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Justice still asymmetric

A LOCAL Afro-American family, seeking relief from what they say has been three years of racial harassment and destruction of their private property, has had their day in court. The judgment: no relief from racial harassment.

Eugene Campbell and his accused white neighbor, Charles McHone, stood before District Court Judge William B. Reingold last week. McHone pleaded guilty to throwing a brick through the window of Campbell's truck and to threatening his family.

Reingold ordered McHone to pay for the damage to the truck, but McHone got away with a warning for issuing racially oriented threats against his neighbors.

This should come as no surprise to anyone. Historically, the harassment of Afro-Americans by white Americans has been viewed as a minor infraction, at best, by law enforcement and judicial officials.

The Campbells say they had been unable to get relief from the sheriff's department, which maintained that they (the Campbells) had to witness the crime being committed in order to bring charges.

When the Campbells provided the sheriff's department with a metal object that was thrown through the front door of their home, the object was confiscated, but there was no follow-up. When a *Chronicle* reporter questioned Major E.D. Alston of the Forsyth County Sheriff's Department, she was told that the object was examined for fingerprints, but produced no evidence to link it to any one person.

Indeed, there may have been multiple fingerprints, but we are concerned about only one set -- those of the accused.

Considering our current civil climate, when racial violence against Afro-Americans is escalating nationally and overt bigotry is once again popular, it is not too much to expect our law officers and judges to make decisions which forcefully deter racially intolerant behavior.

Reingold had the authority to issue an injunction against McHone. He could have required McHone to post a personal bond which would have been forfeited if McHone persisted with his antagonistic behavior.

Reingold could have ordered a psychiatric evaluation of McHone or he could have given him a suspended sentence and probation. In other words, he could have sent a clear signal that racial violence would not be tolerated by his court. Instead, he chose to dismiss McHone with an impotent warning.

In this case, Reingold apparently perceived the damage to the Campbell's truck to be more significant than the threats McHone made against their lives.

It can be convincingly argued that it is precisely this type of indifference, on the part of those pledged to uphold the law, which contributes to the current climate of racial intolerance.

So, we have to wait until McHone maims or kills a member of the Campbell family (or until a member of the Campbell family maims or kills McHone) for this case to evoke the sincere attention of law enforcement officials.

One can only speculate as to what the outcome of this case would have been if a white man had stood before Reingold accusing an Afro-American man of harassing his family and destroying his private property.

But for most Afro-Americans, for whom justice has traditionally been asymmetric, the outcome of such a scenario is unequivocal.



The tragedy of Yvonne Smallwood

NEW YORK -- Yvonne Smallwood was 28 years old and the mother of four children. The youngest is 2. She worked full time for the city of New York and then worked a second job as a dietitian's aide for a Bronx hospital, just to bring in extra money for her family.

On Dec. 3 she was arrested for protesting the issuance of a summons to Austin Harper, her mate, who is a cab driver. On Dec. 9, she was dead while still in police custody.

What happened during those seven days clearly points to yet another case of unchecked police brutality in New York City. Witnesses, including Austin Harper and a bystander, a social work investigator for New York City, both confirmed that Yvonne Smallwood was beaten by several white police officers. The investigator noted that police threw her to the ground and kicked her. Mr. Austin stated that during this first beating she was knocked unconscious.

Police then took her to the hospital, where she was treated and released back into police custody. According to Austin, the officers wheeled her to the police car, where they beat her yet again: "The second time, after they wheeled her out of the hospital, my brother and I watched as she fell out of the

wheelchair and the police didn't believe she was hurt so they pushed her, picked her up, threw her into the police car and, when her legs

at a time when the Afro-American community of New York has become the target of increasing racially motivated violence. But, as



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BENJAMIN CHAVIS JR.

stuck out the back seat, they beat and kicked them into the car." The police then took her to jail at Riker's Island.

