

Kennedy shilled in racial assault case

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Call it Howard Beach Part II.

Nicholas Minucci, now 20, was on trial earlier this summer for cracking the skull of Glenn Moore, an African-American, with a baseball bat. According to Frank Agostini, one of Minucci's accomplices in the racially motivated attack, the clang of the aluminum bat striking Moore's head "sounded like Barry Bonds hit a home run."

Moore, 23, is hardly a model citizen. But that does not justify the unprovoked brutal attack on him. Moore testified that he and two friends were looking to steal an automobile last June when they ventured into Howard Beach, the predominantly White neighborhood in Queens noted for another high-profile racial assault 20 years ago.

But before they could find a car, a gang of young Whites, led by Minucci, spotted the three African-Americans. Moore's friends ran, but he fell and was trapped by the group. He said Minucci called him the n-word and said, "We'll show you not to come and rob White boys."

Moore said the 240-pound Minucci, called "Fat Nick," made him take off his sneakers and drop to his knees before teeing off on him. Albert Gaudelli, Minucci's attorney, claimed that Moore fractured his skull when he fell on his own.

The surprise star witness for the defense

was Randall Kennedy, a Black Harvard University law professor and author of a book titled, "Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word." Kennedy testified: "The word is a complex word. It has many meanings."

Gaudelli would later boast, "I think I did good. I got a Rhodes scholar to testify for nothing and all I had to do is drive him to the airport."

Outside the courtroom, Kennedy defended his action, saying, "I do not feel I was championing somebody's cause. I was asked to speak as an expert witness about a particular issue. Somebody's liberties are at stake here."

Kennedy testified that the n-word has multiple meanings and is not necessarily associated with racism. And he wasn't the only Black taking the stand for the defense. Gary Jenkins, a hip-hop music producer, claimed the n-word has been stripped of its noxious odor.

"It's been permutated and morphed by a generation of younger people who moved it around and changed it into a matter of parlance," Jenkins said. "There has got to be more to it than a word to find that someone is racist."

Buoyed by two African-American "experts," Gaudelli said in his closing argument,



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"You don't like that word. I don't like that word; no one over 30 likes it but it's a fact that people under 30 use the word differently. Ignore this word; it's merely another descriptive word."

Fortunately, the jury was not swayed by Gaudelli's admonition or Randall Kennedy's testimony. Nicholas Minucci was found guilty

of second-degree assault as a hate crime for the baseball-bat attack and first- and second-degree robbery as a hate crime for stealing Moore's sneakers and several other items. Minucci could face more than 25 years in prison when he is sentenced on July 15.

Although Minucci's lawyer failed in his attempt to sanitize the n-word, the trial should serve as yet another reminder that we can't use the n-word as a so-called term of endearment among ourselves and get upset when those outside the race use that same term in a different manner.

The n-word should not be used in any forum.

When I was editor of *Emerge* magazine, we helped lead a campaign that forced Merriam-Webster to change its published definition of the n-word. Cam Gilbert wrote a short article that noted that Kathryn Williams, curator at the Museum of African

American History in Flint, Mich., was fond of saying, "Anyone can be a nigger. A nigger is any ignorant person." When a boy asked her, "Am I a nigger because I am Black?" she replied no and urged him to look up the word in the dictionary. Neither liked the definition they found in Merriam-Webster's 9th and 10th editions: "1. a black person. 2. ...member of any dark-skinned race — usu. taken to be offensive."

Williams launched a national letter-writing campaign against the publisher of the dictionary. An Associated Press story noted, "Hundreds of people contacted Merriam-Webster after its definition of the racial slur was printed in the September [1997] issue of *Emerge* magazine."

NAACP President Kweisi Mfume said, "The NAACP finds it objectionable that Merriam-Webster would use Black people as a definition for a racist term." He threatened to lead a boycott of the company if the definition was not revised in the next edition.

Merriam-Webster quickly capitulated. Its revised definition of the n-word states, "it now ranks as perhaps the most offensive and inflammatory racial slur in English."

That's exactly what it is. And use of the n-word should never be defended by Harvard professors, hip-hop artists or anyone else.

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Immigration about 'show me the dinero,' not race

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Do you remember when Mexican President, Vicente Fox made the following comment? "There is no doubt that Mexicans ... are doing jobs that not even Blacks want to do there in the United States."

President Fox made that comment to a group of Texas business owners in May 2005. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton telephoned Fox to voice their displeasure, to which Fox responded by inviting both of them to Mexico to "join forces" on working for immigration rights and civil rights for immigrants in United States, according to CNN.

