

# MINNESOTA Spokesman-Recorder

AS IT WAS SPOKEN . . . LET US RECORD .

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## Crime and justice conference a first for Minnesota

Forum documents legal system disparities affecting people of color



Sarah Walker (l), Call-to-Justice Coordinator for the Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ) and Steve Glaze, ex-offender working as a maintenance tech at CCJ and panelist for the forum

Photo by Lauretta Dawolo

By Lauretta Dawolo  
 Staff Writer

The Council on Crime and Justice (CCJ) will host a public forum on June 28 entitled "Call to Justice: Reducing Racial Disparity and Enhancing Public Safety." The forum will bring together an array of public figures, organizations, agencies

and companies to discuss the racial disparity in the criminal justice system.

- Topics of discussion include:
- Racial Disparities and Minnesota's Changing Demographics.
  - Causes and Collateral Consequences of Racial Disparity in the Justice System.
  - The Linkage Between

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## Juneteenth commemorates revolutionary chapter in African American history

News Analysis  
 By Chris Nisan  
 Staff Writer

The Juneteenth observance has become an institutionalized part of the cultural life of the Black community here in the Twin Cities, as it is in many other cities around the United States.



An 1865 celebration of emancipation in Washington, D.C.

Courtesy of De Capo Press

Juneteenth began in Texas as a local observance of the emancipation of enslaved Black people in Galveston in 1865. It has since become synonymous with the celebration of slavery abolition in Black communities across the nation.

While the celebration of Juneteenth is widespread and growing, its roots as a com-



Faces from the Juneteenth Minnesota celebration in Theodore Wirth Park on June 17

Photos by Emmett Timmons

memoration of freedom from enslavement are more obscure. Even less known and appreciated is an understanding of the time period from which Juneteenth emerges as a revolutionary chapter in the history of Black people in the United States — a chapter with worldwide significance.

It is a story that involves the struggle by Black people for land, political rights, education, and access to culture and human dignity.

### Origins of Juneteenth

The celebration which came to be known as Juneteenth began in recognition of the

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## Caravan to Cuba comes through Twin Cities

Leaders explain why African Americans should support end of embargo against Cuba

By Chris Nisan  
 Staff Writer

"The purpose of the Friendshipship is to break the [economic] blockade [against Cuba] and to reverse the policy, which is immoral and unjust," said Rev. Thomas Smith, president of the board of directors of Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO). Smith was speaking about the 17th U.S./Cuba Friendshipship Caravan.

The Friendshipship is an activity organized by IFCO's Pastors for Peace project. The caravan organizes volunteers from around the U.S., Canada and Europe to collect humanitarian aid to deliver to Cuba and to challenge the U.S. economic blockade and travel ban imposed on the island. This year's shipment has focused on collecting materials for Cuba's children with special needs.

Over 100 volunteers will participate in this year's Friendshipship Caravan. The caravan will travel 14 separate routes across the country, stopping in all 48 contiguous U.S. states. En route, the caravan will be hosted in 125 communities, including a stop in the Twin Cities this Thursday, June 22.

Organizers say that they expect to collect 100 tons of humanitarian aid during the two-



Rev. Lucius Walker (l) in Cuba during a 2005 delivery of Friendshipship supplies

Photo courtesy of IFCO

### Cuban blockade and travel ban

The United States government has maintained an economic blockade and travel ban on the island nation of Cuba for 44 years.

Under U.S. law, Cuba is designated as an enemy country under the Trading with the Enemy Act. Unless authorized by a license, U.S. citizens are restricted from engaging

week caravan. The caravan will travel to its U.S. staging point in McAllen, Texas, before going to Cuba.

in trade or commerce with Cuba. This prohibition includes citizens' spending money while in Cuba, effectively restricting travel to the island.

"It is our duty to resist and condemn this cruel U.S. policy," declared Rev. Lucius Walker, Jr., executive director and founder of IFCO.

The economic blockade and travel ban has been roundly condemned worldwide. The most recent expression of this opposition was the near-unanimous vote of the United Nations General Assembly last November in favor of a resolution calling for the U.S. government to end trade, financial and travel restrictions on Cuba. The vote was 182 to 4 with one abstention.

Rev. Walker explained that IFCO/Pastors for Peace reject the blockade, travel ban and the licensing system "As both immoral and illegal."

"It is immoral because it endangers the lives of millions of Cubans and inflicts suffering on innocent children, as well as adults. It is illegal under international law because it uses medicine and food as weapons of war to force another nation to change its government," said Walker.

