



## Gore calls for racial justice

By JIM SUHR  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**DETROIT** — Echoing a political rival's recent theme, Vice President Al Gore called for enhanced racial justice and the need for expanded federal hate-crime legislation.

During a speech Sunday to the NAACP's Detroit branch, Gore said the nation's future depends on its ability to improve civil rights, including fending off challenges to affirmative action.

"Martin Luther King died to give us civil rights," Gore told about 9,000 people at the annual Fight for Freedom Fund dinner held by the nation's largest NAACP chapter. "The least we can do is enforce those laws."

On a flight to Detroit from Colorado, where he attended a memorial service for victims of Tuesday's high school shooting, Gore talked by phone to reporters — several from publications targeted to black readers — criticizing a "right-wing coordinated effort to try to end affirmative action" and racial profiling by law enforcement.

Gore revisited those themes in Detroit, where he also pushed for bolstering education by hiring more teachers and paring class sizes, and urged federal emphasis on improving economic climates in inner cities through loans and other funding.

But Gore keyed on racial themes, telling the 51,000-member Detroit chapter of the National Organization for the Advancement of Colored People the nation's future means "recognizing and accepting our diversity and harmony as the greatest strength we have."

Gore's comments were akin to those made five days earlier by former Sen. Bill Bradley, the only announced challenger to Gore in the race for their party's nomination.

On Tuesday, Bradley declared racial unity "the defining moral issue of our time" and put the quest for societal integration at the center of his campaign to win the White House. Like Gore, Bradley called the problem of race "central to our American future."

The vice president also cast himself as a born-and-bred defender of minorities, alluding to his father's political pursuit of racial justice as a U.S. senator.

"He sacrificed his career because he was willing to stand for what he believed," Gore said. "I'm glad my father taught me to love justice. My family taught me to hate discrimination."

"I feel a connection to this struggle and to your history through my family."

Though Gore formally hasn't declared himself a candidate for the 2000 presidential race, he has announced an exploratory committee and is considered a virtual certainty to run.

Gore urged the NAACP branch to continue to "reach out for justice and fairness for all Americans." To that end, he urged the group to help pressure Congress to act on a measure that would make federal prosecution of hate crimes easier.

Some congressional Republicans have suggested the legislation is unnecessary because dozens of states have laws protecting the groups identified in the bill. As well, backers are concerned that social conservatives may construe the legislation as extending special protections to homosexuals.

## Justices consider protection of black voter rights

By RICHARD CARELLI  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**WASHINGTON** — For most of an hour Monday, it seemed the Supreme Court was intent on deciding just how vigorously the federal government can protect minorities from election-system changes that might hurt their voting power.

But the argument session's last few minutes threw into doubt whether the Bossier Parish, La., case, to be decided by late June, will yield an important ruling that affects all states and counties covered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The legal fight over how the local school board elects its 12 members has lasted so long, the court was told, that no more elections are planned until the current system gets revamped after the 2000 census.

"There is no remedy," said school board lawyer Michael Carvin, suggesting the case is too old to matter. Only if the justices disagree are they likely to reach the heart of the dispute: whether the Justice Department can forestall election changes that may be discriminatory but do not leave minority voters any worse off.

The 1965 law "is not limited to changes intended to make matters worse for minorities," Justice Department lawyer Paul Wolfson argued. He said the Bossier Parish school board's intent in 1992 "was to hold the line as much as possible against further black participation" in school board matters.

Patricia Brannan said her clients, black voters in the parish, "have been trying for seven years to have ... the school board adopt a nondiscriminatory system."

Carvin argued, however, that the relevant section of the voting rights law was not written to eliminate the perpetuation of discrimination but only to guard against retrogression.

If the Supreme Court decides that issue, it would go a long way in determining how easy or difficult it will be for the Justice Department to reject proposed election law changes that affect minority voting power.

The Bossier Parish school board for years has had its members elected to four-year terms from 12 different districts. About 20 percent of the parish's population is black, concentrated into two areas.

None of the 12 districts has a black majority.

As of 1990, no black ever had been elected to the school board. After the 1990 census required a redrawing of the school board election map, the local NAACP chapter proposed creating two black-majority districts. The school board opted instead for a new map in 1992 with no such district, the same map that had been adopted by the parish's chief governing body, called the police jury.

Even though the police jury's plan had received the Justice Department's approval required by the 1965 law, the school board's proposed redistricting plan did not. Government lawyers decided the plan would dilute minority voting strength.

While the case wended its way through federal courts, two black candidates were elected to the 12-member school board in 1994. They were re-elected in 1998, along with a third black candidate. The case is *Reno vs. Bossier Parish School Board*, 98-405.

