

# FORUM

## Black-on-black tragedy



**Nigel Alston**  
Motivational Moments

"What we see depends entirely on what we look for."  
— Sir John Lubbock

Sean Taylor, a black, 24-year old professional football player for the Washington Redskins is dead from a gunshot wound to his femoral artery. He lost too much blood and never recovered from the assault by four black men. One of the men apparently did some yard work for Taylor, and the others, I'm sure, watched him play on Sundays. His baby's mama was unharmed in the break-in; she hid under the bedding, while Taylor locked the bedroom door and grabbed his machete. What do you tell his 18-month old baby girl about his death, that her father's past caught up with him or that he was just another black on black crime victim, a statistic with an asterisk.

There are a few people who, based on Taylor's past behavior, are not surprised that he died a violent death. And, maybe it shouldn't be surprising that Taylor's death was at the hands of another black man. It's a crying shame though that four black men have been charged in this senseless break-in gone wrong. Taylor by all accounts

had turned his life around. Leonard Shapiro, a Sports Columnist for the Washington Post asks "... could anyone honestly say they never saw this coming?" Shapiro shares an experience he had with the NFL once, attending a required NFL rookie symposium, then, a four-day session. "Every drafted rookie was and still is required to attend an annual event designed to prepare the players for a wide variety of issues they would soon be facing as highly visible professional athletes," he writes in his piece, "Taylor's Death Is Tragic but Not Surprising."

The symposium, he said, included a "compelling" element, a skit that included a wide range of scenarios that placed athletes in certain situations where they would have to make "a very critical and potentially life-altering decision." At the moment the athlete would normally take an action, a voice would scream "FREEZE!!!!!!" At that point a leader would help facilitate a discussion about handling the situation. What should or would the athlete do? It was role-playing for the sake of helping players understand and apply judgment in real life situations. Shapiro points out that Taylor did not report to a rookie symposium and supposedly had scrapes with his head football coach, Joe Gibbs. He didn't show up for off season workouts and almost went to jail for a reported shooting incident.

Shapiro's colleague, Post columnist and ESPN broadcaster Michael Wilbon weighed in

on the subject as well, prior to knowing what actually happened. "I know how I feel about Taylor, and this latest news isn't surprising in the least, not to me," he is quoted as saying in the article. "Whether this incident is or isn't random, Taylor grew up in a violent world, embraced it, claimed it, loved to run in it and refused to divorce himself from it. He ain't the first and won't be the last. We have no idea what happened, or if what we know now will be revised later. It's sad, yes, but hardly surprising."

And maybe it is not surprising that it was a black on black crime, again! Jason Whitlock, in a column on FOXSports.com, "Taylor's death a grim reminder for us all," labels the men charged, and others like them, as the Black KKK. Yes, you read it right, the Black KKK. They bring as much destruction and fear.

According to Whitlock, "... if you're a black man living in America, you've been reminded once again that your life is in constant jeopardy of violent death." Whitlock doesn't mince any words; he wants the gravity of the situation to sink in. Maybe we have become so used to violence and death that we have become immune. Our feelings are suppressed. He goes on to write that, "when shots are fired and a black man hits the pavement, there's every statistical reason to believe another black man pulled the trigger."

That's not some negative, unfair stereotype. It's a reality

we've been living with, tolerating and rationalizing for far too long."

Black men are targets of black men, says Whitlock. If you don't believe it, he suggests visiting the coroner's office or talking with a police detective. You can feel his intensity, reading his piece, as he suggests cutting through the crap and dealing with reality. He believes "our self-hatred" has been set to music and influenced by hip-hop. "When leading causes of death and dysfunction are murder, ignorance and incarceration, there's no reason to give a free pass to a culture that celebrates murder, ignorance and incarceration," he writes passionately.

The NFL symposium didn't include a scenario with a home break-in scene. A trainer was not in Taylor's home when the Black KKK knocked the door down, squeezed the trigger and fired the gun. There was no one to scream "FREEZE!!!!!!" before the bullet tore Taylor's femoral artery and the blood gushed out of his leg. There was no one to discuss the consequences of their actions with the burglars. It would have been a teachable moment and his daughter would have appreciated it.

Nigel Alston is a radio talk-show host, columnist and motivational speaker. He is the chairman of the Winston-Salem State University Board of Trustees. Visit his Web site at [www.motivationalmoments.com](http://www.motivationalmoments.com).



