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The Seattle Medium

A Message From The People... To The People

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WE DEMAND!!!!

Community Rally Emphasizes Justice, Action, Change and An End To The Crucifixion Of Black Men By Police

By Addie Marie Jones
The Seattle Medium

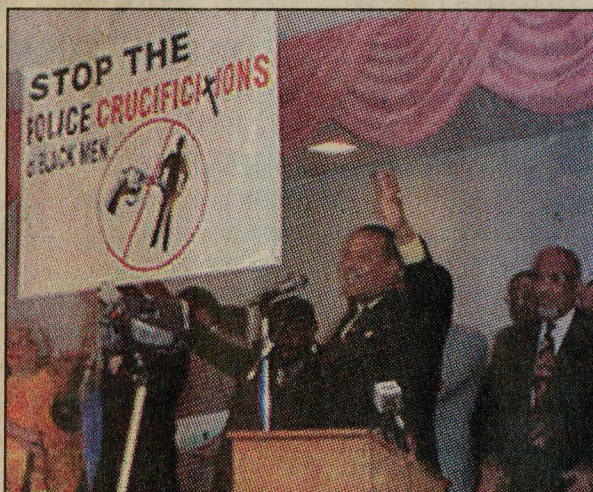
"African American Ministers and Community Leaders Rally Against Police Crucifixions of African Americans" was the title of a recent rally held at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Seattle on Good Friday, April 21. People who represent the depth and breadth of our community, Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Jewish, Asian, PhDs and AFDC's, all stood in unity to demand immediate improvements in police accountability in communities of color.

This rally was called by African American ministers and community leaders in response to outrage after a group of community leaders viewed the unedited news footage, from a local TV station, of the recent police shooting death of David Walker in the Queen Anne neighborhood two weeks ago. Walker, who has a history of mental illness, was followed by up to 12 police officers as he skipped two or more blocks holding a knife before he turned around and was shot to death by a Seattle police officer.

The group encouraged supporters to sign a petition ratifying the African American Community 14 Point Action Plan for Social Justice that will be presented to political leaders to approve and adopt. This plan was crafted by a coalition of community-based organizations including the NAACP, The Urban League, and the Washington State Commission on African American Affairs.

The group had previously forwarded this plan to local politicians, but to date no action has been taken on it.

"We are not asking, but demanding," said Rev. Dr. Leslie D. Braxton, pastor of Mt. Zion Baptist Church. "Power



Top left: Rev. Dr. John Hunter, pastor of First A.M.E. Church addresses the huge crowd gathered at Mt. Zion during the rally. Top right: Rev. Reggie C. Witherspoon, pastor of Mt. Calvary Christian Center prepares to lead rally supporters in song. Bottom: A near capacity crowd looks on, as community leaders and pastors showed their solidarity to end crucifixions of Black men by police. Staff photos/Chris H. Bennett.

concedes nothing without a demand.

"We put you in office and if you don't have policies that are sympathetic to all human life, then we'll put someone in office who does have sympathy to our community," said Rev. Dr. John Hunter, pastor of First A.M.E. Church.

The group demanded that the new Seattle Police Chief be someone who has demonstrated diversity skills and group

sensitivity.

The group stated that the explanation provided by the assistant police chief that officers are trained to "shoot at the area of greatest mass" therefore to shoot to kill is not acceptable to them.

"No longer are we willing to be target practice, harassed, and killed in the streets like dogs," said Braxton. "We're not going to take it any more."

This group questioned why

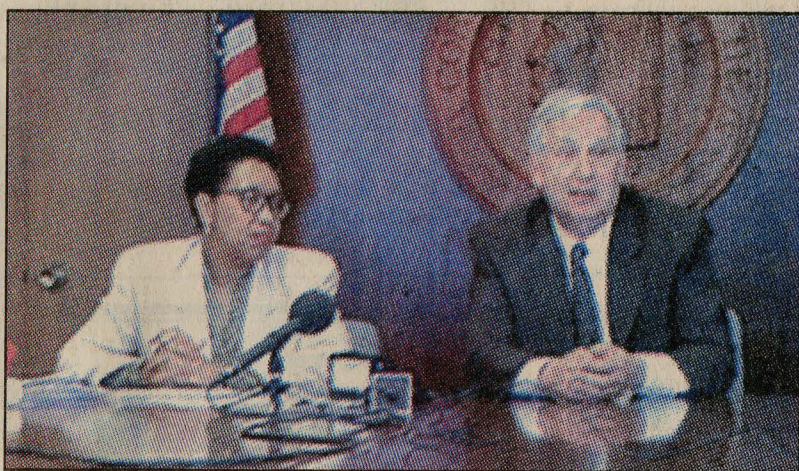
Seattle Police SWAT Teams, who are in the most difficult situations, have the option to use non-lethal force while regular police officers only have the option to shoot-to-kill?

Sanity, equity and police accountability are what this group is demanding. So far, in the history of this state, no police officer has ever been found guilty of using "excessive force" in the shooting deaths of

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Seattle Housing Audit

Parents and Minorities Still Targets Of Rental Discrimination



Germaine Covington, Director of the Seattle Office For Civil Rights and Seattle City Mayor Paul Schell answer questions about the results of a new Seattle housing audit. The audit was the first conducted by the City since the mid 80's. Staff Photo/Chris B. Bennett.

