

Officer breaks silence after acquittal

Stephen Roach shot and killed an unarmed black man in April, sparking riots in Cincinnati

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CINCINNATI — A white Cincinnati police officer acquitted in the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man doesn't know if his life will ever be what it once was: normal.

"Normal?" Stephen Roach said in an interview with The Cincinnati Enquirer published Saturday. "What would that be like?"

Roach was acquitted Sept. 26 by a Hamilton County judge of misdemeanor charges of negligent homicide and obstructing official business. Roach shot Timothy Thomas, 19, on April 7, after chasing him into a dark alley. Thomas was wanted on 14 misdemeanor warrants.

The shooting touched off three nights of rioting in which dozens of people were injured and more than 800 arrested in the city's worst racial unrest since the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968.

"I still can't believe all that has happened in the city in the last six months because of something that took just seconds to occur in that alley," Roach told the newspaper in his first interview since the verdict.

Roach, 27, did not talk much about the shooting because he is being sued for wrong-

ful death by Thomas' mother, Angela Leisure, and the city is doing its own investigation. He did say the trial had a "just" ending.

"What went on in that alley was a nightmare for everybody," Roach said as he sat on a sofa in the home he shares with his wife, Erin.

Roach said he and his wife have not returned to their normal routines since the shooting.

"We put a lot of stuff on hold," he said. "We were thinking about building a new house. We haven't talked about having kids for a long time."

"The only time we've mentioned kids is when we say how lucky we were we didn't have kids when this thing happened," he said.

"Through it all, Erin showed so much strength. She kept the whole family together — her folks, my parents, us. She put everything into perspective. She kept telling me that no matter what happened, we had each other."

Roach said that after the shooting, he and his wife were afraid to leave their home. He said the public has been supportive and he has received many anonymous donations to his \$56,000 legal defense fund.

Last Thursday morning, after work, he and his wife went to breakfast at a downtown restaurant. No one interrupted their meal, but they could not leave without being spotted.

"An African-American gentleman stopped me on the street. He said, 'I just want to say thanks.'"

"He said he really appreciated what I said after court that day."

In a statement after the trial, Roach read an apology to Thomas' mother.

"The man said: 'I know it's a tough time. You're not going to be able to say much. There's not much you can say. But, you did the right thing.'"

Roach has not returned to his beat. His police powers are suspended while he works in the city's impound lot.

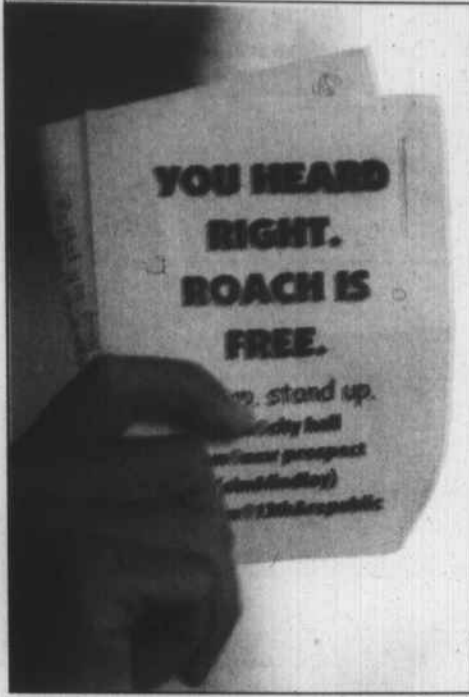
Roach's job is to inspect cars, enter data into a computer and wait for an owner to show up.

"Some have said, 'Oh, you're Officer Roach,'" he said. "And they may have had bad thoughts about me. But they've never said anything."

Roach eventually hopes to return to police work, but not yet.

"I still have problems dealing with this thing," Roach said. "It's going to take time. It wouldn't be right to come back, for me, for the Cincinnati police, for the city."

Roach has an unpublished telephone number and could not be reached for additional comment.



A protester holds up a sign in a Cincinnati City Council meeting in reaction to the not guilty verdict of Cincinnati Police Officer Stephen Roach Sept. 26.

