

# Suicide of Miami politician leaves many questions

By George E. Curry

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - A week after former Miami city Commissioner Arthur E. Teele Jr. walked into the lobby of the *Miami Herald* newspaper and ended his life by firing two bullets into his head, friends and community leaders are still asking: Why?

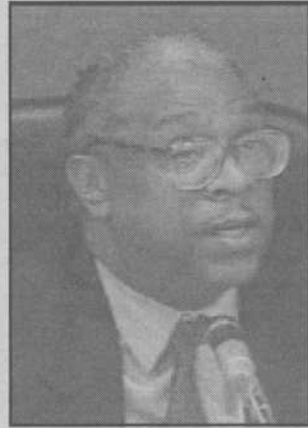
Though the only person who knows that answer for sure is dead, law enforcement officials — including some that prosecuted him on various bribery-related charges

— are still retracing Teele's tracks for additional evidence that might explain his decision to commit suicide.

According to the *Miami Herald*, Teele, 59, spoke to a columnist shortly before his death and asked, "Who did I piss off in this town?"

Whatever he did, it began the downfall of a once powerful Black official.

After receiving his undergraduate and law degrees from Florida A&M University, Teele quickly distinguished himself.



ARTHUR TEELE

He served as legal counsel for the Tallahassee

NAACP branch.

He and a partner bought the *Capital Outlook*, a Black newspaper in Tallahassee. In Miami, he served on the City Commission and on the Miami-Dade County Commission.

According to published reports, the Florida State Attorney's office began an investigation of Teele on December 12, 2003, in connection with the city's Community Redevelopment Agency. That investigation led to other areas.

He was removed last year from his City Commission by Gov. Jeb Bush following a conviction for threatening a police officer tailing his wife as part of a probe.

Three weeks ago, Teele was indicted on 26 federal charges of fraud and money laundering.

More recently, Teele's probation officer filed papers requesting to revoke an earlier probation.

On the day Teele killed himself, *The New Times*, a weekly, published a sordid

14-page account that, among other things, portrayed Teele as a crook, raised questions about his alleged use of cocaine and described in vivid details a supposed \$450 encounter with a self-described "transsexual prostitute."

Teele declared that he was more than \$1.7 million in debt as of a year ago.

Ironically, the reporter who spoke with Teele twice before he took his life, was fired by the *Miami Herald* for illegally taping a telephone conversation with Teele.

# Report: Black presence in U.S. law schools dwindling

By Kenneth Mallory

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA)

- A report by the American Bar Association has found that the proportion of minorities, including Blacks and Hispanics, enrolling in law schools has decreased in the past two years.

"Miles to Go" finds that African-American representation in law is less than other professions, like teaching and medicine.

"Minority representation among law students has dropped from 20.6 percent in 2001-2002 to 20.3 percent in 2003-2004," said the findings in the third edition of "Miles to Go: Progress of Minorities in the Legal Profession," published by the ABA's Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Legal Profession.

The report also finds that African-American representation in law is less than other professions, like teaching and medicine, and Blacks "continue to be grossly under represented in top level jobs, such as law partner and corporate general counsel."

In addition, the report contends minorities are less apt than Whites to head to private law firms after leaving law school, more likely to resign from firms after three years association.

The report's author, New York Law School Professor Elizabeth Chambliss, deemed the finding of reduced enrollment "extremely troubling," and, in an interview said: "The legal profession already is one of the least racially integrated professions in the United States when all four minority groups [African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, Native American] are aggregated."

In 2000, African-Americans made up only 3.9 per-

cent of all lawyers, compared to 4.4 percent of physicians, 5.6 percent of college and university professors, 7.8 percent of computer scientists and 7.9 percent of accountants and auditors."

Chambliss discussed the implications of such findings. "The low level of Black representation in the profession may discourage promising Black students from considering law and limit Black lawyers' chances to find mentors and role models within the law. And, to the extent that Black lawyers are more likely than others to be concerned with racial justice, discrimination, community development, and the like, the dearth of Black lawyers contributes to an already unequal access to lawyers in the United States."

Reginald McGahee, dean of admissions at Howard University Law School, perhaps the premiere African-American law school in the country, said the number of applicants applying to Howard has declined, especially among Black males.

"There is a universal drop in African-American males that are applying to law schools, and more specifically, higher education in general. And we're seeing that same decline," he said.

"Ultimately, at some point, you will not be able to find lawyers of color," said Kim Keenan, president of the National Bar Association, a group representing thousands of Black lawyers.

Acknowledging the decline in enrollment and possible ramifications, Keenan said the Black community has to start ensuring that Black children have the necessary "educational opportunities," as early as grammar school, to properly train them and increase their chances to enter the profession."

Our professional workforce should look like our country," said Keenan.

Lawrence Baca, chair of the ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession, suggests, "Any law school that wants to increase minority participation, or, particularly, Black participation, is going to have to get out and do some outreach work."

He said, "The first thing that I would do if I was a law school is I would find my graduates of color, whatever racial or ethnic group it is, and ask them for their assistance in helping me identify folks and convincing folks to apply."

Baca said he believes a major reason Black students are not considering careers in law is because they lack role models in the profession and

do not hear about positive things lawyers have done with their careers.

Law officials discussed obstacles that might preclude Blacks from pursuing careers in law, such as the apparent growing disinterest in the profession and the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test), which many feel is biased against Black law school applicants.

"The legal trade for one reason or another has not had the best reputation in the press, and to the extent that it may be causing students to not apply to law school. The way to get past that is for our folks to go into the law schools and say, 'I don't care about what you wrote about in the paper. Here's what I did last week with my career,'" said Baca.

A major concern voiced

by many future Black lawyers, as well as those advocating increased diversity in the profession, is the hurdle the LSAT poses to Black students.

McGahee said some currently believe the LSAT is biased: "The main thing that we have to realize is that there's a lot of debate out there right now... there are some inherent biases that go along with the LSAT. Being at Howard, we're more sensitive to that than some other institutions in the country may be."

According to Chambliss, law schools shouldn't rely as much on the standardized test:

"One of the main barriers to increasing diversity among law students is law schools' heavy reliance on the LSAT. African-Ameri-


cans and other minority groups score lower, on average, than Whites, on the LSAT, yet law schools' reliance on this measure of aptitude has increased markedly over time," Chambliss said in a statement. "One point difference on the LSAT can make the difference between admission and rejection by law schools, even though such differences are not statistically significant, and even though the LSAT does not predict success as a lawyer, however measured."

"Law schools concerned with increasing the diversity of their student bodies need to focus less on the LSAT and more on other measures of achievement, including undergraduate grades and work history," Chambliss said.

Kenneth Mallory writes for *Afro Newspapers*.

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