

Why Cops Who Shoot Unarmed Black Men Get Acquitted

by Julian Sereno

Thirty years ago I served on a jury in a criminal trial in Orange County Superior Court. What I observed then opened my eyes to exactly what so many black men face with the criminal justice system — why so many are locked up and why policemen who shoot them dead even though they are unarmed are rarely convicted.

The incident that led to the trial occurred on the evening of Halloween on West Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, long before the thronging costumed celebrants of recent years. The facts of the case were not in dispute. Only their interpretation.

The victim and the only witness for the prosecution was a young white man, not of imposing stature, who was walking down Franklin Street with a bag of groceries at

about 8 p.m. The defendant was a larger, fit, fair skinned young African American man.

When they encountered one another, the defendant asked the plaintiff for money. The plaintiff handed over his wallet; the defendant took it, removed the cash, handed the wallet back and strolled over to a convenience store on Rosemary Street to buy beer. The plaintiff ran off down Franklin Street yelling, “Help, I’ve been robbed.” The defendant was arrested leaving the convenience store with his beer.

The question before the jury was whether the event in question was a strong arm robbery, punishable by 10 years in prison, or merely panhandling, not illegal. The jury was split pretty evenly between men and women, and between native North Carolinians and transplants from the north, of which I was one. There were no African Americans on the jury. Two

members of the jury were victims of violent crimes. The jury foreman had been kidnapped and taken hostage during a bank robbery in South Florida. I had been set upon by a gang at a James Brown concert in 1968, but managed to escape relatively unscathed; they didn’t manage to get me on the ground and stomp me as they intended.

The question before each juror was whether a reasonable person would think they were being robbed or would they think they were being panhandled. I believe the defendant was a panhandler. He never threatened the plaintiff, and certainly didn’t behave as though he had just robbed someone. A woman from New England, a senior citizen, said of the plaintiff, “That guy is such a marshmallow that if I said ‘boo’ he would call the cops.”

Other jurors felt differently. Those who

voted for conviction thought that if the defendant asked them for money, they would have thought he was robbing them.

The jury deliberated for two days, going as far as 8-4 for acquittal and later, 10-2 for conviction. We eventually reached equilibrium at 6-6, and the judge declared a mistrial because we were hopelessly deadlocked.

What I learned from that experience was the palpable fear, even blind terror, that some people have for black men — all black men. When a cop who shoots an unarmed black man tells a jury that he shot for fear of his life, a lot of jurors buy it give him a pass. And it only takes one to hang a jury.

Some jurors feel that very same kind of fear themselves.

Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line.

FREE VOTE to Help Chatham Residents Get ID



Let’s be proactive and ensure everyone in Chatham has photo ID before the 2020 election cycle. By 2020

NC will probably require photo ID in order to participate in our elections. Some of our

residents may not currently have the proper ID. Rather than argue among ourselves about whether or not a photo ID should be required, I want to focus on what we can control locally.

That’s why I’ve launched FREE VOTE. FREE VOTE is a non-partisan group dedicated to ensuring everyone in Chatham County is able to participate. We will offer financial assistance, travel assistance and provide critical information to those who need it. We’ve set up a 24 hr toll free number 833-voterID and a

website 833voterID.com

Election officials estimate there may be up to 700 Chatham County residents who do not have photo identification. I don’t know if that is an accurate number or not but even one is too many. The democratic process is too important to have folks unable to participate because of something as simple as a photo ID.

Even if photo ID does not become a requirement to vote, we know having one improves access to important services and overall

quality of life. Our society requires a photo ID for just about everything these days, even to get a library card. Those who do not have a photo ID have limited opportunity to fully participate in our community.

Now is the time to act. Let’s not wait until the last minute. If you are a member or leader of a local non-profit serving citizens who may not have a photo ID, please contact us and help us help them.

Brian Bock; 833voterID.com

Government Schools

by Don Lein

As Ronald Reagan once quipped “The most terrifying words in the English language are: I’m from the government and I am here to help.” Nowhere is this more evident than in public schools, more appropriately called government schools.

Earlier this year the results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, often called the “nations report card” were released. They measure math and reading skills for 4th and 8th graders and were largely unchanged from the previous two years, which were significantly below where they were four years earlier. This should not be a surprise since math and reading scores for 17- year-olds are largely unchanged from the 1970s. This does not bode well for our economic future when these students will have to compete in a global market.

As a case in point, Canada, culturally quite similar to the U. S., has far better outcomes on standardized tests. In the Program for International Student Assessment’s math tests for 15-year-olds, Canada ranked 9th in the world and the U. S. ranked 39th, placing the U.S. at the level of Croatia and Greece, which both have struggling economies. If we would just close half the gap between us and Canada it would raise our economic growth rates by more than enough to compensate for projected fiscal problems with Social Security and Medicare benefits and raise the GDP by 7 percent across the 21st century.

Fortunately, we keep statistics by states and some states are faring much better on these tests than others. What is their secret to success? They have a relentless focus on student performance, strong school accountability and teacher performance. We have more than doubled school expenditures since 1970 and yet our graduate achievements remain essentially flat — so more money is clearly not the answer. We recently had teacher strikes in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Oklahoma and West Virginia and believe it or not there was no discussion of relating salary increases to teacher effectiveness. Having personally headed up a teachers group in pre-union days, I

can assure you there was a wide disparity in aptitude, attitude and performance. To have paid them on any other basis than effectiveness would have been a waste of taxpayer’s money.

How did we get ourselves into this mess in the first place?? As Rousas Rushdoony states in his book “The Messianic Character of American Education” (1963) that the purpose of public schools “has been essentially a religious movement ... to liberate man by means of a universal system of state supported schools,” with its goal being to eliminate the Christian worldview in every aspect of its influence. Horace Mann, universalists, humanists had competing views on how to get this done, but state-supported schools were the means they sought to free man from the chains of Christianity.