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## North Minneapolis is home to rising academic star

North High valedictorian one of the top students in the nation

By Felicia Shultz  
 Contributing Writer

Crystal Johnson likes to prove people wrong. "People doubt us because of where we live, but we like to show them that we can suit up when we need to, and we can also just be us, casual and fun, when the time is right. We have family values that have been passed down through stories in generations before us."

er night, she'll put in six. This helps explain how she earned an "A" in every class, for four years straight.

"There were many times when I'd go into her room at night to tell her good night, and I'd have to remove her glasses because she had fallen asleep while studying," said Johnson.

Frazier's determination has helped her leave a mark on her alma mater. She is the



North High valedictorian Ambrea Frazier was named one of the nation's top African American seniors by Ebony magazine.

Photo by Felicia Shultz

Johnson is the mother of Ambrea Frazier, a Minneapolis North Community High School graduate who is gaining local and national attention. Not only has Frazier learned the valuable lesson that hard work really does pay off, but she has been proving people wrong for a long time.

The North High graduate has put many things aside during her high school years that others wouldn't go a day without. This includes partying, television and boys. On an easy night, Frazier will study a few hours. On a hard-

2006 class valedictorian — a ranking she had been watching closely all year long.

"I remember exactly when they told me that I'd earned an excited Frazier. "My two favorite school counselors pulled me aside during class and said, "We'd like to congratulate you. You are the 2006 class valedictorian."

It's not just Frazier's high class ranking that is catching so much local and national attention; it's the combination of all the other stuff she has achieved. She is class president and captain of her tennis

■ See **VALEDICTORIAN** on page 12

## BRIEF: Last surviving lynching victim James Cameron passes on

James Cameron, author, historian and founder of America's Black Holocaust Museum — who was America's only living survivor of a lynching — died after a long illness at the age of 92.

In August of 1920 at the age of 16, Cameron was falsely accused of participating in the murder of a young White man in Marion, Indiana. Ironically, no one was ever accused, arrested or charged with the murder of Cameron's teenage friends, nor for the beating Cameron suffered.

The near-lynching inspired Cameron to devote his life to fighting racial injustice and discrimination. He helped found three NAACP chapters in Indiana during the 1940s and became



the first NAACP president for the organization's Madison County Branch in Anderson, Indiana. Cameron also served as Indiana's director of civil liberties, investigating civil rights infractions often at the risk of his own life.

It was these constant threats to him and his family that forced Cameron to move them to his birth state of Wisconsin in the early 1950s, settling in Milwaukee where he continued to work for civil rights.

During the 1970s, Cameron published literally hundreds of articles and booklets detailing civil rights and occurrences of racial injustices. He chronicled his near lynching in a book titled *A Time of Terror* (Black Classic Press). The book was published in 1982 after many rejections from publishers.

The book — and Cameron's notoriety as the nation's only lynching survivor — caught the attention of the American pub-

lic, thrusting the author into the national spotlight where he recounted his experience to presidents, civil rights icons such as Coretta Scott King, and media icons like Oprah Winfrey.

In 1988, Cameron founded America's Black Holocaust Museum, located in Milwaukee, which documents the racial injustices suffered by people of African descent. Eighteen years later, the museum is still growing in prominence and scope, becoming a nationally known institution.

— From a Milwaukee Community Journal story via the MNPA, photo courtesy of America's Black Holocaust Museum

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day, June 19, 1865, that federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, and the Black people of the area were told of the Emancipation Proclamation.

As the story goes, Black people of the area had not known about the Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued on January 1, 1863, until the arrival of the Northern troops. Black people in the area began to call the day Juneteenth in recognition of the month and the day the news of freedom arrived.

"The thing to remember about June 1865 was that up until that time there had been virtually no military action in Texas," said Columbia University historian Eric Foner in an interview with the *Spokesman-Recorder*. It was with the arrival of the Northern armies that the news of the proclamation had reached a good part of the Black population in the South.

Foner is a noted historian and author who has written several books on the Civil War and Reconstruction. His latest book is titled *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Knopf, 2005).

**Civil War and Radical Reconstruction**

The Civil War completely revolutionized the socio-economic foundations of the United States. The most important aspect of this transformation was the defeat of the slave-owning class in the war and the freeing of millions of enslaved Black people.

The emancipation of the slaves was, in and of itself, the most revolutionary act in the history of the nation. Emancipation unleashed powerful creative impulses among Black people that translated into a powerful social movement for freedom, economic justice and equality.

Immediately after the war, however, Black people were forced by the local ruling classes, with the backing of a good section of the federal government led by President Andrew Johnson, into virtual slave conditions by what became known as the Black Codes — laws that restricted the freedom of Black people and made it almost impossible for them to leave their former masters and survive economically.

