

Will killing finally unify LA Latinos, Blacks?

By Kevin Herrera
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS ANGELES (NNPA) - It was seen by some as a symbol of Black and Brown unity. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and the Rev. Al Sharpton stood side by side at a church service calling on African-Americans and Latinos to come together in the wake of the death of 19-month-old Suzie Marie Peña, who was killed by police during a shootout with her father July 10.

"We want [the Peña] family to know that we love them," Sharpton said during the service at Hope Community Church, a multicultural congregation. "If Suzie had been Black, we'd have been there. If Suzie had been White, someone would have been there. We are here because Suzie should not have suffered what she suffered... One of the reasons I came here is to say even though the victim may not have been African-American, the victim should not be dead... We cannot, in our own fight against racism, only deal with one race."

Since the shooting, two communities thought to be at odds over a lack of housing and quality jobs and other issues in the inner city have literally joined hands in support of the Peña family and in protest against the Los Angeles Police Department, which has long been a source of anger and frustration for both Blacks and Latinos.

The fragile alliance borne out of Suzie's death has many hoping that deeply rooted suspicions can give way to a long-lasting partnership, ensuring that her death was not in vain.

"The impact of Suzie's passing has already been felt by the Latino and African-American community, and this represents a tremendous case for hope, hope that this incident will help us, Latinos and African-Americans, to plant the seed for a real, honest, and comprehensive unity," said Arturo Ybarra, director of the Watts/Century Latino Organization, which was founded in 1990 by Blacks and Latinos to protest a controversial develop-

ment project by the Community Redevelopment Agency.

Suzie was accidentally killed July 10 by a police officer's bullet after she had been held hostage by her father, Jose Raul Peña, for several hours at his auto repair shop in Watts. Peña was reportedly under the influence and suffering from depression at the time of the hostage standoff, which also involved his 16-year-old step-daughter.

A SWAT team entered the facility after failed attempts to negotiate his surrender, officials said. Upon entering, officers were shot at multiple times — one was wounded — and they returned fire, killing Peña and his daughter.

A coroner's report found that Suzie was killed by an officer's bullet to the head, which sent shockwaves throughout the area, prompting protests over the officers' tactics.

As the family grieved, scores of residents, both Black and Brown, lined up to pay their respects.

"Suzie was an innocent baby, shot to death, and everyone has rallied together, regardless of race, because we all know that that could have been my baby," said activist Najee Ali. "There is definitely a tension that we cannot ignore between Blacks and Latinos, but this unfortunate death offers us hope that we can really bring these two groups together unlike any other tragedy or circumstance could. This death has struck a nerve and really highlights the need for Black and Brown unity."

However, there are plenty who are skeptical about the impact of Suzie's death and its potential to spark a new era of partner-

ship, particularly when so many are hurting from high unemployment, a lack of affordable housing and poor schools. There is also competition for physical living space and a feeling of resentment by some African-Americans for Latinos who are moving in to a once predominantly Black enclave.

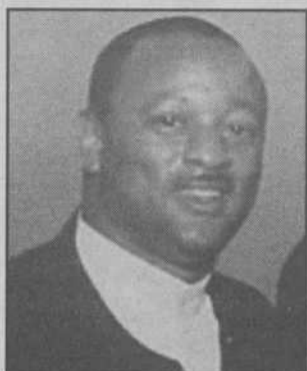
Some believe her death, while tragic, will be forgotten with time, and the rage felt by

the average citizen will fade as the struggles of every day survival take precedence over activism.

"As far as the shooting is concerned, we are dealing with an

extremely emotional incident. When you lose a loved one, emotion reaches its peak," said Coalition Against Police Abuse Director Michael Zinzun, who advocates for the creation of an independent prosecutor who can conduct investigations into police misconduct. "The problem comes when it starts to subside. We call it the ebb and flow. We must build on this moment before the momentum is lost."

One of the reasons for a perceived lack of Latino leadership and visibility during times of crisis in South Los Angeles may be the dearth of organized activism in the area.



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Judge Roberts listed in right-wingers Federalist Society directory

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Judge John G. Roberts, the president's nominee to fill the recent Supreme Court vacancy, is listed in the directory of the Federalist Society despite denials that he had ever belonged to the right-wing network of law students, professors, lawyers and judges.

When it was initially reported that Roberts was a member of the group, either he or his representatives denied any ties to the Federalist Society and demanded a correction. The *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, The Associated Press and *USA Today* all printed retractions.

However, the *Washington Post* disclosed Monday that it had found documentation that Roberts was a member

of the group.

"Over the weekend, The *Post* obtained a copy of the Federalist Society Lawyers Division Leadership Directory, 1997-1998," the newspaper reported. "It lists Roberts, then a partner at the law firm Hogan & Hartson, as a member of the steering committee of the organization's Washington chapter and includes his firm's address and telephone number."

