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TRAYVON MARTIN

Trayvon Martin's parents write book on 5-year anniversary

By Errin Haines Whack

(AP) - The parents of slain unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin have written a book recounting his 2012 fatal shooting and their push for justice in his case.

Trayvon was killed five years ago this month by neighborhood watchman George Zimmerman in the central Florida suburb of Sanford. His case was the predecessor to the Black Lives Matter movement that has come in response to similar killings across the country, mostly by white police officers.

Zimmerman was acquitted of killing Trayvon in 2013. Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin say such shootings have added to their grief, but they have comforted other parents and started a foundation in Trayvon's name. They are also exploring running for public office as part of their advocacy.

Trayvon would have been 22 years old on Feb. 5.

Trump praises Douglass, other famous African Americans

By Jesse J. Holland

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Donald Trump kicked off Black History Month on Wednesday by gathering some of his black aides and supporters at the White House for a "listening" session in which he praised the contributions of slave-turned-abolitionist Frederick Douglass and other African-American icons.

"Frederick Douglass is an example of somebody who has done an amazing job and is being recognized more and more, I notice," Trump told the group gathered in the Roosevelt Room.

The president's comments drew immediate backlash on social media from critics who perceived it as a reference to a still-living Douglass. Douglass, who died in 1895, was one of the country's most influential and celebrated African-Americans.

Douglass was born a slave, and became an orator and a leading figure in the anti-slavery movement. Over the last 20 years of his life, Douglass served as marshal and recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia, as well as U.S. minister to Haiti. Black History Month originally started out as a weeklong celebration that included Douglass' birthday along with that of President Abraham Lincoln.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer later said it would become clearer what Trump meant by having noticed Douglass being recognized "more and more."

"I think he wants to highlight the contributions he has made," Spicer said.

The White House has said Trump plans to issue an official proclamation recognizing Black History Month, which has been recognized by every U.S. president since 1976. Other White House events are planned, including a gala and receptions, officials said.

"During this month, we honor the tremendous history of the African-Americans throughout our country, throughout the world if you really think about it, right?" Trump said. "And this story's one of unimaginable sacrifice, hard work and faith in America."

"Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks and millions more black Americans who made America what it is today," Trump said. "I'm proud to honor this heritage and will be honoring it more and more."

Trump mentioned the new Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture as a place "where people can learn about Rev. King, so many other things." He did not mention the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial, which also sits on the National Mall.

On hand for the listening session were Housing and Urban Development Secretary nominee Ben Carson; Paris Dennard, an official with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund; longtime Republican strategist and media owner Armstrong Williams; and White House adviser Omarosa Manigault.

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Lawyers' Committee Goes on Red Alert As Trump Rolls Back Civil Rights

By Lauren Victoria Burke (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

President Donald Trump began his first term by attempting to roll back the civil rights gains that occurred under his predecessor, President Barack Obama.

Hours after Trump was sworn in as president, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice undertook actions that signaled a major shift in civil rights enforcement; particularly work on voting rights and policing reform.

"The actions taken so quickly are unprecedented," said Joe Rich, the co-director of the Fair Housing and Community Development Project at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Rich is also a former attorney working in the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Lawyers' Committee held a conference call on January 24 with the press on the current state of play in civil rights policy as the Trump Administration begins.

"We are concerned about the statements of President Trump which are an invitation for voter suppression tactics to be put on the books," said Kristen Clarke, the president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Civil rights groups are reeling from the number of moves the new administration has made in less than a week in office. Despite the situation, some hope was renewed by the massive and historic turnout of the Women's March on January 21, the day after Trump's inauguration.

In addition, the Lawyers' Committee says, "the names of new leadership at the Justice Department have been announced and include individuals with track records of fighting against civil rights in the areas of voting."

Preliminary changes in the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division are occurring, while the nomination of Senator Jeff Sessions to serve as Attorney General is pending. The Senate is scheduled to vote on his nomination this week, even as some civil rights groups call for more hearings in the wake of the Trump Administration's travel ban on seven majority Muslim countries.

