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The Voice of the Black Community

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Like your results? Then keep on doing it

By James Clingman

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Once again (sounds like a broken record) Cincinnati is in the national and international news for being the city where a black man cannot stand on the street, sit in his car, hold a brick, or go to the store for a soft drink without getting killed by police officers. Of course I am generalizing only because, unless you have been in a "spider hole" for the past couple of years, you know what I am talking about.

Cincinnati and many of its citizens, both black and white, continue to amaze me. I am amazed at the apathy; I am amazed at the lukewarm resistance; I am amazed at the fear; and I am amazed at the lack of righteous indignation at what has to be one of the worst cities in America for police/community relations and economic disparity.

Cincinnati is ground zero, and the world awaits our decision on how we will deal with the latest in a long line of debacles that plague this town. No need to recap the things of the past; you already know our history. Suffice to say that just eight years ago Cincinnati was named the Nation's "Most Livable" city. What that term "most livable" means is certainly open for debate, but imagine what people around the world think as they look at Cincinnati now and see that yet another black man has been killed by the police.

What happened to Cincinnati? I say nothing happened. Things have been this way for quite some time; it's just that the cover was finally pulled off Cincinnati when Timothy Thomas was killed. Just read some of the writings of Carter G. Woodson and you will see what I mean. In one article titled, "Negroes of Cincinnati Prior to [the] Civil War," Woodson wrote, "In 1807 ... the legislature enacted another measure providing that no Negro should be permitted to settle in Ohio unless he could within twenty days give bonds to the amount of \$500.00, guaranteeing his good behavior and support." Woodson went on to write, "They (black people) were not wanted in this city but were tolerated as a negligible factor."

Wendell P. Dabney, a newspaper publisher and entrepreneur who lived in Cincinnati, wrote a book in 1926 titled "Cincinnati's Colored Citizens." Read what he said about his hometown. In describing what took place in 1862 during "The Siege of Cincinnati," Dabney wrote, "The colored men were roughly handled by the Irish police. From hotels and barber shops, in the midst of their labors, these helpless people were pounced upon and often bareheaded and in shirtsleeves ... at the point of the bayonet, and gathered in vacant yards and guarded." Dabney also described several "riots" in Cincinnati during which thousands of Black people were run out of town and others were killed by "angry white folks."

Here's the real kicker, and this supports what Mumia Abu-Jamal called in his editorial on the Nathaniel Jones death at the hands of white police officers, the "Big Nigger Defense" or the "BND." In Dabney's book there is an excerpt from an article titled, "The Negro in Cincinnati," written by Frank Quillan, who was working on his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in 1910. The Quillan document was the result of a study of the status of the Negro in the life of Cincinnati, prepared under the direction of the Department of History at the University of Michigan.

The article begins with a quote from Samuel J. Tilden, Democratic candidate for presidency in 1876, who called the entire state of Ohio a "dead nigger state." After citing several discriminatory practices against blacks in Cincinnati, Quillan poses the question, "What are the causes for this strong prejudice in Cincinnati? Among the seven reasons he gives is this one: 'When a Negro commits a crime the newspapers always emphasize his race connection by such headlines as 'A Big Black Burley Brute of a Negro' does such and such, and the whole race gets a share of the blame; while if the crime is committed by a white man the race is not mentioned, and the individual gets the blame.'"

Nathaniel Jones has been demonized and described in the same manner, even being called a "deadly weapon" by the mayor of Cincinnati simply because of his weight. Mumia's BND scenario is not so outlandish now, is it?

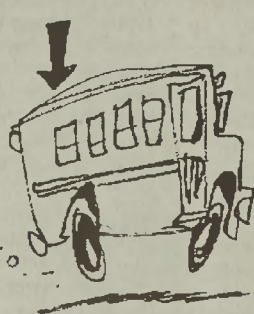
So it's plain to see that very little has changed in Cincinnati when it comes to how black folks are treated and mistreated by some police officers. Why haven't things changed? Because we, black folks, have not changed our response to these kinds of acts. We have marched, demonstrated, gone to jail, and we have had too many "race commissions" and "race dialogues" to list in this article. What should we do now, now after 40 years of marching and protesting, now after 250 years of the same mistreatment? Do you think there may just be an economic answer somewhere out there that we could use?

One thing I do know. We will keep on getting what we've always gotten if we keep on doing what we've always done.

JAMES E. CLINGMAN, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald Newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce.

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THE CHARLOTTE POST
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A proud Nubian history in Egypt

GEORGE E. CURRY



CAIRO, Egypt — After stepping out of the famed Egyptian Museum here and walking next door to the Coffee Shop Restaurant, a visitor is likely to meet Khaled Osman Mohamed, the manager. Khaled bears a striking resemblance to my cousin Walter Lynn Stuart, who lives in Nashville. Each is tall and slender, they have similar complexions and heads that could be politely described as follically-challenged.

If you ask Khaled to describe himself, he says without hesitation, "I'm Nubian." When pressed, the Cairo-born manager says he is proud to be an Egyptian, but even prouder to be a Nubian, a term associated with dark-skinned people and a region along the Nile that joins Egypt and its southern neighbor, Sudan.

The city of Aswan, with its impressive skyline and chocolate-covered people, is the center of Nubian culture. A pamphlet published by the Egyptian Tourist Authority observes: "Here, the Nile is at its most beautiful, flowing through amber desert and granite rocks, round emerald islands covered in palm groves and tropical plants."

But Nubia reeks of more than post-card beauty. The first published reference to

the term "Nubia" was by the Greek author Strabo in "Geographica." He had visited the region in 29 B.C. and researchers believe Nubian is a derivative of the Egyptian word nub, meaning gold, for which the region is famous. But the history of the region dates back to 6000 B.C. Beginning around 1971 B.C., the region became known as Kush; the Kushites served as middlemen in the flourishing trade between Mediterranean countries and Africa. Four Kushite kings ruled Egypt for 50 years during the 25th Dynasty.

