

## OUR VIEW

## Death by Cop

The June 14 *Review-Journal* media alert about the Denise Brasco, the latest civilian killed by Las Vegas police, read as follows: "A woman wielding a knife was shot and killed by Las Vegas police after causing a fuss at a Jack in the Box fast-food restaurant near Lake Mead and Martin Luther King boulevards this morning. Police Tasered her three times, shot her with big bean bag loads eight times, and pepper sprayed her once. When she still wouldn't surrender, they fired live rounds twice, killing her. Police caught up with her in the street, where she was holding the hand of a child. Police said they grabbed the child away before trying to subdue her."

You didn't need to read the proceeding story to know that this case left more questions than it answered. (Obviously, the family was distraught over the death of the 25-year-old Glasco. Her mother, Betty Fowler, told the *R-J*: "They took my baby. They shot my baby for nothing.") The facts of the case seem to support Fowler.

Understanding that police officers have one of the most difficult jobs in the world and acknowledging that hindsight and Monday-morning quarterbacking is easy for observers, because we don't have to engage in dangerous situations and make life-or-death decisions in split seconds—indeed, weighing all this, it's still unclear why this woman had to be killed in order to defuse the situation. Did she really need to die in order to be subdued?

Brasco allegedly pulled a knife on a customer in the Jack in the Box restaurant. In and of itself, this is a punishable crime. Police found Brasco across the street, with her son and waving a knife. They were able to snag Brasco's son, a Metro spokesman told the daily newspaper, but unable to subdue her. That's when nonlethal force was deployed: Taser, pepper spray and bean bags.

Nothing worked, according to police.

In response to an *R-J* question into why police didn't just snatch the knife, much in the same way they'd done with Brasco's soon, Metro said it was more difficult to wrest the knife away because it's a smaller object. According to the *R-J*, police said the nonlethal force was ineffective and she was unresponsive to commands.

With all due respect, this just doesn't pass the smell test. Judging by witness and police descriptions of the incident, Brasco was more of a threat to herself than to anyone else. The way to deal with such a threat isn't to eliminate it. Brasco wasn't some insurgent taking sniper shots at American soldiers from a hidden perch inside a bombed-out house in Ramadi. She wasn't nearly indestructible and armed to the teeth like Larry Phillips Jr. and Emil Matasareanu, two mercenary bank robbers who turned the streets of North Hollywood into a war zone after robbing a bank on Feb. 28, 1997.

She may have been irrational. She may have been under the influence of a controlled substance (her family members say she didn't use drugs.) She may have even been seen as a threat to her son. Given all that, she still didn't deserve to die. American law enforcement is the most advanced in the world, but you couldn't tell by the civilian body count it's racked up. Las Vegas police (a few, by no means the whole department) have, on occasion, been quick on the trigger when dealing with crime suppression. Some cases, like the death of 17-year-old Swuave Lopez defy explanation: he was handcuffed and running when he escaped from a cop car and was shot in the back. Was he that much of a threat?

The technology available to law enforcement is simply too advanced for unnecessary deaths like those of Lopez and Brasco. Tasers can be deadly, but they have good track records. Pepper spray is proven effective. Shotgun-fired bean bags aren't deployed enough. Nor are other nonlethal methods like glue guns that shoot pressurized foam that immobilizes suspects or guns firing rubber projectiles. If authorities want to build public confidence, these cases are going to have to stop. Because, as history has shown us, the cops will likely be absolved by the coroner's inquest, keeping Metro's perfect record of killing civilians without repercussion. If this happens, mark it another notch for Metro, another blow for society.



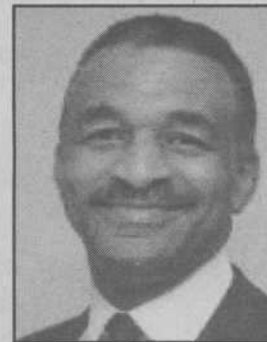
## The culmination of freedom

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Considering how Juneteenth has become the celebration of freedom for Black people—our Independence Day, as some call it—we should give some deep thought to what freedom really is all about for our people. Anyone who reads the Emancipation Proclamation can see that it did not free our enslaved ancestors, despite what we were taught. We know that the Emancipation called for freedom among those who were not under the jurisdiction of the Union, thus, lacking the real power to impose its will on the Southern Confederacy. It also failed to free those who were under the jurisdiction of the Union, thus, it really freed no one. Then along came General Gordon Granger to Galveston, Texas. Granger read the General Order freeing the enslaved of Texas on June 19, 1865, which is said to be two years late; but you could say it was six months early, because the 13th Amendment, which "freed" Black people once again, was not ratified until December 1865. Texas did not ratify the 13th Amendment until February of 1870! We were really free this time. Or were we?

Let's see now...

We were freed by the Emancipation—but, oops, it really didn't free us. Then came Juneteenth, which



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freed us either too late or too early, depending on how you look at it. Then came the 13th Amendment, which still says slavery is abolished "except" for those duly convicted of crimes (oops, sorry about that). How many times is that?—three? We have been "freed" more than any other people on earth.

Reconstruction followed our newfound freedom with the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, which was supposed to provide due process and equal treatment for Black people; free again, y'all.

Then the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, which freed us once again to be able to vote, but old Rutherford B. Hayes would have no part of that. He just withdrew the federal troops and looked the other way as Black people were once again prevented from attaining their freedom by attempting to cast their votes. Foiled again!

The next 100 years saw Black people fighting for public accommodations, education; and, yes, voting

rights, which were given to us again in 1965, but even today certain aspects of the law must be "reviewed," "extended" or "renewed" every now and then. Freedom? You tell me.

Having fought the battles for civil rights, education and voting; after being "freed" so many times it makes my head swim, Black people are still in a battle to attain true freedom.

What is true freedom?

It is all those things that we were supposed to have been granted after the Civil War with the ratifying of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. But, the culmination of freedom for Black people in America is economic freedom.

It was great to get freed so many times, but freedom in 1865—with no money, no 40 acres and no mules—was not freedom at all. Unlike the Israelites who were instructed by God Himself to

go back and get reparations from their former captors, we received nothing but more trouble, Thaddeus Stevens' 1867 Reparations Bill notwithstanding.

When we did get some money, it was nice to have the choice of spending it in businesses we did not own, but it was better to support those businesses we did own. It was nice to be able to go to school with White folks who hated us, but better to have our own schools. It was nice to finally have the right to vote without being threatened, but better to have our votes count for something other than condescension and false promises, which would not have been the case if we had maintained our economic base.

That's why I say that the culmination of freedom, if we are really free at all, is economic freedom. I don't mean individual economic (See Clingman, Page 9)

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