

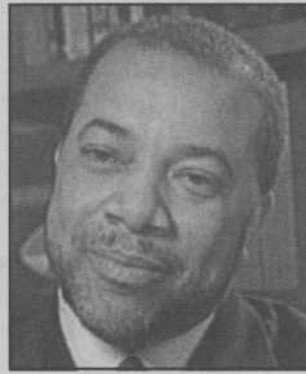
Dortch speaks to Black Press

Former 100 Black Men president blasts Thomas choice

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
SAVANNAH, Ga. (NNPA) - The immediate past chairman of the 100 Black Men of America has strongly criticized the Atlanta chapter after it held a reunion and 20th anniversary celebration with ultraconservative Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas as its special guest.

"There are those of our color, but not of our kind, and there are those of our kind, but not of our color."

— Thomas Dortch
Author and speaker



"I disagreed with our chapter having Clarence Thomas in," Thomas Dortch told the Black publishers of the 200-member National Newspaper Publishers Association at its annual NNPA mid-winter conference in Savannah. "I want to say, again, to be clear, because while we have 300 members, only about a third of them went to that function for Clarence Thomas. I disagree. It was wrong. It was the beginning of our 20th anniversary of that chapter. It was the worst way to start celebrating 20 years when that man doesn't stand for anything that we stand for... There are those of our color, but not of our kind, and there are those of our kind, but not of our color. And this boy does not fit into our neighborhood."

Dortch, keynote speaker for an NNPA luncheon, focused on Thomas for the first nearly 15 minutes of a 30-minute speech. Since his appointment to the court 14 years ago, Thomas has routinely sided with conserva-

tive justices Antonin Scalia and the late Chief Justice William Rhenquist to gut programs that would help eradicate racial discrimination. Thomas has now aligned himself with Scalia and new Chief Justice John Roberts, appointed by President George Bush last fall after the death of Rhenquist.

"Fourteen years ago he lied about everything he was going to do on the bench," Dortch said. "He was going to be fair-handed, he was going to be open, and he would review everything as it was," says Dortch. He described Thomas as being "one of the most oppressive individuals, not just in Washington, but in this nation, a guy who everything he got was because of affirmative action, including a Supreme Court appointment because [Former President] George Herbert Walker Bush knew that he could not appoint anybody but a Black person to replace the great Thurgood Marshall."

The so-called "dialogue with Clarence Thomas," as described by Dortch, was featured in a front-page photograph in the *Atlanta Inquirer* with Thomas flanked by seven of the organization's board members, including its executive director, John Grant, and Robert Haley, chairman of the chapter's board. The smiling group had presented Thomas with a copy of the limited edition book, "Project Success: The Right Thing for the Right Reason," the story of the 100 Black Men of Atlanta.

Dortch concluded, "For that one mistake, I do not condemn my brothers, and those who participated in it, I think it was a bad mistake."

Neither Grant nor Haley could be reached for comment by NNPA deadline.

Dortch's comments were strongly applauded by the publishers, who between the annual board meetings, workshops and receptions, routinely heard speakers who

reaffirm the Black Press' mission of justice for Black people. Over the past two months, many of the newspapers have been publishing stories and columns about yet another controversial nominee to the Supreme Court, Judge Samuel Alito. Some said Dortch's comments were strong reminders for them to stay the course.

"In reference to Clarence Thomas, I went to school with Clarence. He was a friend," says Floyd Adams, Jr., publisher of the *Savannah Herald*, the host newspaper for the conference. "Everything that he said today was true about Clarence."

Adams, former Savannah mayor, says although he and Thomas have been cordial, he is deeply disappointed in his Supreme Court performance and that Dortch's speech should hearten Black publishers to do more to expose conservative, anti-civil rights agendas by Blacks and Whites.

"That is going to be the future of the Black Press," said Adams. "We are regress- (See Thomas, Page 13)

B.I.G.'s kin settle for \$1.1 million

LOS ANGELES (AP) - A federal judge has ordered the city to pay \$1.1 million in legal costs to the family of slain rapper Notorious B.I.G. as sanctions for intentionally withholding evidence during the family's civil lawsuit trial.

U.S. District Judge Florence-Marie Cooper's ruling Friday didn't give the family the \$2 million originally sought, but she left open the possibility of an additional \$300,000.

"It's pretty clear from the ruling that the judge understands this is a significant and difficult case," said Perry Sanders, an attorney for the rapper's family.

Christopher Wallace, or Notorious B.I.G., was shot and killed March 9, 1997, after a party at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. The killing has not been solved.

Cooper declared a mistrial last summer in the family's civil lawsuit after finding that a police detective hid statements linking the killing to former LAPD Officers David Mack and Rafael Perez. She also ordered the city to pay the slain rapper's family's legal costs.

The plaintiffs had been trying to show that Mack, a convicted bank robber, orchestrated Wallace's killing with the help of college friend on behalf of Death Row Records chief Marion "Suge" Knight. All three have denied involvement.

Attorneys for the family received an anonymous tip from a former officer that a department informant had tied Perez and Mack to the killing. Detective Steven Katz claimed he had overlooked a transcript of the remarks in his desk.

But Cooper ruled that Katz and perhaps others concealed the information, which could have bolstered the family's contention that Mack was involved in the killing. A retrial is set to begin later this year.

Authorities: Girl, 7, shot at Maryland day-care center

GERMANTOWN, Md. - A 7-year-old girl was shot in the arm at a daycare center Tuesday after an 8-year-old classmate brought in one of his father's guns and it accidentally went off, authorities said.

The father was arrested for gun offenses, and court documents outlined an extensive criminal record. The boy also was charged, but authorities said that was done only so he could be helped by juvenile authorities.

The boy had the weapon in a backpack and was playing with it when it went off, said Montgomery County police spokesman Derek Baliles.

The girl was taken to a Washington, D.C., hospital with a wound that was not considered life-threatening.

There were six children at the For Kids We Care Inc. daycare center at the time of the shooting, authorities said. Police said the boy had found the gun, a .38-caliber Taurus revolver, in a container in his father's closet.

Police charged John Linwood Hall Sr., 56, with leaving a firearm in a location accessible by an unsupervised minor, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and pos-

session of a firearm by a felon.

Montgomery County State's Attorney Douglas Gansler declined to give any details of the charges against the boy because of his age. The boy was to have his case reviewed by the Department of Juvenile Services, according to a police news release.

Neither youngster's name was released.

Hall has an extensive criminal record dating to the 1960s, according to court documents. It includes several convictions of assault with intent to maim and gun charges. He could be sentenced to five years in prison if convicted of being a felon in possession of a handgun and three years on the delinquency of a minor charge, authorities said.

The documents said there were "numerous" other weapons in Hall's apartment that his son had access to. Hall was in custody and could not immediately be reached for comment.

Gansler said the boy knowingly brought the gun to the daycare center and that the charges filed against him were in the "best interest of the 8-year-old to make sure he gets the help he needs" from the state.

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