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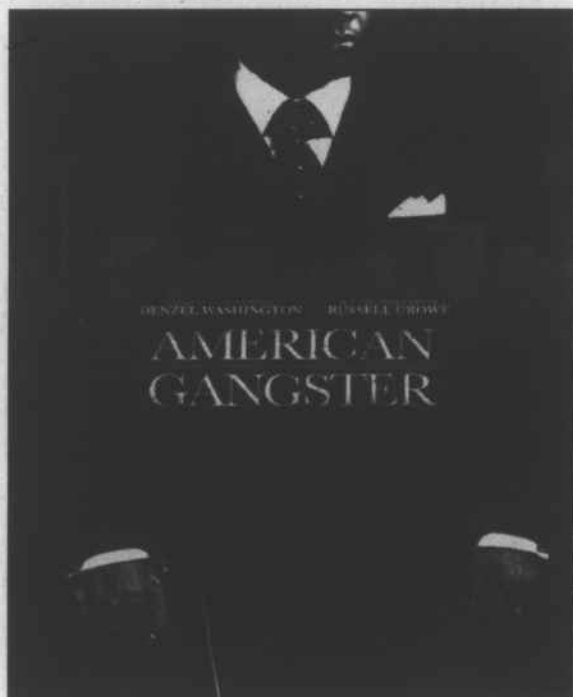
## Chickens have come home to roost



**A. Peter Bailey**

REALITY CHECK

The chickens have come home to roost. One of the most important lessons learned from Brother Malcolm X by those who were listening is that in the campaign for equal rights, equal opportunity and equal justice, we are not confronted mainly by bigoted individuals but by a powerful, pervasive system (italics mine) of White supremacy and racism. One would never know this by the actions of most African-Americans during the past 40 years. Instead we have supported entertainers and others who demean and disrespect us in song lyrics; we enrich members of other racial and ethnic by donating them billions of dollars annually with our rampant consumerism instead of using our collective economic resources to empower ourselves; we wallow in excessive me, myself and I-ism; we support shallow, sound bite leadership who know just what to say to get on the six o'clock news; we act like we have the luxury of intra-group divisions based on income, education status and skin complexion; we are too often apathetic and disorganized. We ignore or reject words of wisdom from legendary former-leaders Malcolm X (U.S. politics is ruled by special interest blocs and lobbies. What group has a more urgent special interest, what group needs a



sions of White supremacy and racism from those who regard us as being apathetic and powerless thus they feel free to indulge in noose hangings and name calling, among other things. Thus, the chickens have come home to roost.

I will not go to see American Gangster for the same reason I didn't see The Godfather II and Good Fellows, the same reason I have never watched The Sopranos. I will not support movies, books, TV programs, song lyrics that glorify gangster. It is very disappointing that a brilliant, intelligent actor such as Denzel Washington would participate in such a venture. The only good thing about it is that it is called American Gangster, not Black American Gangster since Black gangsters are quintessential Americans, products of American culture, not black culture.

The question I would ask Senator Barack Obama if given a chance is what exactly is it that causes you to believe that people in this country, with its pervasive white supremacy, will elect you president? By the way, my belief remains that if the Democrats nominate Senator Obama or Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton as their candidate, they are conceding the 2008 election to the Republicans.

Peter Bailey, former editor of Ebony magazine, was an original member of The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), founded in 1964 by Malcolm X.

bloc, a lobby, more than the Black man...Twenty-two million Black people should tomorrow give a dollar a piece to build a skyscraper lobby building in Washington D.C. Every morning, every legislator should receive a communication about what the black man in American expects and wants and needs. The demanding voice of the Black lobby should be in the ears of every legislator who votes on any issue), Mary McLeod Bethune (I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. This kind of confidence will aid the economic rise of the race by bring-

ing together the pennies and dollars of our people and ploughing them into useful channels), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (A second important step that the Negro must take is to work passionately for group identity. This does not mean group isolation or group exclusivity. There must always be healthy debate... this form of group unity can do infinitely more to liberate the Negro than any action of individuals. We have been oppressed as a group and we must overcome that oppression as a group). Our ignoring or rejecting of these words of wisdom have resulted in an increase in overt expres-

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