Clinton: blacks should make 'right compromises'

Former president tells CBC to take caution with anti-terrorism laws

BY HAZEL TRICE EDNEY
NNPA CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON — Former President Bill Clinton says blacks should be prepared to "make the right compromises" on proposed anti-terrorism laws because threats on civil rights by terrorists are far worse.

"This terrorist attack basically wants to create a world that is the exact opposite of everything that black people have worked for since the end of slavery because they (terrorists) believe that they have the truth," Clinton told NNPA in an interview after he received an achievement award during the annual dinner at the Congressional Black Caucus Legislative conference last Saturday night.

"What I think we should do is support responsible military and law enforcement options that are consistent with preserving our civil liberties. We can make the right compromises,"

he said. "Twenty-five years ago, there were people who said metal detectors at airports were actually an infringement upon our civil liberties. They said there's going to be a problem. Now we do it as a matter of course."

Clinton said the outlandish oppression of women and non-Muslims in some Middle Eastern countries should show all Americans the anti-civil and anti-human rights mentalities of some who warp Islamic beliefs and should be a reminder to African Americans that "we've been down this road before."

In response to a question about whether he had been communicating with President Bush, Clinton said, "I got a letter from him the other day." But he declined to say what the letter said. "We'll talk," he said of his plans in relation to Bush.

Clinton's encouragement of African Americans to make

civil rights compromises is directly opposed to a coalition of civil rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, which have decried many of the proposals in a legislative anti-terrorism package Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft have sent before Congress.



Scott

Ashcroft is encouraging a vote on the package this week, although civil rights representatives have encouraged Congress not to rush.

"We already live in a surveillance society," said Laura Murphy, director of the Wash-

ington, D.C., office of the ACLU, which has asked members of Congress to study the proposal well before voting.

"We shouldn't rush through this process because the consequences will last the rest of our lives," she said.

"There is a cooperative spirit, but that does not mean that the president can get passed anything that he wants," said Rep. Robert C. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), a member of the Crime Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee.

The proposed new laws include the ability to wiretap any phone used by a suspect, including landline phones and cell phones. It is a proposal most civil rights representatives have said is palatable.

But other proposed legislation, such as unlimited detention of aliens without judgment, is being strongly challenged.



As president, Clinton addresses the CBC. He also spoke to the group over the weekend at its annual meeting.

Students respond to attacks

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Moved by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, a group of Wake Forest University students has begun organizing a series of events that explore issues raised by the attack. The series, or theme year, is called "The Year of Unity and Hope: Pro Humanitate at Work."

Expected to run throughout the academic year, the series began Sept. 26 with an 8 p.m. forum called "Understanding September 11."

Wake Forest faculty members, including Charles "Hank" Kennedy and Charles Kimball, spoke at the forum. They gave short presentations on their areas of expertise followed by a question-and-answer session.

Kennedy, a professor of political science, is an expert on Pakistan and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Kimball, chair of the religion department, is an expert on Islam and religion and politics in the Middle East. Both have provided analysis of the United States' "War on Terrorism" for the media.

Wake Forest senior Jay Cridlin is the co-chair of the event series committee, which

was created during a university retreat for student leaders. Cridlin, editor of Wake Forest's student newspaper, the Old Gold and Black, said the committee was formed in response to students' need to understand the political situation and to assist in the relief efforts.

"The political situation is so complex, and a lot of people still don't understand why all this is happening, and what could happen from here," Cridlin said. "There's a great need for information, and for opportunities to do something with the knowledge and understanding we hope to gain."

University administrators are working with the students to plan the theme year.

"We were very pleased to see that students were compelled enough to explore this topic that they wanted to take responsibility for organizing the theme year and events," said Ken Zick, vice president of student life and instructional resources at Wake Forest.

"The student leaders will also act as a coordinating committee for student-run initiatives for service to help with the relief effort like blood drives."

Wake Forest has previously celebrated theme years, including "The Year of Ethics and Honor" and "The Year of the Arts." No single theme had been chosen for this year. With approval from the university, the students are planning several events tied to the theme. "The Year of Unity and Hope: Pro Humanitate at Work." "Pro Humanitate" is the Wake Forest motto. It means, "For the good of humanity."

Events will include a fundraiser organized by the university's Volunteer Service Corps to raise money for the September 11 Fund, which benefits victims in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The student committee will also invite prominent speakers to campus.

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