



**“TAKING LIVES AND FAKING JUSTICE:  
CODE BLUE AND CASUALTY BLACK”**

*Los Angeles Sentinel, 05-01-08, p. A-7*

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It clearly would be a welcomed and rightful relief if we could, following and expanding on Barak Obama’s initial appeal, actually erase racialized discourse, eliminate the many subtle and savage forms of racism itself and dare imagine and bring into being, a new way of relating in the world, truly beyond the race, class and gender constraints on freedom, justice and human flourishing which afflict and damage our world. But there is Fox (and its media confederates), steadfastly stirring its witches-and-warlocks brew, conjuring up racist images of the impending moral fall and political failure of “White” America, if Obama is elected and Black presence in the White House extends beyond domestic servants and servile, self-effacing, reputation-and-principle-sacrificing subordinates.

There is also, among the long list of police killings in this country, the current case of Sean Bell, shot to death on his wedding day, November 25, 2006, along with two companions who were gravely wounded, in a police fusillade of 50 bullets. And then, there is the verdict of “not guilty” and the accompanying castigation of the victims, questioning their reasoning and rights to be free from the excessive and deadly force imposed on them. So, after the killing and gravely wounding of unarmed and innocent men; after the seventeen months of mourning by family, friends and loved ones; after seven weeks of pretended and procedural justice, testimony and tension-filled listening in hope and horror; and after hoping for the best and trying to ready oneself for the almost certain worst, the three policemen were ruled not guilty, not only of felony manslaughter and assault, but also even of misdemeanor reckless endangerment. Surely, in a different, less racialized world or way of reasoning, 50 shots at the

victims and the increased possibility of injuring and killing other innocents should have been counted at least as a misdemeanor, i.e., a misbehaving worthy of some kind of sanction. But the targets were Black, and it was once again, hard proof, in both Black and White and living color, of the continuing reality and deadly consequences of racialized perceptions and practice under the camouflage and color of law.

However, it is important to stress that it is not just a question of police violence and aggression as an isolated exercise in “cops gone wild”, but a reflection in a real time and in a real way of the problematic and precarious character of relations between the police and peoples of color, especially young Black males. And it is a raw and camouflage-resistant reminder of U.S. society’s acute denial of the casualty-ridden reality of racism and its role in the domination, deprivation, degradation and destruction experienced in the daily lives of Blacks and other peoples of color.

Indeed, the ruling race/class of this country doesn’t want to be told about the racist character of America or American justice—the profiling, the stereotyping, the differential sentencing and rates of executions or the conditions that lead to crime, conviction, confinement and recidivism, or the killing of innocent victims in socially sanctioned street or institutional executions. But the constant attempts to indict and discredit those who refuse to submit or be silent do not erase or lessen racism, rewrite history or offer a true way forward out of the web of lies and illusions about existing racism which society has spun to console and congratulate itself. It is a wise saying of the ancestors that “closing one’s eyes or placing one’s hand in front of one’s face doesn’t make the sun go out”.

There are those who rush to point out that this current shooting is not a case of racism because there were two Black policemen involved. But that's because they fail to see the systemic nature of racism, how the system cultivates attitudes of reckless and depraved disregard for the lives of peoples of color, how it calls on those who would be police or president, corporate CEO or secretary of state, or anyone worthy of White reward or recognition to adopt its attitude and participate in its practices. Thus, Black participation in systemic processes and practices do not make these actions less racist; it only demonstrates how compelling, even coercive, the need to act as the system requires actually is. No one rational and honest would argue that Native American and African participation in colonial armies made the conquest and colonization of Native America and Africa less racist or imperialist, or that Jewish participation in the Nazi army or the roundup of Jews by the Judenrat (the Jewish Council) made the Nazi actions any less fascist. The system shapes participants in its own image and interest—even in unofficial positions and practice. This is the meaning of Fanon's insight of "White Masks, Black Skins" concerning the tendency of the system of oppression to compel its victims to doubt themselves, deny themselves, condemn themselves, and ultimately mutilate themselves in psychic, physical, cultural and immoral ways and thus the need for resistance.

There is talk again in the media about the need for calm and the "wisdom" of wait-

ing and giving a more sensitive administration and the system time to work itself out. But it is obvious to all, that police review panels and reports are perpetual diversions and society will defend its official protectors. In a real sense, code blue is not simply a police code of silence and mutual support against outsiders, but is also a smaller example of a larger ruling race and class code with similar rank-closing commitment to the established order.

Thus, there must be continued struggle for justice, regardless of friendly outreach by "enlightened" administrations and perpetual promises of reviews, reports and reform. The key is to sustain the initial moral outrage and righteous anger, to keep in mind Sean Bell, Amadou Diallo and all the others dead, brutalized and disabled, the widows and orphans, the grieving families and friends and our ancient ethical obligation "to bear witness to truth and set the scales of justice in their proper place (especially) among those who have no voice". This requires ongoing and earnest struggle, not only around this case, but also around the question of justice as a pervasive principle of social life. In conclusion, then, let's remind ourselves and all those who seek justice and dare freedom that in the face of injustice, domination, deprivation and degradation, there is no remedy except resistance and no way forward except thru the fierce fire of uncompromising and relentless struggle and the dedication, discipline and sacrifice it demands and deserves.