# Hitler-praising gunman Jewish

By DAVID FOSTER  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LITTLETON, Colo.** — Dylan Klebold, one of the Columbine High gunmen said by classmates to have openly admired Adolf Hitler, was the great-grandson of a prominent Jewish philanthropist in Ohio.

It was one more puzzle regarding the pair of misfit teens who worried other students with their talk of vengeance but impressed some adults, including a court officer, as bright young men with promising futures.

Long before last Tuesday's murderous rampage, Klebold, 17, was known around his high school as an admirer of Hitler and the Nazis. He and fellow gunman Eric Harris, 18, would talk German in the hallways and hurl insults at Jews, blacks and Hispanics.

Yet Klebold's mother, Susan Klebold, is the granddaughter of the late Leo Yassenoff, a wealthy commercial real-estate developer in Columbus, Ohio, and a prominent figure in the Jewish community there.

Yassenoff was active at the Temple Israel and donated enough money to the Jewish Community Center of Columbus that it named the center after him.

Susan Klebold was "definitely brought up Jewish," said Skip Yassenoff, 49, a distant cousin who grew up with her in Columbus. Yassenoff said Susan's husband, Thomas Klebold, is not Jewish; he said he didn't know how Dylan and his older brother, Byron, were raised.

"I don't see how it can be more awful," said Yassenoff, who still lives in Columbus. "I really can't imagine the pain of my cousin and her husband and the parents of the other boy."

In Littleton, court officials anguished over another contradictory side of Harris and Klebold: Less than three months before their carefully planned assault, they convinced a court officer that they had great prospects for staying out of trouble.

The teen-agers last year entered a so-called diversion program that enabled them to clear their records after they were caught breaking into a car. They performed 45 hours of community service, received counseling and wrote apology letters. Harris also received anger-management counseling, which he enjoyed, his diversion officer wrote.

"Eric is a very bright young man who is likely to succeed in life," the unnamed officer wrote in court documents. "He is intelligent enough to achieve lofty goals as long as he stays on task and remains motivated."

"Dylan has earned the right for an early termination," the officer wrote. "He is intelligent enough to make any dream a reality but he needs to understand hard work is part of it."

District Attorney Dave Thomas said the teens made a cal-

## White churches refuse new black preachers

By JAY REEVES  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala.** — Baptist-affiliated Samford University suspended a 50-year-old program after white churches barred three African students from preaching because of their race, a dean said Monday.

While a handful of white churches have refused through the years to accept black student preachers through the program, the official said, the university was unaware of the problem until recently.

Samford President Thomas E. Corts suspended the student-run program and ordered a restructuring after learning of the discrimination earlier this month, said Timothy George, dean of the Beeson Divinity School.

"We were all very upset about this," said George. "We have no sympathy for anyone that would deny full acceptance to all of God's children, regardless of their race."

Under the program, undergraduates and divinity students sign up to speak in Baptist churches statewide that agree to serve as hosts.

George said he did not know which churches had refused to admit speakers because of their race. He said he also did not know exactly how many congregations were involved.



Associated Press/Rocky Mountain News photo by Dennis Schroeder  
Michael Shoels, the father of Columbine High School shooting victim Isaiah Shoels, speaks with members of the media at his Littleton, Colo., home last Thursday. Next to him is a portrait of his son.

culated effort to impress their diversion officer. Thomas said the officer is so upset that he is worried about him.

"He's anguishing over what happened here," Thomas said. "He's a very dedicated, committed public servant. He did the best he could, I believe. Most of us in the system wish we were human lie-detectors, but we're not."

The officer's name has not been released; it was blacked out on the documents provided to reporters.

Other adults said they were lulled into complacency by the teens' middle-class upbringing and caring parents.

Klebold lived in a home worth nearly \$400,000, a modernistic cedar-and-glass structure tucked

between two huge stone formations on a rural road:

Thomas Klebold, 52, is a former geophysicist who now runs a mortgage management business from his home. His wife, 50, has worked for the Colorado community-college system for years, helping disabled students gain access to education.

Michael Briand, who knows Ms. Klebold from his work as a community-development consultant at Arapahoe Community College, said Thomas Klebold is a liberal who favors gun control, and Ms. Klebold is a sensitive listener.

"As far as I can tell, this family was utterly, utterly normal," Briand said. "They did everything right."

Harris moved to Littleton in

1996 from Plattsburgh, N.Y., where his father, Wayne Harris, was an Air Force pilot. In Littleton, the family bought a two-story, \$184,000 home on a quiet cul-de-sac. Wayne Harris got a job at a flight-safety business, and his wife, Katherine, worked for a catering company, according to court documents.

Neighbors said the couple were quiet, sometimes waving across the fence but making little effort to socialize. Eric's older brother, Kevin, played basketball with neighbors on trips home from college.

"They were pretty nice people, pretty quiet," said Matt Good, 16, who lives two doors away. "They seemed to get along with everyone."

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