The results of a new fair housing audit released Monday by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights (SOCR) revealed that parents and non-white renters still face housing discrimination in Seattle.

The audit, which concentrated solely on race-based and parental status discrimination patterns, paired testers posed as prospective renters who resembled each other in all aspects except for their protected class status in order to determine the general level of compliance with Federal and/or local fair housing laws.

30 on-site tests were conducted which paired an African American (protected class) tester and a Caucasian (control) tester for the race-based test, and 30 telephone tests which paired a control tester who was married with no children and the matched protected class tester who was married with two children for the parental status tests. The test was performed by sending the protected class tester in first, and then having the control tester visit the same housing unit approximately one hour afterwards. Race and parental status are legally protected classes under Seattle's Fair Housing Ordinance, as well as under state and Federal law.

In tests for race-base discrimination, 23% of tests (7 tests) showed discrimination against African American home-seekers. The discrimination included differences in rental terms, service and treatment. Testers encountered evidence of discrimination in an additional 13% of the cases, although these results were deemed inconclusive, and may warrant further testing. Sixty-four percent of the tests showed no significant difference in treatment, information or services.

In the parental status tests, 13% (4 tests) showed discrimination against families with children. Thirty percent (9 Tests) were inconclusive, and may warrant further testing. Fifty-seven percent of the tests showed no evidence of discrimination.

"The good news is that well over half of the testing conducted showed no evidence of any discrimination," said Seattle Mayor Paul Schell. "But it clearly states we need to do better. Even in cases where discrimination is unintentional, the effects are just as harmful. Discrimination against any individual or family is an insult to all of us in this city."

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Political Potpourri

Inquest Jury

The King County Executive has convened yet another Inquest Jury. This jury is being convened to investigate the circumstances surrounding the police killing of yet another Black man. The King County Executive under the current law has the power to and does appoint an Inquest Jury under such circumstances. The problem is that in this and previous situations, the finding of the Inquest Jury has been unacceptable to the Black Community. Such jury inquiries usually result in findings of justifiable or excusable homicide. This finding of no-fault on the part of the police in every situation where the killing of Black men are involved does not solve the lingering problem of mistrust. It is time, given the current atmosphere, for the powers that be to revisit the inquest system. The current system lacks in the view of many people, even an appearance of fairness. Now, more than ever, the interest of the community require a different application of the law for a more just result.

The Governor and Legislators

Governor Locke finds himself in the position of having to convince legislators to pass a much needed state budget. In order to change the climate of opinion to facilitate legislative action, the Governor has fashioned a new budget plan. This new budget as announced, promises what he terms "a common ground," one. Whether this characterization is true remains to be seen. We are all aware that budget issues provides the grist for many a political battle. Given the climate created by the passage of Initiative 695, we should not accept anything different. We foolishly voted in such a fashion that neither party has a majority. It is even more difficult under these circumstances to pass something as necessary as the state budget.

When we the people act in such foolish ways, we can expect the current logjam in state politics to continue.

Community Act

The community came together on Good Friday, one of the holiest days in Christianity, to call for, or in the words of the participants a "demand" for change. This "demand" concerned the way the police, politicians and the justice system deal with Black folk. More particularly, we the members of the Black Community expressed the collective view that the police needed to act in a different way toward us. The police should and must be required to use the same restraints when dealing with Black folk as it does when dealing with White folk or for that matter in dealing with anyone. Police have shown the tendency to regard the lives of Blacks generally and Black men in particular as something a little lower than that of cougars frequently seen prowling some outlying communities. The question being asked by any number of right thinking people must be answered in terms of real meaningful reform. There must be more than a mere proforma review of the events which prompted this latest community crises.

Equal Justice

The latest cause of conversation in our community concerned the recent finding of a research group commissioned by the State Commission on Racial Justice. The findings of the researchers caused some in the Black community to react in total disbelief. It seems that the researchers studied a total of three hundred drug cases in selected counties of this state including King County. The finding of the researchers which astounded most of us is that there is no difference in how the courts treat White, Black, Brown and Yellow drug offenders. All are treated equally in the courts of the counties

reviewed. What was not explained is how the numbers of Blacks imprisoned for drug offences outstrip that of others despite the fact that Whites use and deal more drugs than Blacks or other people of color. There is definitely something "rotten in Denmark" where this report is concerned. Furthermore, the fact that the co-chairs, both of whom are respected jurists bought off on the findings cast more disrepute on the judicial system.

Elian Revisited

The relatives of young Elian had their hands slapped this weekend. The Justice Department had enough of that group's use of the young boy for political reasons. So the Justice Department did the next best thing. It sent in INS officers and they brought the young boy out without any physical harm. The strange thing is that those on the right thought that the American public would be so outraged that Republicans could make political hay out of the incident. They are finding to the contrary, most Americans believe that the conduct of the Miami relatives led to the Justice Department conduct. Both the Miami relatives and the Cuban community are the wrongdoers in the eyes of a majority of those polled. Even the Vice President's action is condemned as he panders for votes. The voting public is also sending a much needed message to congressional Republicans. We the people are saying loud and clear that no congressional investigation is needed. The child has been returned to his father. That to a majority should end the matter. Congress, especially those Republicans who are attempting to continue to play politics with the issue, should heed our warning. There is nothing to be gained politically in the continuing saga of Elian.