Even the UN, in the UN Agenda 2030, is getting involved in the act. Self-styled “hemispheric authorities” such as EU or the African Union, intend to gradually harmonize education systems across the Americas, then the planet, with, of course, the U.S. footing the bill. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Lima Commitment signatories agreed to develop and provide education programs “strengthening democratic and civic values from early childhood and throughout life.” To facilitate the indoctrination of children from “early childhood” the agreements demand “gender equality”, which requires that women enter the workforce to help undermine “patriarchy”. Of course, contraception and abortion will be available on demand.

Is all lost?? Alas, a couple of rays of sunshine have broken through the overcast of government-controlled education, not only in the U. S. but all over the world. The two alternatives have been charter schools and home schooling. A new Harvard study shows public support for charter schools has jumped 10 points in just the last year — from 52 percent to 62 percent. Until several years ago both political parties had endorsed charters as answers to the school choice issue. However, recently the NAACP and unions — both markedly leftist organizations, have opposed more charters. In New York City the unions forced the

mayor to shut down some very successful charters in ghetto areas, condemning the minority children to attend the dysfunctional public school system and probably forcing them to continue their poverty-stricken dysfunctional lives. The NAACP has called for a moratorium on new charters even though the children who benefit most from charters are minority children.

The other ray of hope for education is home schooling — not just in the U.S., but all over the world. With today’s technology, quality courses of study are quite easy to obtain and participate in. Home schooling is growing in Russia with over 100,000 students participating and with many Russian cities holding regional homeschooling conferences helping to ensure use of the latest technology and ensuring quality. Many countries in Europe have embraced the philosophy that the “Money follows the child” and would direct the financial support for the child to public, private, parochial or other — allowing the parents to decide which option was best for their children.

One other issue I would like to touch upon and that is the #MeToo movement. It appears to be non-partisan, non-racial, although I am still scratching my head as to how Bill Clinton gets a pass. Ayaan Hirsi Ali applauds actions to hold all those accountable for violence against women, but wonders why female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honor violence do not seem egregious enough to receive their condemnation. She suggests it may be because the perpetrators typically have brown skin. She asks if white men were to remove the genitals of girls and sew their vaginas shut, would the women’s movement take notice? She then asks “If we can call out the patriarchy in the high paid glamorous world of media and entertainment, why on earth aren’t we calling it out when it is being violently imposed between the legs of little girls?” Good questions, Ayaan.

Don Lein is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. A Chatham resident, he is involved in a variety of civic organizations.

President Trump Has Been Exceedingly Tough on Russia

by Jeff Davidson

In May 2017, the ultra-obnoxious late night TV show host Stephen Colbert apparently delighted his legions of ignorant fans by repugnant joking that, “The only thing [Trump’s] mouth is good for is being Vladimir Putin’s c-k holster.”

Along with the cognitively challenged Colbert, the ‘mainstream’ media continues its massive lies about President Trump being ‘soft’ on Russia. The ‘mainstream’ press fervently wants you to believe that Russia/Putin “have something” on Trump which stops him from taking aggressive action to curtail Putin’s excesses. Concurrently, no U.S. president in recent history has been tougher on Russia than Donald Trump.

LET’S LOOK AT THE RECORD

What has President Trump done in relation to Russia during his first 17 months in office?

- Imposed sanctions on Russian companies and Russian entities, blocking at least \$3 billion worth of deals from going into Russian coffers.

- Placed harsh economic restrictions on a group of Russian oligarchs which effectively puts more pressure on Vladimir Putin. The Russian leader has illegally amassed enormous wealth — exceeding \$25 billion — in the last 18 years, but he can’t hold all that wealth in his own name, so he appointed oligarch cronies to be his trustees. Putting his oligarchs on sanctions hurts Putin big time.

- Levied considerable financial sanctions and travel restrictions on 50-plus individuals who have been accused of human-rights abuses and corruption under both the Magnitsky Act and the Global Magnitsky Act.

- Criticized NATO allies for not spending enough on defense (and was accused by the “lame stream” media of encouraging Russia to test alliance resolve). NATO allies,

however, have taken steps to pay more, and NATO appears stronger than before, which is decidedly not the outcome Putin wanted.

- Authorized the expulsion of 60 Russian diplomats from the U.S. in the wake of nerve agent attack on British soil, allegedly at the hands of the Kremlin.

- Approved the export of lethal weapons, including American-made Javelin antitank missiles, to help Ukraine shore up its eastern defenses against separatists backed by Moscow.

- Facilitated U.S. sales of more coal to energy-strapped Ukraine, while weakening Russia’s hold on oil exports.

- Killed more than 200 Russian soldiers in Syria — U.S. troops are present as in Syria as much to limit Russian and Iranian influence on the country’s future as to fight the remnants of the Islamic State

CHEAP LAUGHS OFFERED HERE

President Trump’s personality flaws are readily apparent to many people, even those who voted for him. So, too, his ability to get things done is readily apparent, particularly in curbing Russia.

Go ahead, Mr. Colbert. Spew more hate and more lies about the president and the reality of his stand on Russia, despite a staggering number of developments to the contrary. Your viewers won’t know the difference and your utter vulgarity will probably generate some more cheap laughs.

Jeff Davidson of Raleigh is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He is “The Work-Life Balance Expert®”, the premier thought leader on work-life balance issues. Jeff is the author of 65 books, among them Breathing Space, Dial it Down, Live it Up, Simpler Living, 60 Second Innovator, and 60 Second Organizer. Visit www.BreathingSpace.com