

# FORUM

## I really do love this game

**Nigel Alston**  
Motivational Moments



away dizzy. He crossed the half court line, moved the ball from his right hand behind his back to his left hand, between his legs again and in one continuous motion released the ball.

It sailed through the air on its way through the hoop - swish - nothing but the bottom of the net.

It qualifies for the CIAA Tournament highlight reel.

Raise the roof. I love this game.

I have seen a few more games and have a lot of memories since that time "back in the day."

I attended my first tournament in 1971 as a freshman at Livingstone College.

It didn't take a lot of planning or thought.

"Let's go to the tournament," someone shouted.

That's all the encouragement we needed. We didn't have \$5 between us. We didn't see a game or make it into the coliseum. We didn't need a hotel reservation, we slept in the car.

That was the beginning of a love affair.

It's the same love affair that thousands of people have developed over the years. I wonder if the coaches who pooled their money to rent that boxing arena to put on the first tournament in Washington, D.C. knew they

were starting a tradition that would become the largest black basketball tournament in the country.

From a 2,000 person sell-out in Washington, D.C. to an economic impact of \$8 million for the city hosting the event. Operating on a shoestring budget of \$800 in 1946, the CIAA now commands more than \$250,000 in scholarships that benefit member schools.

Sky boxes are used to entertain and host school supporters while the Delta's and AKA's have the hottest ticket in town to a sold out fashion show. There is something for everyone.

A Greek step show allows students to show off their synchronized moves and a cheerleading contest makes Tae-Bo look tame.

And how can I forget Mr. CIAA. He'll be styling and profiling in living color.

I watch the games in between conversations with friends. I walk over to the pavilion to find that bargain I just can't do without as I listen to "old school" music blast from a boom box.

The CIAA is more than just a basketball tournament.

There is the hall of fame induction ceremony, tip-off banquets, the coaches' social and one party after another.

My wife has just come in

from the ladies' evening game. She is in the spirit already. It's ladies night out.

A friend's daughter is a ball girl and they are out to support her and watch some good basketball. She met a few people she didn't know. They talked about the coaching changes, a chancellor moving on to another school, and the games moving to Raleigh next year.

The games have traveled around over the years to cities like Washington, Baltimore, Durham, Greensboro, Hampton, Norfolk, Richmond and Winston-Salem.

I am flipping through the pages of a souvenir program now, which is more like a family photo album, reading about the rich history of the CIAA.

I have one more day at the office before the fun begins for me. By the time you read this column, I'll be enjoying another CIAA tournament. And it is all because of those coaches who pitched in \$100 to rent an arena to put on a tournament in 1946.

Thanks coaches! Your legacy continues.

*Nigel Alston is an executive with Integon Insurance and can be reached at PO Box 722, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102 or e-mailed at nalston237@aol.com*

The friends of our friends are our friends.

- Congo

Founded in 1912, the CIAA is the oldest black athletic conference in the nation. The CIAA Tournament is the third largest in the country in terms of attendance. It's in good company behind the ACC and the Big East tournaments and has produced legendary coaches and professional players. I've attended the tourney for more years than I can count. But one memory stands out in my mind.

I don't remember the year, but I remember one of the players and can hear the crowd cheering.

War Memorial Coliseum was packed to see one of the CIAA's best, Earl "The Pearl" Monroe do his thing.

It was a fast break. He brought the ball up the court while the defense was jockeying for position. As he approached half court, he dribbled the ball behind his back, changed direction and completed a killer crossover that would make Tim Hard-

## The truth behind the death penalty

**Earl Ofari Hutchinson**

Guest Columnist

Even with the public embarrassment over the near execution of Illinois death row inmate Anthony Porter who was wrongfully accused of murder, most Americans still enthusiastically favor capital punishment.

There are essentially two reasons why they do.

One is publicly stated: the fear of crime. And for that we can thank the media and politicians.

From the late 1980s on, the media has stuffed the public with mega doses of gory crime and violence stories, and politicians have pounded away on crime as a sure-fire crowd pleaser and vote getter. Even though murder rates are at a twenty year low and Americans were more likely to be murdered during the Great Depression of the 1930s than today, a scared stiff public still demands the speedy dispatch of violent criminals. Some argue that crime rates have dropped because of the death penalty and tougher crime measures, but the downward trend in murder and major crime happened before the big escalation in the number executed in the late 1980s.

The other reason for death penalty mania is privately

whispered: race and class. More than forty-five percent of those currently sitting on the nation's death rows are minorities. They are almost always the poorest of the poor and the least likely to have the resources to get top-flight legal representation. In the public's legal rush to judgment of prisoners, many of those executed have been mentally incompetent, juvenile delinquents, and as we now know innocent.

According to a Congressional subcommittee report, 48 innocent persons have been executed during the past two decades. With Porter's case in the public spotlight, this may even be the tip of iceberg. He is the 10th death row inmate freed because of doubts about their guilt in Illinois since the death penalty was reinstated in 1977.

This monumental flaw in the administration of the death penalty forced the American Bar Association to repeatedly recommend a total moratorium on executions.

But since moral and legal arguments against the death penalty for the most part fall on deaf ears, death penalty opponents should hammer away at the two most cherished beliefs of the public that it deters crime and that it's more cost effective to kill criminals.

Both are huge myths.

The death penalty doesn't deter crime. Eighteen of

the 20 states with the highest murder rates are death penalty states. That includes California and Texas which have the highest number of prisoners on death row. Seventeen of the 20 major cities with the highest murder rates are in death penalty states. The murder rates in Michigan and Indiana are nearly identical even though Indiana has the death penalty and Michigan doesn't.

Most people are not murdered by a stranger on the street but by a friend, acquaintance, or a relative. There is not a shred of evidence that those who kill, whether they be a stranger or someone known to the victim, worry that one day they could have a date with the executioner.

But most murderers need not worry about that anyway. There are 20,000 or more homicides in America yearly. Yet only one in 600 murderers will receive the death penalty. If they are poor, minority and live in the South and their victim is white and middle-class, they almost certainly will be a prime candidate for execution.

The death penalty is anything but cost effective. Taxpayers pay dearly for special DA units to prosecute death penalty cases, extra jury selection, special motions, a second penalty phase, lengthy investigations, and a battery of witnesses. The time and

costs pile up even higher in capital cases because prosecutors and judges try to be legally correct and avoid reversal (many are anyway) and the states allocate paltry sums for legal representation for the indigent.

It costs three times more to execute a prisoner than to lock him/her up for life. Florida spends \$3 million per execution, North Carolina, and Texas over \$2 million. The estimate is that California would save nearly \$100 million annually by resentencing its nearly 600 death row inmates to life imprisonment, and making them pay the families of the victims their earnings from their prison labor.

The worst part of all this is that the death penalty wastes time, fans public hysteria and squanders resources that should be spent on alcohol and drug treatment, counseling, education and job training programs.

These are far more cost effective deterrents to protecting lives than taking a relatively few lives in execution chambers each month. And that includes the innocent who weren't as lucky as Porter.

*Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of The Crisis in Black and Black. His email address is ehutchi344@aol.com.*

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#### CONTACT US:

phone number: 336 / 722-8624

fax: 336 / 723-9173

website address: www.netunlimited.net/~wschron

email address: wschron@netunlimited.net

Sports Editor 723-8428

Circulation 722-8624

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Business Office

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