

OPINION/ FORUM

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Mad Women and Black-on-Black Crime

The weekly Moral Monday rally at the General Assembly saw a swelling in attendance this week, courtesy of the latest repressive law passed by Republican lawmakers.

In what was the legislative equivalent of a quarter-back sneak, Republicans pushed through a bill last week that comes very close to banning abortions across the Tarheel State.

Women's rights advocates and feminist groups joined the NAACP and other civil rights and voting rights advocates for Monday's protest. Their voices were welcomed, but for a movement that is more than two months old, those voices could have been sounded a lot sooner.

In one of our first commentaries about the new Republican-led legislature and Governor's Mansion, we urged all equality-loving residents to speak out and take a stand, for it wouldn't be long before lawmakers turned their focus away from suppressing immigrants and blacks and toward other groups. We aren't psychics; the writing was on the wall the minute Republicans settled-in and began making moves to suppress the minority vote and send immigrants packing. Did middle class white women think that they would be immune?

In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who we believe did possess prophetic abilities, penned on April 16, 1963 that, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

We should heed his words now more than ever.

The George Zimmerman trial has been getting a lot of headlines over the last two weeks. Everyone wants to see the man who shot and killed Trayvon Martin brought to justice, and justifiably so. The very real thought of a white (Hispanic) man walking free for killing an unarmed black teenager is every black parent's nightmare.

There is always a big hubbub when someone of another race guns down or otherwise kills or wrongs an African American. There are rallies, Facebook campaigns and then suddenly, Civil Rights Movement bigwigs – the Jesses and the Sharptons of the world – are rife on cable news channels. But black-on-black crime – the kind that has claimed the lives of more black teenagers than a racist's bullet – doesn't raise an eyebrow, let alone our collective ire.

Over the long Fourth of July weekend – July 3-7 – 74 people were shot in Chicago, which has gained the dubious reputation as the nation's murder capital. Of those shot, 12 were killed. The severely injured included five-year-old and seven-year-old boys.

The Windy City has already surpassed 200 homicides in 2013, well on track to equal or top the 500 gun deaths the city recorded last year. The majority of the victims and perpetrators are black and brown folks from the inner-city. Unlike Trayvon Martin's parents, many of these victims' kin will never have a day in court to look their loved one's killer in the eye. A lot of these homicides go unsolved. We figure that the cops feel that since we, the black community, care so little about our people gunning down one another, why should they invest a lot of time in solving these crimes.

The names of Trayvon Martin, Sean Bell, Emmett Till and Yusef Hawkins will live on forever. All of them were tragically killed by non-blacks, and each of their deaths sparked a national – even international – outcry.

Jaden Donald deserves equal time and equal indignation. He is the five-year-old black Chicago boy clinging to life after being shot, allegedly by fellow African American Darrell E. Chambers, last week. Where is the rally for Kinta Lamont Newman, a black man gunned down by other black men in Durham earlier this year, and Omar Sykes, the Howard University student shot and killed in Washington, D.C. on July 4?

Murder – regardless of the color of the victim or killer – should alarm us all. It should jar us, move us. We don't see that happening in the black community when it comes to us killing ourselves, and that's troubling. If we have become desensitized to the most common kind of crime in our community, then truly we have lost our way.



Jesse Jackson
 Guest Columnist

President Barack Obama should lead a forceful drive to revive the Voting Rights Act, which was effectively disemboweled by the Supreme Court's recent decision. All celebrate the 1965 Act as the most consequential civil rights legislation of the past century. Its passage was central to the building of the New South, opening the way to attracting foreign investment in auto factories, creating CNN, hosting the Super Bowl, even electing presidents. One afflicted with a poisoned heart is often blind to its effects. The South learned only after the civil rights legislation that segregation was blighting its own potential.

In 2006, the Congress, after weeks of hearings and thousands of pages of testimony and evidence, overwhelmingly reauthorized the law by a vote of 98-0 in the Senate and 390-33 in the House. Legislators

chose to sustain Section 4 that identified which counties and states had a history of discrimination sufficient that changes in voting rights would be subject to prior approval by the Justice Department or a federal court under Section 5. Preclearance not only blocked laws with discriminatory effect, but it also inhibited efforts to suppress the right to vote.

But Justice John Roberts, writing for the court in a 5-4 decision, argued that "our country has changed." He and the activist reactionaries on the court substituted their judgment for that of elected officials and struck down Section 4. Yet, the decision came after an election in which Republicans, particularly in Section 4 states, had pushed harsh restrictions on voting that would make it harder for minorities to vote. When the Miami Heat played the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA finals, the games were rough, but proactive referees kept them from becoming brawls. Justice Roberts' decision, in essence, would pull the referees off the court.

With Republican office holders increasingly wor-

ried by the growing numbers of African-American, Latino, Asian-American and other minority voters, measures to curtail voting rights have spread. It is perverse that the chief justice thought this was the time to overrule the congressional judgment.

Sen. Lindsay Graham (R-S.C.) defended the court's decision, saying that his state had witnessed "tremendous progress" in voting rights. Progress, no doubt, but in 2012 South Carolina passed a discriminatory voting act that was struck down by the courts. David Gergen said he was from North Carolina and "times have changed." Change, yes, but in 2012, North Carolina pushed an aggressive agenda to curtail voting rights, including restrictive voting ID, elimination of early voting on Sunday, a ban on same day voter registration and more. Similar reforms in Texas, blocked by a Section 5 preclearance review, were immediately taken up again when the court's decision came down.