Fox initially refused to apologize for the comment, saying his remark had been misinterpreted. But later, he said he understood the African-American community has worked hard to fight against discrimination and that as a result of that fight the Mexican community in America has benefited greatly.

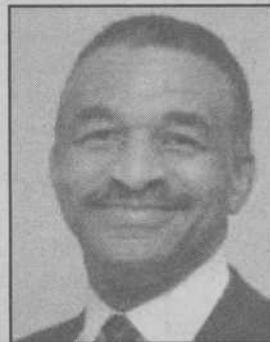
Jesse Jackson replied that he was sure the president had no racist intent and suggested

the two meet to discuss "joint strategies between Blacks and immigrant groups" in the United States. Fox agreed to set up a visit to Mexico, first by Jackson and then with Sharpton.

Black people have very short memories. Does anyone know what has happened since those comments were made and since that invitation was extended and since those Black "leaders" were supposed to go to Mexico and work things out?

Now we have this brouhaha regarding illegal immigrants and what to do with them and, for the most part, Black leaders are not even in the discussion. What does all of this really mean? What has happened since May 2005?

I participated in the "Choose Black America" press conference on illegal immigration that was held at the National Press



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Club on May 23, 2006, during which time I spoke about the economic ramifications of this topic and how it negatively affects Black people in this country. I noted our hesitancy to enforce the law when it comes to the corporate raiders who hire "illegal" immigrants and pay them well below the going wage, all the while filling their own pockets with even more profits from this "New Jack Slavery."

I suggested this is an economic issue, not a political issue, and it is not a race issue, as many would have us believe. It is an economic issue when corporations and people who enter this country illegally are able to get away with illegal activities. What else could it be?

Muestrame el Dinero means "show me the money" in Spanish. That's exactly what's happening folks, not only with the corpora-

tions but with some of our so-called Black leaders as well.

As the title of Jackson's book says, "It's About the Money."

I suspect that somewhere, sometime, in some back room the statement was made by someone, "Muestrame el Dinero," because that's what this immigration thing is all about. But why can't Black people see it for what it really is? Why are we engaged in conversations about "helping" the immigrants get their civil rights? Why have I heard brothers saying things like, "Let's not get into a fight with Hispanics," and "We have to strengthen our alliance with Latinos and support them"?

When did you last see Latinos, or any other group for that matter, standing with Black people on, say, reparations for the work our parents did to help these groups attain what they have, as Fox acknowledged? What about their support for us during Katrina? Why were there no marches in the streets then? Where was this alliance when Black

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decline in marriage rates. Between 1970 and 1980, the numbers fell dramatically, down to just 30 percent from about 53 percent for young Black women. Marriage has been falling out of favor every since or so it seems.

Working mothers, unmarried couples living together, out-of-wedlock births, birth control, divorce and remarriage have transformed the social landscape.

No one seems to feel this more than African-American women do. Many of them wear a mask, and with their mouths, they say that they do not want to be married or they do not need a man; however, when they're alone or with their friends, the contrary is apparent —

a true desire to be married appears prevalent in their hearts and minds, as it has always been for women.

Women need to realize that desiring to be married is nothing of which to be ashamed. Actually, we were created by God that way. He took the woman from man's side, and He shaped and formed us for man; so it is natural for a man to be our desire.

Most single Black women over the age of 30 who have graced college campuses at a rate of 70 percent to 30 percent for Black men are not desperate enough to simply accept any situation just to have a man. By design or by default, many Black women have cultivated the skills that allow them to maintain them-

selves (or sometimes to even prosper) without a mate.

If they are to marry, they are going to have to figure out how to compromise without settling from the "diminishing pool" of available Black men (due greatly to crime, murder, imprisonment, unemployment and homosexuality).

Unfortunately, we live in an era wrought with brothers on the "down low," the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and the decline of the stable blue-collar jobs that Black men used to hold, which makes linking one's fate to a man through marriage a risky business for Black women. Sex, love and child-bearing have become a la carte choices rather

than a package deal that comes with marriage.

There is a marriage gap for African-Americans that we all need to be concerned about. The economic, psychosocial and health-related consequences for men, women and children in the absence of marriage are indisputable. Married Black adults have more income, are less likely to face poverty, and are more likely to be happy and promote better family functioning.

There are many other benefits of marriage, but suffice it to say for now that while marriage may not be a panacea for all that ails many African-Americans today, it certainly is an indispensable and essential aspect for healthier home life and community.