As one of my fellow journalists noted, walk around Aswan today you'll meet yourself coming and going. If you don't see anyone who resembles you, look around and you'll undoubtedly spot someone who looks like a college roommate, a childhood friend or a co-worker.

In Cairo, an African American is likely to be greeted as "cousin" by merchants trying to collect American dollars. By the time you get to Aswan, black Americans are upgraded to "Brotha" and "Sisster." There is an unbroken, and largely unspoken, link between the two peoples that neither slavery nor the Atlantic Ocean could sever.

Khaled introduced several of us to Hamdy Soliman Oushy, a Nubian who received his masters and doctorate degrees in agriculture from New Mexico State University. At a Nubian cul-

ture center in Cairo, where fellow Nubians meet each week to socialize and keep the past alive, Oushy points to a colorful painting that stretches around the room. Nubians are seen walking, working, and interacting.

Much of that history has been submerged — literally. In 1960, the High Dam was built, a 2-mile engineering phenomenon that provides electricity and irrigation for the nation. While the Egyptian government raved about the construction of the dam, not everyone was not pleased with the country's version of urban renewal.

"Everything we had is now under water," Oushy explains. "Our houses, our dead, our villages. My dream is to go back there one day and to have a house." He also realizes that with each passing year, that becomes less likely to happen.

Relocated to large urban areas, such as Cairo, Nubians still hold a special place in their hearts for their native land and for African Americans who visit Egypt.

Khaled, for example, gave his family a two-hour notice that he was bringing a half-dozen black journalists he had just met home for dinner. His family, like many, has shared an apartment building for years. That alone helps account for the strong family tie. Khaled's family embraced us as their own, making sure we had plenty to eat and that we were comfortable in their home.

Khaled has visited Winston-Salem, N.C. twice within the past decade, mostly to lecture about Nubian culture. He is familiar with all of the American sports and entertainment icons, from Michael Jackson to Michael Jordan.

"Everyone think Americans are rich," says Khaled, who loves to joke. "Don't tell them you're from America. Tell them you're from Sudan."

He and his family speak proudly about their Nubian culture, how Nubians are known for their honesty and taking care of one another.

When asked earlier in the day what he missed about the United States, Khaled replied, "Seafood and Chinese food."

At the mention of Chinese food, everyone groaned.

Later, Khaled suddenly remembered: "There is something that I miss more than anything else."

And what is that? "C.P. Time," he said, with a big laugh.

When I heard Khaled longing for Colored People's time, a less sophisticated way of saying fashionably late, I knew I had indeed found my Nubian brother.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. His most recent book is "The Best of Emerge Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.

Lessons in peace and real community

WILLIAM RASPBERRY



Given his long years as a priest, it's not surprising that the Rev. Elias Chacour's conversation tends toward small homilies on brotherhood and reconciliation. What may surprise is the degree to which he both embodies and lives his sermons.

The 64-year-old Israeli-born cleric is an Israeli citizen, a Palestinian and a Melkite Catholic. He is also founder and president of Israel's first Christian-Arab-Israeli university, the fledgling Mar Elias University, which just opened as a branch of the University of Indianapolis.

Naturally, he expects to equip his graduates to earn a good living — the first three majors are environmental science, computer science and media and communications — but his real hope is that the university can help demonstrate that people can

live together in peace in the Middle East.

"I mean real community, not mere tolerance," he said in a recent interview in Washington. "I hate being tolerated. We need to see our differences not as something we tolerate but as something that enriches us. What we are doing here could be a model not just for the region but for all human society."

So far Mar Elias has slightly fewer than 100 students, but Chacour says he expects that number to reach 3,000 within five years, drawing from the West Bank, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere in the region. A quarter of the faculty is Jewish. Classes are conducted in English. The students are Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Druze — and most are women.

"The role of women at our university is very important," says Chacour. "Many girls in Muslim society tend to disregard education on the rationale that they are going to marry, so why go to school? For 20 years it's been clear to me that if you educate the girl, you educate her family, because she comes to

see the value of education."

The new university — whose accreditation terms require that students complete their degree work in Indianapolis — is an outgrowth of a high school Chacour started in 1982. That school, like Mar Elias, is in Ibillin, in the Galilee region — near Nazareth, but not in the occupied territories — and now enrolls about 4,500 students from kindergarten through high school. Like Mar Elias, its students are Christians, Muslims and Jews; it is the biggest school in the country with that mix, says Chacour.

Interestingly, given the flap French President Jacques Chirac set off last week with his call for a law banning the wearing of Muslim head scarves, Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses in France's public schools, such religious insignia seem not to be a problem at Mar Elias.

A few of the female Muslim students wear the scarves, but most choose not to — a fact that for Chacour symbolizes the recognition that they are in an environment

where no one religion is more honored than another. Moreover, he believes that the "peace and reconciliation" ethos of Mar Elias is best affirmed when students don't wear the insignia.

And make no mistake, peace and reconciliation are always at the front of Chacour's thinking.

"If I wanted to be bitter, I could be," he said. "I was deported from my village of Biram [in 1947], though I remained inside the territory. I'm still not allowed to live in my village. I can attend church there, and, oh, yes, I can be buried there."

"My family was fooled by the Israeli military into going away 'for two weeks' because of some things they had to do. And we've never been able to go back. So I could be bitter if I wanted to."

"But my parents, simple peasants, never believed in hatred and violence. They always taught us that the only way to dispose of an enemy is to turn him into a friend."

Not a bad sermon at that.

WILLIAM RASPBERRY is a Washington Post columnist.