We need to keep the referees on the court. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has

already pledged hearings to begin reformulating Section 4. Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) said that he hoped the House would find a "responsible way forward." The president should elevate this issue so that Americans can see who stands for voting rights, and who stands in the way.

Over the past years, the new South has made progress, but that is in large part because the Voting Rights Act put referees on the field to enforce the law. Will Republicans join Democrats in reviving bipartisan support for remedying the Supreme Court's wrong-headed decision? Or will they use the court's decision to intensify their efforts to suppress the vote? By pushing hard for action, the president can help recreate the bipartisan support that is vital for our progress as one nation.

Jesse L. Jackson Sr. is founder and president of the Chicago-based Rainbow PUSH Coalition. You can keep up with his work at www.rainbow-push.org.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Let me express my personal gratitude and very warm compliments on behalf of the Liberian Embassy in Washington for the warm hospitality accorded us during our recent visit to North Carolina. It was a pleasure for me to speak at your State Assembly and the enthusiasm that filled the hall reminds me that Liberia and the United States' relations will remain unshakable. As Liberia is on a forward march, we look forward to a continued partnership with you for a secured future for Liberia.

Once again, it was a pleasure visiting with you and thanks for the hospitality.

Best regards,

*Jeremiah C. Sulunteh
 Ambassador Extraordinary and
 Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Republic of
 Liberia, Washington, D.C.*



Submitted Photo
 Ambassador Sulunteh (front row, third from left) poses at the General Assembly May 29 with members of the Forsyth County delegation and Legislative Black Caucus.

Obama should lead VRA fight

Jesse Jackson
 Guest Columnist

President Barack Obama should lead a forceful drive to revive the Voting Rights Act, which was effectively disemboweled by the Supreme Court's recent decision. All celebrate the 1965 Act as the most consequential civil rights legislation of the past century. Its passage was central to the building of the New South, opening the way to attracting foreign investment in auto factories, creating CNN, hosting the Super Bowl, even electing presidents. One afflicted with a poisoned heart is often blind to its effects. The South learned only after the civil rights legislation that segregation was blighting its own potential.

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Ginsburg is the new Marshall

George Curry
 Guest Columnist

If you're looking for the justice on the Supreme Court who mirrors Thurgood Marshall's tenure on the bench, it is not Sonia Sotomayor, the "Wise Latina." And it certainly isn't Clarence Thomas. It is Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the second woman to serve on the nation's highest court.

This became clear in the Fisher v. University of Texas affirmative action case. With Elena Kagan recusing herself, the court voted 7-1 to send the case back to court of appeals for additional review. The lone dissenter was Ginsburg.

"The University of Texas at Austin (University) ... has steered clear of a quota system like the one struck down in Bakke, which excluded all nonminority candidates from competition for a fixed number of seats..." she said. "Justice Powell's majority opinion in Bakke 'rules out a racial quota or set-aside, in which race is the sole fact of eligibility for certain places in a class.' And, like so many educational institutions across the Nation, the University has taken care to follow the model approved by the Court in Grutter v. Bollinger."

In sending Fisher back to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans, the 7-1 majority empha-

sized that the lower court should apply a standard of strict scrutiny, meaning the University must prove that it has tried all available race-neutral approaches before allowing race to be considered a factor in admissions.

Ginsburg wrote in her dissent, "I have said before and reiterate here that only an ostrich could regard the supposedly neutral alternatives as race unconscious."

Continuing to address the issue of race directly, Ginsburg said, "I have several times explained why government actors, including state universities, need not be blind to the lingering effects of 'an overtly discriminatory past,' the legacy of 'centuries of law-sanctioned inequality.' Among constitutionally permissible options, I remain convinced, 'those that candidly disclose their consideration of race [are] preferable to those that conceal it.'"

In Shelby County v. Holder, the Voting Rights Act challenge, Ginsburg filed a dissenting opinion that was joined by Stephen G. Breyer, Sotomayor and Kagan. The conservative majority struck down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, effectively gutting one of the nation's most effective tools to curb discrimination against Black voters.

"In the Court's view, the very success of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act demands its dormancy," Ginsburg said. "Congress was of another mind. Recognizing that large progress has been made, Congress determined,



based on a voluminous record, that the scourge of discrimination was not yet extirpated."

She explained, "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) has worked to combat voting discrimination where other remedies had been tried and failed. Particularly effective is the VRA's requirement of federal preclearance for all changes to voting laws in the regions of the country with the most aggravated records of rank discrimination against minority voting rights."

Quoting a 1966 decision in South Carolina v. Katzenbach, Ginsburg said, "A century after the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments guaranteed citizens the right to vote free of discrimination on the basis of race, the 'blight of racial discrimination in voting' continued to 'infec[t] the electoral

process in parts of our country."

The Voting Rights Act directly addressed that infection, Ginsburg stated.

"Although the VRA wrought dramatic changes in the realization of minority voting rights, the Act, to date, surely has not eliminated all vestiges of discrimination against the exercise of the franchise by minority citizens," she said.

She noted that Congress, not the judiciary, should have the final say on voting matters.

"The Constitution uses the words 'right to vote' in five separate places: the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-Fourth, and Twenty-Sixth Amendments. Each of these Amendments contains the same broad empowerment of Congress to enact 'appropriate legislation' to enforce the protected right. The implication is unmistakable: Under our constitutional structure, Congress holds the lead rein in making the right to vote equally real for all U.S. citizens. These Amendments are in line with the special role assigned to Congress in protecting the integrity of the democratic process in federal elections."

That's language that would make Thurgood Marshall proud.

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emer magazine, is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service (NNPA.) He can be reached through his Web site, www.georgecurry.com.



Omar Sykes