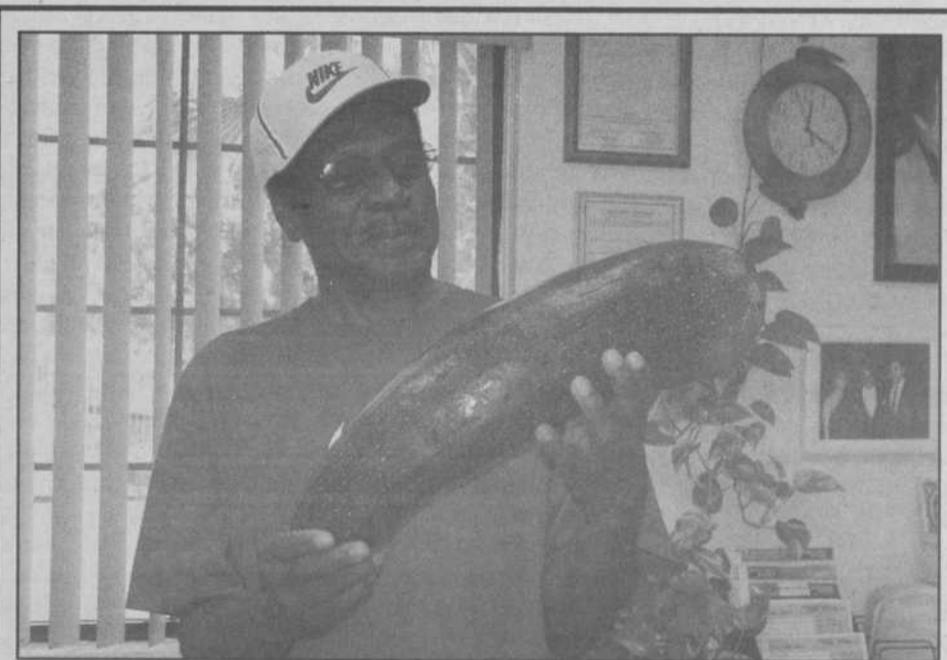
Although Roberts has acknowledged taking parts in Federalist Society activities, he had denied being a member of the group. A White House spokesperson said Roberts "has no recollection of being a member of the Federalist Society, or its steering committee."

The disclosure of Roberts' ties to the Federalist Society is expected to raise questions about his veracity and end his

campaign as a stealth conservative. While there is nothing illegal or wrong with being a member of the group, it provides a clearer picture of his views and ends, once and for all, the likelihood of his being a Sandra Day O'Connor-like conservative in disguise. On the group's website, it notes: "Founded in 1982, the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies is a group of conservatives and libertarians dedicated to reforming the current legal order."

The 25,000-member organization notes at another point that it foster debate on, "...The role of the courts in saying what the law is rather than what they wish it to be."

The idea that beginning in law school, conservatives are part of a large, influential network that leads to clerkships (See *Federalist*, Page 12)



74 year-old truck driver from Alabama still knows how to grow big things

Matt Davis, shown here proudly displaying the 10 pound, 20 inch, Zucchini Squash he and his wife, Barbara, grew at their home in North Las Vegas, Nevada. "It's strange... I planted the seed in 2003, but it didn't come-up until this year," he said.

Davis studied agriculture in 1950, during his senior year at Conecuh County Training School (CCTS), in Evergreen, Alabama, under the direction of professor P.A. Gray. Davis was one of 56 other individuals who graduated from CCTS that year.

Davis, a prostate cancer survivor since 1995, credits his successful recovery

South Los Angeles, while becoming increasingly Latino, is still considered to be a bastion of Black political power, which in some ways hinders the development of new Latino leadership there, said Jaime Regalado, executive director of the Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Institute of Public Affairs at Cal State Los Angeles.

African-Americans have a well-documented history of dealing with police misconduct, stretching from the days of slavery to the Watts riots of 1965, the Black Panther movement, the Rodney King beating and most recently, the shooting of Brown.

African-Americans are associated with the struggle for civil rights, while Latinos have received less attention for their efforts by the media, Regalado said.

While Blacks may see police misconduct as a form of racism, Latinos may view it as a symptom of economics.

"A lack of leadership definitely has its roots in immigration, the fear of being deported if they speak out against law enforcement, and, of course, language and employment, as many Latinos work two or three jobs and frankly do not have time to participate in politics or organizing activities," said Ybarra, who puts some of the blame on the Catholic church, which is not as active in social movements as Black congregations.

"I'm going to break it down," Ali said. "The Latino community [in South Los Angeles] has no real leadership or experience dealing with police abuse or controversial shootings at all. That's why I felt the need to

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directly to the "excellent care" he received during his visits to the Cancer Treatment Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is also an entrepreneur and learned to speak Spanish as a senior citizen. Davis truly enjoys living life and learning new things.

In February 2002 (when his upper left lung was removed due to a cancerous mass), Davis continued to live life filled with great joy and gratitude. This year, he underwent major lower back surgery.

Despite the surgery, Davis said the blessings continue, and he's already working on a new adventure — Davis is writing his first book titled, "The Truck Driver from Alabama."