

Verdict

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Sharpston said. The BLF members at Sunday's press conference said they are poised for action. They said they would send a joint letter to the Justice Department this week calling for a full investigation and requesting a meeting with Attorney General Michael Mukasey.

Lawmakers are looking hard at the case.

U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and a congressional delegation were scheduled to visit the Bell family on Monday to discuss a possible civil rights violations of Bell. Conyers said he would also go to the spot where the shooting occurred.

A statement issued by the New York delegation of the Congressional Black Caucus and Chairwoman Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick vowed to remain vigilant on the issue.

"We do not accept that this is the end of this case," it states.

"We have joined with the families and their attorneys in filing a compliant with the U.S. Department of Justice, requesting an investigation of violations of the civil rights of Sean Bell, Joseph Guzman, and Trent Benefield."

The Justice Department has announced that its Civil Rights Division, the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's New York Field Division will indepen-



William Bell, Valerie Bell, and Nicole Paultre Bell join Rev. Al Sharpston (not pictured) during his radio broadcast as he covers the Sean Bell trial in New York City on Saturday.

dently review circumstances surrounding the killing.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference President Charles Steele, also a BLF member, says he will take the pressure a step further.

"After we get the Justice Department to address this tragedy, we are going to ask New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly to meet with us about the SCLC's non-violence conflict resolution program to train officers about non violent conflict resolution in order to prevent the deaths of other Black Americans. This program has worked well in Atlanta, where we are training some 1,700 police officers, and in international markets, where they are seeking peaceful resolutions to end violence. This program has instilled a

trust and belief that violence can be eradicated all over the world."

It hasn't happened across America. The list of questionable police killings and misuse of force in recent years include:

— Kyle Coppin, 18, an unarmed teen carrying a hairbrush who was shot 10 times Nov. 12, 2007, and then handcuffed by New York City Police officers;

— DeOnte Rawlings, 14, shot in the head in October of 2007 by one of two off duty Washington, D.C. police officers who killed the youth after discovering him on a mini bike that was stolen from one of the officers' homes. The officers claim DeOnte shot at them, but no gun was found at the scene.

— DeAunta "Tae Tae"

Farrow, a 12-year-old West Memphis boy fatally shot by a West Memphis police officer on June 22, 2007. Police said the child, walking with a young cousin, was spotted carrying a toy gun that the officer mistook as real. DeAunta was shot twice by police when they said he did not drop the toy. Some witnesses said the child was only carrying pop and chips.

— Martin Lee Anderson, 14, of Tallahassee, Fla., a sickle cell anemia patient who died in a juvenile boot-camp Jan. 6, 2006, complaining that he could not breathe as he was roughed up by camp guards, who failed to heed his pleas. The guards were later found not-guilty in his death.

A 10-foot long banner carried by protestors at the "Enough is Enough Stop Hate Crimes and Police Brutality," sponsored by the Hip-Hop Caucus in Washington on Nov. 17, 2007 carried the names of more than 1,700 names of people killed by police in recent years.

Sunday's press conference also included Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y.; Melanie Campbell of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Rev. Lennox Yearwood of the Hip Hop Caucus; Darlene Young of Blacks in Government and Gary Flowers, who is BLF's executive director and CEO.

Bell says she will do what she must in order to remain committed to justice for the father of her two children. "At every meeting, at every march, at every rally, I'm going to be right up front," she says.

The CBC statement encourages supporters to join her: "We must all remain committed to creating a justice system that is fair to all and building police-community relations that respect the lives and well-being of all."

Voter ID could affect turnout

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Supreme Court's refusal to strike down an Indiana law requiring government-issued photo identification at the ballot box could disenfranchise minority and elderly voters at next week's primary and prompt other states to pass similar laws, voting advocates said recently.

The court, in a splintered 6-3 ruling Monday, said Indiana's law, which took effect in 2006 and requires voters to present a state or federal photo ID card at the ballot box, does not violate the First or 14th amendments. The court said the law served as a justifiable protection to the electoral process.

"It's especially worrisome that the court has sent a signal making it easier to put up barriers to people voting," said Michael Waldman, executive director of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's law school. "There's a real risk that people will see this as a green light to pass restrictive voter ID laws in other states."

More than 20 states require some type of identification at the polls. But only Georgia and Indiana require government-issued photo IDs. For the overwhelming majority of voters, an Indiana driver's license serves as the identification.

In recent years, appellate courts have upheld bitterly fought identification laws in Arizona, Georgia and Michigan, but none is as stringent as the Indiana law.

Advocacy groups, including the Brennan Center, say they know of no voter fraud case ever being prosecuted against someone who impersonated another voter at the polls. Indiana's Republican Secretary of State Todd Rokita acknowledged there were no prosecutions in his state for impersonating voters, but said the measure was necessary to protect election integrity.

Indiana Solicitor General Tom Fisher, who argued the state's case before the high court, said Monday's ruling vindicates the law as a "common sense measure to protect the security and integrity of elections."

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Celebrating Firsts

Richard Hatcher, five-time mayor of Gary, Ind., and one of the first Black mayors of a major American city when he was elected in 1968—the other was Carl Stokes of Cleveland—is joined by his daughter Ragen in congratulating John King III of the 100 Black Men Academy on his award-winning essay. The Hatchers came here for a series of events to commemorate the 40-year anniversary of election win in Gary.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Marty Frierson



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Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
& Sunday, May 4, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Boulevard Mall:
Saturday, May 10, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
& Sunday, May 11, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Galleria Mall:
Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
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