

# FORUM

## Judge Biggs Labors Hard to Bring the Best Out Of Young People

Attorney, assistant district attorney, judge, wife, mother, Big Sister, Sunday school teacher and role model are just some of the titles that describe the Honorable Judge Loretta C. Biggs. Now, we join the community and state in celebrating her newest and recent title of Assistant United States Attorney.

We are very proud of her selection because she has earned it by the exemplary manner she served as district court judge in Forsyth County.

We know Judge Biggs as a very dynamic, smart, sensitive woman who lives essentially from the inside out. She combines a warm spirit with deep intellectuality.

Even though many forces may act upon her without the built-in purpose and meaning of her life is never compromised or given up.

What makes her successes and accomplishments so significant is the fact that she lives by her inner convictions and not conformity, moral integrity rather than social respectability and commitment to justice and truth and not political expediency.

She lives according to a higher loyalty that includes her God, family, church, community and nation. Judge



### GUEST COLUMN

By REV. JOHN MENDEZ

Biggs' accomplishments demonstrate that she has made a difference.

This is the energy that vitalizes and strengthens her life.

It's the dynamism of such a powerful unique personality as Judge Biggs that is being brought to hear upon and oversee the coordination of crime prevention on behalf of the U.S. attorney's office.

She will be joining Attorney General Janet Reno in

a moral campaign to help reduce crime in North Carolina, rather than multiplying the number of indictments that can be signed. Judge Biggs continues to believe in humankind and labors hard to bring the best out of people, especially among our youth. Few has worked as hard in the court system to keep youth from falling between the cracks. She works with numerous youth and community organizations to motivate and inspire young people to not only be their best,

but do their best.

We believe Judge Biggs will be as equally outstanding in her new position as assistant U.S. attorney as she has in previous professional appointments and affiliations.

She has the support of this community and church. We are proud of her and our prayers will go with her.

(Rev. John Mendez is pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church.)



Judge Loretta Biggs

## Squeezing Every Bit of Juice Out of O.J.

The Juice, O.J. Simpson, spent his life building and living a carefully fabricated image. Now it's all crumbling to pieces and black people will eventually suffer. Not because of what O.J. has been accused of doing. The courts will deal with that. Rather, it is because of what he and we have become in the eyes of the media.

Should black people have cause for alarm because of this murder case? National TV, magazines, newspapers and tabloids squeeze this phenomenal story for all it's worth. The story has every negative element of back-room scuttlebutt and barroom whispers. There's sex, violence, abuse, murder, interracial love, celebrity, power, a love triangle and prime example of how the American Dream exploded into nightmare.



Vanessa Williams

Very little, though, is said about race in this "story of the century." Maybe black people should be asking themselves, why?

Why should we be concerned about our image? Why should we worry if one of us becomes the focus of tragedy and horror in the media? How soon we forget the debacle surrounding the sexual harassment hearings of Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. Or the shame we felt over Vanessa Williams and the Miss America Pageant, or the outcry against Nation of Islam leader, Louis Farrakhan and the issue of anti-semitism, or Muhammad Ali's fight to protest

the draft and the Viet Nam war. These public issues and concerns pinpoint black people as the centerpiece of controversy, ridicule, finger pointing, abuse and crime. We have set the example in several national calamities.

It has been said that some people can make race a part of any issue. That may be so. Curiously though, that has not been the case with O.J. Several self-interest and special-interest groups in this country have found some angle (whether positive or negative) of the O.J. case to manipulate to their advantage. These loud and influential voices tip-toe around the issue of race.

Even most black people keep the topic at arm's length as if it's a pariah or a bottle of suntan lotion. We say The Juice let us down. It's a crying



### GUEST COLUMN

By LEE J. COX

shame, some say, that a man with everything could destroy his life over some white woman. We're hurt and angry.

A friend of mine sat with me watching the sideshow of O.J. being chased (albeit followed closely) along a California freeway. He said, "I wish O.J. would blow out his brains!"

"Why?" I wondered, more shocked than concerned.

"Cause neither he nor our people will win if this goes to court," he said.

"The hateful finger of blame will point in our direction, again." So now we're caught up in the media circus like everybody else. Bob Woodward of Watergate fame said this story is "about the failure of success." Los Angeles Time reporter, Howard Rosenberg, said the Simpson case "appears to affirm the media's role as an agenda setter, not so much telling Americas what to think as what to think about."

O.J. pitifully graces the covers and front pages of every major publica-

tion with a new image. His sullen face tilts back hopelessly on the news every night. A Los Angeles psychiatrist, Mark S. Goulston, claimed our interest stems from our disturbance that O.J. was "someone we wanted to be." The Juice had achieved what we all want: power, celebrity, the big home, fancy car, fine clothes and a beautiful family. In the past he had the image of someone who made it.

