deserved a full measure of citizenship, disappeared into History.

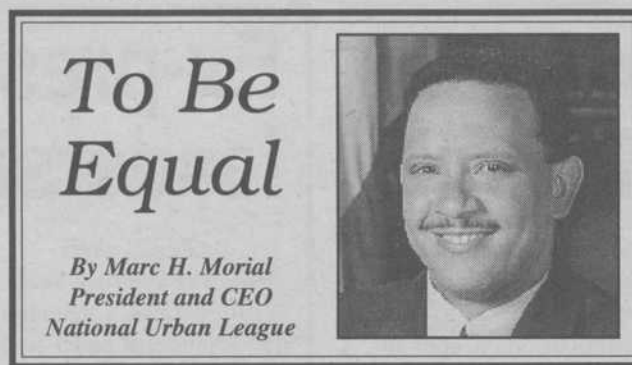
They were individuals, with their own names and their own pasts—James

Chaney, Michael (Mickey) Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. But they shared a cruel fate. They were stalked, kidnapped and murdered just outside of Philadelphia, in rural Neshoba County by men who thought that if they shed enough blood they could repel the tide of history.

Their killers are thought to have numbered at least eighteen and have included town law officials as well as members of the Ku Klux Klan. Seven Klan members were later convicted of federal civil rights violations and sentenced to from three to ten years in prison.

No one has ever been charged with their murders.

However, recently Jim Hood, the state's attorney, has sought federal assistance in



re-opening the investigation of the killings, and the United States Attorney's Office for Mississippi has said it's reviewing the request.

I hope the case is reopened. As Rep. John Lewis, Democrat of Georgia, who himself played a prominent role in the Civil Rights Movement, pointed out at the ceremonies, pursuing the wrongdoers is not just a matter of

redressing individual crimes. "It's important," he said, "that justice be done for history's sake."

In Philadelphia a gathering sponsored by the multiracial Philadelphia Coalition and held at the Neshoba County Coliseum, was the first time the state and the town have officially marked the sad anniversary.

The Mount Zion United Methodist Church, whose 1964 burning by the Klan had prompted Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner's trip to the county, has held a ceremony every year since the crime occurred. As we come closer to our annual July 4th celebration of America's long-declared commitment to equality and justice for all—and do so amid the raging of wars beyond our shores—it's vital to remember not only our good fortune.

It's as important to remember how great in America's past were the gaps between its rhetoric and its practices—and the price some paid to

close them.

The price the three civil rights workers paid was dear. The news of their disappearance immediately provoked an almost palpable sense of foreboding within the Movement, and among many Black Americans, who were all too aware of Mississippi's reputation as a place of violent racial extremism.

Even as segregationists jeered that the activists' disappearance was a hoax to gain publicity for the Movement—their buried bodies would not be found for 44 days—few decent people doubted what had happened.

Indeed, all through the spring of 1964, warnings of an explosion of violence in Mississippi had been coming from many quarters. The nationally syndicated columnist Joseph Alsop, writing from Washington, warned, "a very great storm is gathering—and may break very soon indeed—[there]... The southern half of Mississippi ... has been powerfully reinvaded by the Ku Klux Klan..."

That's because it was apparent by early 1964 that the Civil Rights Movement itself was building a crescendo. The shocking assassination of President John F. Kennedy the previous November had given a powerful impetus to what became the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which Kennedy

had endorsed. President Lyndon Baines Johnson would sign the Act that July 2, two weeks after Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman disappeared.

Secondly, Mississippi civil rights activists had stepped up their challenges to the state's rigid adherence to White-supremacist practices and had announced a "Freedom Summer" voter registration campaign designed to destroy segregationists' political power, a prospect which infuriated the Klan and its supporters.

Some may want to dismiss the marking of this sad anniversary as irrelevant to our own time.

Let them speak to the Black, White and Choctaw Mississippians who spoke of remembering the whole past in order to build a future of integrity and reconciliation. And let them recall another commemoration earlier this month—of the 60th anniversary of the D-Day invasion during a war which made the world safe for the expansion of democracy.

The right to expand freedom within America's borders, and the sacrifices its "soldiers" made, two decades later was no less important—and, like the commemoration of D-Day is no less worthy of use as inspiration for the work the freedom struggle must now do.

## Overstreet

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solutely good sense in a city, county and state famous for close elections.

It is rare where an election is decided by a double-digit margin.

Thus, if we comprise about 7 percent of the state population, 9 percent of the county population and more than 10 percent of the city population, we would be fools not try to leverage our strategic voting potential to improve our quality of life.