Mary Joseph, Harper's sister, who is a nurse at Riker's Island, saw Yvonne in the infirmary there and confirmed, "She was crying and crying, saying the police beat her over and over. Her leg was swollen, her ankles were bruised ... I've seen beaten people in my line of work, and she was beaten."

Smallwood's court-appointed attorney says that when he saw her at the arraignment, "Her wrists were very swollen and her leg was three times its normal size. She was in really bad shape, dragging the leg behind her." Smallwood, still in police custody, later died of a blood clot that moved from her swollen leg to her lungs.

The Smallwood murder comes

a result, this community is also beginning to unify around concrete strategies for changing the situation in New York.

As I preached the eulogy at Yvonne Smallwood's funeral and looked down at her young body, draped with a red, black and green liberation flag, I reflected, "When we look upon your face, my sister, we see ourselves. For you are us. You in your death personify the essence of our struggle. They tried to club your spirit out of existence, but it is here with us tonight."

"Let us all make a commitment to her spirit, for the best memorial we can give to Yvonne is to resolve to have the kind of unity and action in our community that makes New York City a city without racism, a city without killer cops ... Our com-

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The culture that works for you

NEW YORK -- Teens who use drugs are not typical of the acne society. Half of them started drinking and using illegal drugs by age 13.

Moreover, their problems ranged from sexual abuse to arrests to self-hatred, if they're Afro-American. The self-image problem or racial anxiety among Afro-American youth is so obvious that a scientific study is not necessary to observe it.

Abuse comes in many forms: physical, sexual and psychological. Abuse then acts as the basis for self-destruction or drug usage, which is this generation's choice of gradual (not so gradual in some cases) suicide.

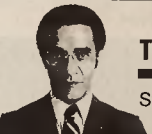
"Poppy" parents are the new menace in child rearing. They are the "closet druggies," parents who use drugs around their children. In one study, 60 percent of the young people on drugs reported that someone else

at home also abuses drugs.

Poppy parents present another of the many challenges to raising healthy children. Parents such as these add to the already overwhelming burden of open drug

brought the AIDS problem to the front door of Black America.

Here are some other drug-related statistics, reported under the "endangered species" category: An estimated 50 percent of young



TONY BROWN

Syndicated Columnist

dealing on the streets in poor neighborhoods.

The battle against drugs in Afro-American communities is substantially different from the battle that is fought in white, middle-class neighborhoods. AIDS, for example, among Afro-American drug addicts, is at an epidemic level. Because they live among other Afro-Americans and are sexually intimate with other Afro-Americans, the drug problem has

Afro-Americans are unemployed; 25 percent under the age of 25 have never held a job; one in six has been arrested by the age of 19; more than 10,000 Afro-American males between the ages of 15 and 19 die each year in homicides (their second-leading cause of death); an estimated 72 percent of Afro-American males in New York City drop out of some high school.

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CHRONICLE CAMERA

King holiday revives memories of his tragic death

For some of us, the tragic occurrence of April 4, 1968, is something we have become familiar with only through the recollections of relatives and through footage provided by the news media.

Some of us have learned of

the tragedy, the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., at our parents and grandparents' knees and we have listened as they recounted the impact the murderer had on the lives of Afro-Americans in this country and on people around the world.

Many of us can only wonder about how we would have felt at the moment we learned of the civil rights leader's death. But there are those of us who actually lived the historical event.

For one moment, in very turbulent times, people everywhere

paused to take note of the assassination that ended the life of a major American leader and threatened to end a movement that challenged inequality around the globe.

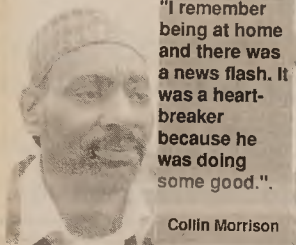
For those who were a part of the movement and even for those who watched from a distance,

April 4, 1968 is a day that has been ingrained in their memories forever. Even those who were school children at the time recall the feeling of sadness and a sense of loss.