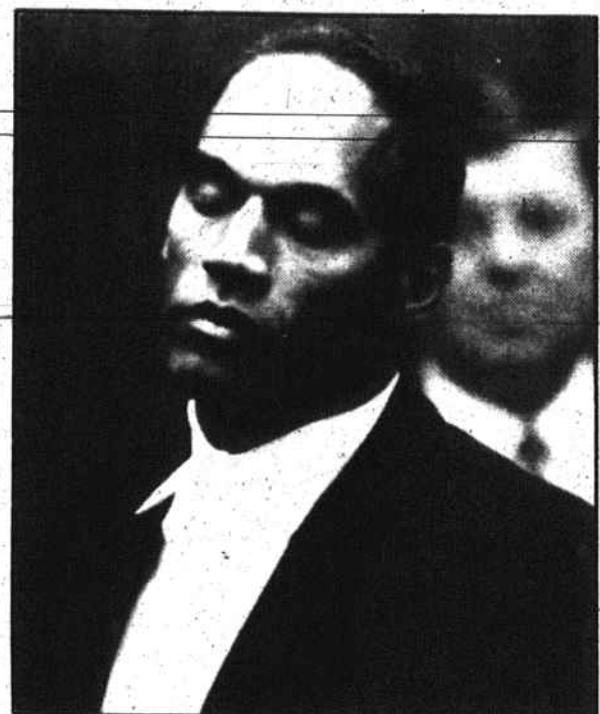
Whites are just as manipulated as blacks when it comes to the issue of

image. Whites are asked to experience the pain, horror and downfall of a man. They grow numb. And in a subtle way, they are asked to realize that this man is a brutal athlete, a violent wife-beater, and a potential killer. Is this the American image of a black man?

Whatever the outcome of the trial, whether O.J. is innocent or guilty, the damage is done. The negative image has been cast in stone while dignity and pride are viciously chipped away. The image of The Juice breaking tackles, hawking Hertz rentals, being silly in Naked Gun movies, and commenting sports, has faded. Maybe my friend was right. We do have cause for alarm. The hateful finger of blame and negativism is pointing in our direction, again.

Good-bye "Juice," it was nice knowing you.

(Lee J. Cox is a Winston-Salem freelance writer and visual artist.)



O.J. Simpson

## Human Rights Groups Remain Concerned About Human Rights in Liberia

Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans have died over the past few months as the rest of the world has looked on, seemingly paralyzed and unable to stop the slaughter. Bodies have washed up on shore in neighboring countries. Hundreds of thousands have fled for their lives, becoming refugees in countries little prepared and unable to finance the costs of receiving them. The sad reality is that the civil war in Rwanda has been going on for decades, receiving little of the world's attention until now.

Similarly, the political situation in Somalia was an old conflict which continued to worsen until tens of thousands were dying of starvation and the world was confronted with the picture of thousands of dying children. Only then did the United Nations and the United States intervene in the internal conflict of that nation.

Now, a similar situation exists in another part of Africa. Liberia has long a close historical ties to the United States. Indeed, Liberia was founded in 1847 by freed American slaves, who chose to return to Africa rather than stay in the country which enslaved them. The capital city, Monrovia, was named for U.S. President James Monroe. Its official language is English and it uses Liberian dollars, which are actually old U.S. dollars as its currency. For many years rubber was Liberia's largest cash crop and it had strong ties to U.S. rubber companies, especially Firestone.

Liberia has faced political instability for nearly two decades but this has escalated over the past four years as a civil war continues to be fought and wide-ranging human rights violations and abuses continue to be committed by the various parties of the conflict. Indeed, since 1990, Liberia has been a divided country with one armed force controlling Monrovia and several other factions controlling most of the rest of the country.

Human rights violations have been a part of the continuous and bloody

civil war. In late 1992, five American nuns and four novices were killed, drawing must international attention and finally forcing the United Nations to take action in the form of an international arms embargo. During this time, several cease-fires and peace agreements have been signed, only to falter once the warring parties left the peace table. Moreover, the military intervention sponsored by other west African countries and originally hailed by the rest of the world has yet to bring peace to Liberia and this military force, mainly staffed by Nigerians, is now accused of aligning itself with two of the warring factions and perhaps even supplying arms and ammunition to them.

Human rights groups remain concerned about the status of human rights in Liberia and President Jimmy Carter's Carter Center has had an office in Monrovia for the past two years. The Carter Center is monitoring the situation closely, as are the other human rights organizations.

In the meantime, although little is heard outside of Liberia about the human rights violations, they are still common there. This spring Human Rights Watch Africa released new study on human rights abuses in Liberia, citing recent military campaigns against civilians, some 40,000 of whom have been displaced because of the fighting. Indeed, Human Rights Watch Africa's report labels the situation in Liberia as "very precarious", pointing out that only a small percentage of the combatants have been demobilized and there are increasing reports of widespread looting, arbitrary arrest and detention, forcible recruitment, beatings, torture, rape and killings of civilians.

Meanwhile, there has been extremely show progress toward the achievement of free elections, which are now scheduled for this September. President Carter plans to head a delegation of election observers if the elec-

tion are held. Liberia last held national election in 1985 and although the voting process itself was judged to be free, the counting process was though to be manipulated by then-President Samuel Doe. Doe was later overthrown and killed.

All Americans, but especially African Americans, have a special relationship with Liberia.

With the relationship comes responsibility—a responsibility to speak out against the human rights violations in Liberia, a responsibility to work



### CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

for free and fair elections in that war-torn country. We must urge the United Nations to stay closely involved in Liberia and urge our own government to be pro-active in Liberia. According to Human Rights Watch Africa, the specter of Liberia degeneration into a Somalia-like situation is a real possibility. We cannot afford to wait for another Somalia or another Rwanda before our government acts. Liberia is a part of us, just as we are a part of it.

(Bernice Powell Jackson is the executive director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.)

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