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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

NYPD acquittal elicits outrage

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Outrage. That's perhaps the best word to describe the mood of the family of the late Sean Bell of New York, grassroots activists and civil rights representatives around the country this week.

"On April 25, 2008, they killed Sean all over again. That's what it felt like to us."

Those were the emotionally charged words expressed by Nicole Paultre Bell as she spoke at a press conference immediately following last Friday's acquittal of the three police officers who killed Bell, her fiancé. He died in a hail of 50 bullets Nov. 26, 2006, the couple's wedding day.

"But, I'm still praying for justice," she said in the televised press conference. "Because it's not over yet. It's far from over."

She was correct.

The next day, she stood alongside New York activist Al Sharpton and led a march and rally protesting the ruling. Then on Sunday, dozens of civil rights leaders gathered to call for public officials to take action against police misuse of force and brutality — an age old problem in the Black community — which is once again center stage.

This time, the protest is focused on the ruling by Queens State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Cooperman, which cleared the three undercover detectives — Giscard F. Isnora, Michael Oliver and Marc Cooper — on manslaughter and additional charges. The shooting happened near a Queens nightclub, where Bell had just left his bachelor party.

He and two friends — Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield — were found to be unarmed although police claimed they thought someone had moved to pick up a gun. Police said the officers feared for their lives.

Guzman and Benefield, both passengers in the vehicle, were seriously wounded. The officers, who were conducting a prostitution sting, said Bell had tried to drive over a detective when they began shooting.

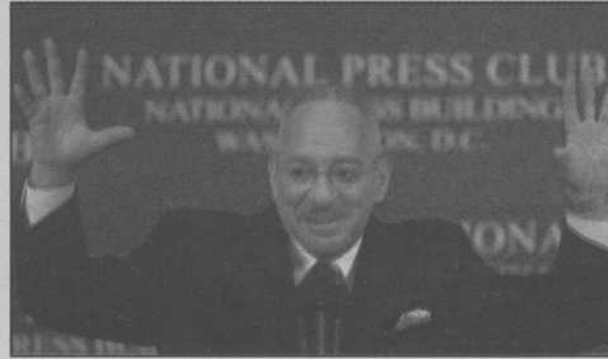
Those in the courtroom last Friday left outraged after the judge said he simply did not find the testimony of the witnesses as being credible, mainly because of their demeanors on the stand. The controversy, yet another in a string of police brutality cases in recent years, appears to be growing.

"The acquittal of New York police officers in the unprovoked murder of unarmed Sean Bell is yet another example of a pattern and practice of excessive force used by police across the nation on Black people," said Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League and chairman of the Black Leadership Forum (BLF), which has a membership of 36 organizations around the country.

Morial was speaking at a press conference at Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network headquarters on Sunday, where BLF members, Sharpton and Bell called on Justice Department and Congress to establish laws that with stiff penalties for police brutality.

"The decision in the Sean Bell case was not a miscarriage of justice, but rather an abortion of justice,"

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The Face of Controversy

Wright wants racial tolerance

By Bankole Thompson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

DETROIT (NNPA) — Rev. Jeremiah Wright, pastor emeritus of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, told 12,000 people in Detroit Sunday night that there is a need for racial tolerance in America.

The former pastor of Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama whose sermon regarding the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks has been a firecracker for Obama's campaign, addressed the Detroit Branch NAACP 53rd annual Fight For Freedom Fund Dinner.

A liberation theologian, Egyptologist, linguist, author and orator, Wright on Sunday

evening told the city with the largest African-American population in the nation that there are clear-cut differences between Blacks and Whites.

Wright told the standing-room-only audience at Cobo Hall, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. first gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, that African-Americans are different from European Americans, but one is no better than the other.

"In the past, we were taught to see others who are different as deficient, and that anybody not like us was abnormal," Wright said, referring to the stereotypes African-American children have been subjected to for decades. "But a change is com-

ing because we no longer see others who are different as deficient. We just see them as different."

Addressing the theme of the dinner, "Change is Going to Come," Wright said, "The NAACP has been built on a primary premise — that all men and women are created equal. The nation's oldest civil rights organization has changed America's history despite violence, intimidation and hostile government policies."

Wright took a swipe at the Republican Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson who told a political forum in Birmingham, a suburb of Detroit, that Wright is one of the most divisive

individuals he has ever heard speak.

"Somebody please tell the Oakland County Executive that the sentence starting with the words 'despite violence' is a direct quote from the NAACP. Otherwise, he will attribute the quote to me and continue to say that I'm one of the most divisive people he's ever heard speak, when he's never heard me speak," Wright said. "I know some say that just my appearance in Detroit will be polarizing. But I'm not here for political reasons. I'm not a politician. Many in the corporate-owned media have made it seem that I'm running for the Oval Office. I've

(See Wright, Page 4)

Dance theater opens concert series

By Parker Philpot
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The first annual Spring Concert Series of the Las Vegas Contemporary Dance Theater, an all-professional dance company, opens Tues., May 6, in the West Las Vegas Library Theater at 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd. Performances are nightly at 7:30, and the closing matinee is Sat., May 10, at 1:30.

LVCDDT is "Las Vegas's first multicultural dance company," said Founding Artistic Director Bernard H. Gaddis, a four-year local resident who performs in *Mystère* at Treasure Island and previously with *Cirque du Soleil* and *Zumanity* on the Strip.

"Each night, there will be 3 or 4 different ballets on the

(See Dance, Page 2)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

The Las Vegas Contemporary Dance Theater will open its inaugural Spring Concert Series on Tuesday. This is the first time the dance company opens in the historical West Side.