

And that's why Cochran believes that affirmative action is necessary. "Affirmative action is merely an attempt to lower the playing field; it's a bridge to parity," he said. "We have to step up and demand our share because our cause is just and our cause is right."

To do that, Cochran said that African Americans must listen to the voices of the past. "Never forget from whence you came," he said. "The agenda needs to be set now, with the fortitude of our ancestors. You, who are free, can do anything."



Cochran, as most of the world knows, has helped to keep a lot of people stay free. He has defended Snoop Doggy Dogg, Michael Jackson and O.J. Simpson.

He has recently taken the cases of Abner Louima, the Haitian who was allegedly beaten and sodomized by police in Brooklyn and Sean "Puffy" Combs, who on Jan. 13, was charged with fleeing a nightclub while shooting an illegal weapon.

But Cochran left these high-profile cases—the cases that made him famous—out of his speech. However, he did mention the case of Geronimo Pratt, a Black Panther he defended in 1972 who was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Two decades later, Cochran saw his inno-

cent client released from prison.

Cochran was not the only one who didn't mention O.J. Simpson and his other famous clients. The leadership of the Black Student Movement pre-selected questions that Cochran would answer, and those people chosen did not ask Cochran about O.J. Simpson, Snoop Doggy Dogg or Sean "Puffy" Combs.

Even though he has been successful at defending the black, rich and famous, lately Cochran has directed his talents elsewhere. In 1996, he wrote his autobiography, "Journey to Justice," which made the best-seller lists of the New York "Times," the "Wall Street Journal" and "USA Today." He has also hosted a live talk show, "Johnnie Cochran Tonight," which aired on Court TV.

But before the fame, Cochran started his career as Deputy City Attorney for the city of Los Angeles in 1963. Three years later he founded the law firm of Cochran, Atkins and Evans; he served as the Assistant District Attorney for Los Angeles County from 1978 to 1980; and in 1981, he returned to private practice.

During his career, he has won numerous awards including the "Criminal Trial Lawyer of the Year Award" and the "Civil Trial Lawyer of the Year Award"—the only lawyer in Los Angeles to be so honored. Time magazine named him "Headliner for 1995" and a year later, he received a "Trumpet Award" from Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.

Cochran graduated from the Loyola University School of Law. He lives in California with his wife, Dr. Dale Mason Cochran, and his father, Johnnie Cochran Sr.