In keeping with this week's remembrances of King, the Chronicle Camera surveyed local resi-

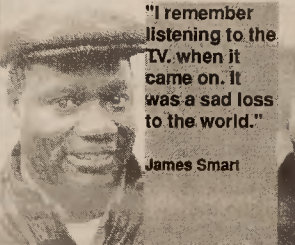
dents to determine what their strongest memories are about the day King was killed.

Below is a random sampling of responses to this week's question, "Do you remember what you were doing and how you felt the day Dr. King was assassinated?"



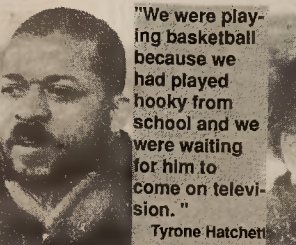
"I remember being at home and there was a news flash. It was a heart-breaker because he was doing some good."

Collin Morrison



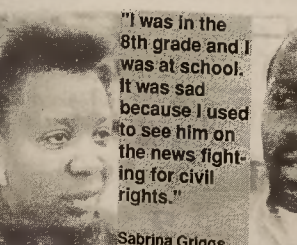
"I remember listening to the TV when it came on. It was a sad loss to the world."

James Smart



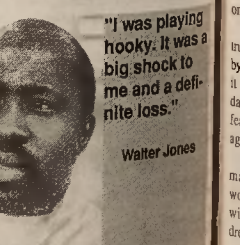
"We were playing basketball because we had played hooky from school and we were waiting for him to come on television."

Tyrone Hatcher



"I was in the 8th grade and I was at school. It was sad because I used to see him on the news fighting for civil rights."

Sabrina Griggs



"I was playing hooky. It was a big shock to me and a definite loss."

Walter Jones

Taxes soak poor people

TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

NEW YORK -- Historically, the tax structure was used to help equalize income, as well as to raise revenues. But now it looks as if the nation's tax structure -- state and federal alike -- is a regressive instrument that widens income inequality.

A recent analysis of federal taxes made by the Congressional Budget Office says that the poorest tenth of American families will wind up paying 20 percent more of their earnings in federal taxes than they did a decade ago. Meanwhile, the richest 1 percent will pay almost 20 percent less.

And this comes at a time when the vast majority of Americans -- 80 percent according to the CBO -- have lower real incomes than they did back in 1977. That's because wages didn't keep up with inflation.

The lowest federal tax rate moves up from 11 percent to 15 percent this year. Higher social security taxes and excise taxes also add to the burdens of the typical family to a far greater extent than for affluent families.

So the net result of the Reagan tax revolution is to cut taxes for the wealthy while taking more from low- and moderate-income families. The rationale was that by cutting taxes for the wealthy, they'd invest more. But national savings and investment rates are down, not up.

And while the administration correctly claims that even with lower rates, the percentage share of the tax burden paid by the affluent is higher, that's because their share of the national income has risen so much.

The problem of regressive taxes is compounded by the fact that most states have tax structures that soak the poor.

While the federal tax reform virtually exempted most of the working poor from federal income taxes, state and local tax collectors continue to squeeze revenues from those least able to pay.

Even before federal tax reform poor households paid more in state and local taxes than they did in federal taxes. In more than half the states with income taxes, the point at which a family of four starts paying taxes is more than \$5,000 below the poverty line.

The poorest 20 percent of taxpayers pay a higher share of their income in state and local taxes than do the next 60 percent of the population -- the middle class.

Almost all states have some form of sales tax, and that impacts poor families disproportionately since they have to spend all they earn. The poorest fifth of all families pay three times as high a percentage of their income in sales taxes as do the wealthiest 5 percent of families.

Taxing the poor is unconvincible. By definition, poor people cannot afford to have their small incomes driven still lower by taxes. The federal tax reform last year recognized that to some extent by removing the working poor from the income tax rolls and enlarging the earned income tax

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