In all honesty this isn't a new model. The Mormons have used this model for years to leverage its political power here in the Valley.

Thus, at least to me, it's amusing for some young White reporter to attempt to characterize CAAN as an organization that discriminates against White folks, as opposed to its formation being an act of salvation.

Mr. Pratt even took it upon himself to call around to White politicians who were planning on attending the community-based candidate forum CAAN held all day last Saturday and suggest to them that they may not want to participate in the forum.

"Ain't" this some you know what?

The Rev. Dr. Robert Fowler, president of CAAN, and group spokesperson Cordell Stokes worked very hard to host a forum whereby as many members of our community that chose to do so could become informed about the issues and candidates.

Personally knowing these two community stalwarts, I have no doubt some "busy body" reporter being fed bad info by one of our own is going to be able to turn them away from a mission that is so vital to our community.

Fowler and Stokes, keep the faith babies. We have got your backs!

## Curry

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gress has approved \$151.1 billion and is expected to approve even more as U.S. troops remain in Iraq after the official change in government. One economist projects that the cost of the war will average at least \$3,415 for every U.S. household.

**SOCIAL COSTS** - "The Bush administration combination of massive spending on the war and tax cuts for the wealthy means less money for social spending," the report observes. "The administration's FY 2005 budget request proposes deep cuts in critical domestic programs. It also virtually freezes funding for domestic discretionary programs other than homeland security."

If Bush is re-elected, the report states, he plans further cuts in domestic spending.

"Indeed, a leaked memo from the White House to domestic agencies outlines major cuts following the election, including funding for education, Head Start, home ownership, job training, medical research and homeland security—all programs the president has been touting during the campaign," it says.

"The \$126 billion already appropriated and the \$25 billion pending for the war in Iraq could have purchased any of the following

desperately needed services in our country: close to 23 million housing vouchers; health care for over 27 million uninsured Americans; nearly 3 million new elementary school teachers; 678,200 new fire engines; over 20 million Head Start slots for children; health care coverage for 82 million children."

**SECURITY COSTS** - "Polls reveal that the war has damaged the U.S. government's standing and credibility in the world. Surveys in eight European and Arab countries demonstrated broad public agreement that the war has hurt, rather than helped, the war on terrorism. At home, 54 percent of Americans polled by the Annenberg Election Survey felt that 'the situation in Iraq was not worth going to war over.'"

The report continues, "A number of former military officials have criticized the war, including retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, who has charged that by manufacturing a false rationale for war, abandoning traditional allies, propping up and trusting Iraqi exiles, and failing to plan for post-war Iraq, the Bush Administration made the United States less secure."

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NPA News Service.

## Walters

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promising that whatever number of troops are required will be provided. He is wrecking the military reserve in the process, to achieve their mission "with honor."

By taking the position of staying in Iraq and "completing the job" Clinton is also giving cover to John Kerry. This means that the Democrats and Republicans have virtually the same position now on the war, which is the problem with Kerry's campaign right now.

At a time when the vast majority of the American people are telling their political leaders they want them to go another way, Kerry is not giving them a distinctively different policy. Instead, he is following Bush. It makes you wish for a Howard Dean, someone who would stand up and say that the war is wrong and that the path to redeeming America's honor is to admit a mistake and get out.

With Bush falling in the polls because the public is souring on the war in Iraq, Kerry may well ride this momentum into the White House. If so, he will become the new Nixon, inheriting a war and having to end it "with honor."

But if he does not move quickly enough, like Nixon, he will also face the certain wrath of American people and become the brunt of an anti-war movement to force

him to get out—this time, mounted by those who are normally a sympathetic part of the Democratic Party constituency.

In this respect, history is a guide to the current moment and one wonders that with the greatest intellectual establishment in the world to analyze history, why the lessons of history are ignored. It is because the function of the intellectual establishment, especially the media, is not to critique the actions of political leaders, but to rationalize and profit from them.

The media did not get America out of Vietnam; they were more concerned with a break-in at the Watergate Hotel—and since they are now "embedded," they will not get America out of Iraq.

Right now it is the big story, all Iraq, all the time, and they are using the war and its many manifestations of books, hearings, budget battles, leaked reports, latest killings, and etc., to sell some more papers and TV spots.

So, let us be clear. This is not about America's honor. It is about how politicians duck the judgment of history and how those who feed off of their mistakes can profit by keeping it center stage. In this sense, Clinton is not a sage, but a pigeon.

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