Recently, the Trump Administration announced that Jones Day lawyer John Gore would head the Civil Rights Division.

"Gore in recent years has been opposed to civil rights in a number



Civil rights groups are calling for more hearings for President Trump's pick for Attorney General Senator Jeff Sessions (R-Ala.) in the wake of the Trump Administration's travel ban on seven majority Muslim countries. (Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons)

of matters," Clarke pointed out on the January 24 conference call. "He has worked on the opposite side in matters involving redistricting."

Borrowing a phrase from Martin Luther King, Jr., Clarke added: "Justice delayed is justice denied for communities who have long been waiting for relief on these matters."

Clarke said that Jeff Sessions has used vote fraud as a tool to chill Black voting.

"We are also deeply concerned about the hostility he has had against consent decrees," said Clarke. "Mr. Sessions has expressed the view that consent decrees are an abuse of federal authority."

Clarke pointed out that the recent consent decree on the Baltimore Police Department was delayed by the Trump Justice Department.



Baldwin Documentary "I Am Not Your Negro" Receives Oscar Nod

By Lauren Victoria Burke (NNPA Newswire Contributor)

On February 1, the first day of Black History Month, the National Museum of African American History and Culture premiered the Oscar-nominated documentary "I Am Not Your Negro," which features commentary by James Baldwin. The film is a tribute to the staggering contribution of one of America's greatest men of letters.

Director Raoul Peck spent ten years completing the film. The documentary was inspired by one of Baldwin's unfinished manuscripts regarding his friendships and views on three of his friends: Medgar Evers, Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. None of the three would live to see their 40th birthday. Medgar Evers was assassinated in 1963 in Jackson, Miss.; Malcolm X was assassinated in 1965 in New York City; King was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, Tenn.

At the heart of the film, the jarring documentary provides Baldwin's sociopolitical observations and showcases the

writer's eloquence and directness as a communicator.

Peck credits Baldwin with changing his life after he read "The Fire Next Time" when he was a teenager.

"The starting point of the movie are the words of a person, a great author, James Baldwin," Peck said at the The Hollywood Reporter's Documentary Oscar Roundtable. "My job was to put myself in the background. I knew those words since I was 15 years old.

"If I can summarize the essential part of Baldwin, it is the ability and obligation to always question whatever truth is put in front of you. Beginning with images, beginning with stories, beginning with cinema. This is something that I learned very early on," Peck told a reporter last week. "And Baldwin gave me the words and the instruments to do that, to be able to deconstruct whatever was put in front of me—ideology, stories, narrative—very concretely."

Baldwin was an American social critic, novelist, essayist, playwright and poet. His essays, (Continued On Page 14)



PROFESSOR CORNEL WEST

Cornel West To Speak at NCCU Rock the Mic Lecture Series

Philosopher, social activist and professor Cornel West, Ph.D. will be the guest speaker at North Carolina Central University's (NCCU) "Rock the Mic" Lecture Series on Friday, Feb. 10, at B.N. Duke Auditorium.

The event starts at 6 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Doors open at 5 p.m.

West, a professor of philosophy and Christian practice at Union Theological Seminary and professor emeritus at Princeton University, has long held a place in the African-American culture for his thought-provoking theories on politics, race relations and religion. Born in Tulsa, Okla., and raised in Sacramento, Ca., his professorship includes stints at Yale University, Harvard University and the University of Paris.

West received his undergraduate degree in eastern languages and civilization from Harvard University with honors in three years and earned his masters and doctoral degrees in philosophy from Princeton University. West has authored more than 20 books and is widely known for his bestseller "Race Matters." A frequent guest on "Real Time with Bill Maher," he also has appeared on "The Colbert Report," CNN, C-Span and "Democracy Now!" He made his film debut in the Matrix and was a commentator on the official trilogy released in 2004.