Black people immediately began to struggle against the new system of enforced labor, and as they did, they won the backing of different sections of the Northern population. This backing came primarily from a small section of the labor movement, and at first, a section of Northern industrial capitalists who became distressed at the attempts of the former slave-owning class to reassert their political authority.

In his landmark work on the history of the Reconstruction era, *Black Reconstruction in America*, Black activist intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois noted the various social forces that came into alliance and the difference in the ideologies each side espoused:

"One was abolition-democracy based on freedom, intelligence and power for all men; the other was industry for private profit directed by an autocracy determined at any price to amass wealth and power. The uncomprehending resistance for the South, and the pressure of Black folk, made these two thoughts uneasy and temporary allies."

It was as a result of these struggles that Radical Reconstruction governments were established in the Southern states. These governments were based on this alliance of formerly enslaved Black people, Northern industrial capitalists, and a section of Southern poor Whites and the Northern labor movement.

These Radical Reconstruction governments carried out impressive work in the short time of their existence. They established the public education system in the South for the first time. They also changed the tax codes to the advantage of the working classes, established and enforced Black voting rights, abolished segregation laws, and set up militias to defend Blacks and other supporters of Reconstruction from physical attack by opponents.

"The most 'Radical' aspect of Radical Reconstruction was the opening it provided for Black labor to wage struggles in its own behalf," said Peter Camejo in his book *Racism, Revolution and Reaction* (Pathfinder Press, 2002).

However, the most important factor for genuine progress for Black people — the confiscation and redistribution of land to the former slaves — was never carried out because of the determined resistance of the Northern industrialists.

It is this aspect of the period, the self-organization and determined resistance of Black people, that represents the most important aspect of the period and constitutes the real essence of the importance of today's celebration of the Juneteenth holiday.

Chris Nisan welcomes reader responses to [cnisan@spokesman-recorder.com](mailto:cnisan@spokesman-recorder.com).

*Obituary*  
**Erma L. Mazingo**  
September 2, 1925 — June 17, 2006



Beloved mother, grandmother, aunt, cousin and friend of Roseville, Minnesota, Erma L. Mazingo passed away suddenly on June 17, 2006.

A leading insurance professional for more than 40 years, Mazingo was the only woman to serve on the eight-member executive board of the Minnesota Insurance Underwriters Association and the first woman invited to join the 150-member organization.

Erma was president of the St. Paul Association of Insurance Women and named "Woman of the Year" by the Viking chapter of the American Business Women's Association. She also received the WCCO "Good Neighbor Award."

Erma began her career at Mutual Service Insurance Company, later becoming an underwriter and director of public relations for Northern States Agency. A longtime active member in civic and community affairs, she was appointed to three terms on the St. Paul Human Rights Commission. Erma also served as president of the St. Paul NAACP and as a board member of the Midway Chamber of Commerce. Her many

activities included the Cameo Social Club (in which she held every office and worked tirelessly as a longtime member), the Twin City Untouchables Social Club; the Silks Bridge Club, the Royal Duchess Bridge Club and Breakfast Pinochle Club.

Erma is preceded in death by her husband Tony; parents Ernest and Myrtle Young Brown; nephew Ernest Jr. She is survived by her daughter Sherrine and son Peter (Tracy); grandchildren Indy and Jocelyn; sisters Doris Aaron and Peggy Parker; and brother Dewey Brown. Erma is also survived by many, many loving nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Funeral services are 11 am Friday, June 23, at Pilgrim Baptist Church, 732 W. Central Ave., St. Paul. Visitation is 4-8 pm Thursday at the Roseville Memorial Chapel, 2245 N. Hamline Avenue (one block south of Hwy. 36) in Roseville, MN (651-631-2727), and one hour prior to services at church Friday. Interment is at Elmhurst Cemetery.

Based on a report from the Itasca Project, Minneapolis is on the verge of looking like Detroit by 2020 — both economically and racially. "Minnesota needs to pay attention to demographics," says Walker.

"In Minnesota, between the years of 1990-1999, all the population growth came from communities of color. If we do not pay attention to disparity, the problem will grow with economic ramifications...producing an inhospitable economic environment. Public safety and employable educated workforce are amongst the top five things corporations look for when they decide to come to a city," she said.

CCJ wants to play a supportive role to various organizations in taking the lead on issues that cause disparity or happen as a result of disparity. "We want to present recommendations and findings through the public forum and [evaluate] public reception and/or emerging ideas," said Walker.

"We've found that the issues tend to be interrelated, but action has been non-successful. We hope that different organizations will see that these issues are interrelated and work together. We want to combine community action with research," said Gambill.

There are currently over 50 partners involved across service and discipline areas. The problem of disparity in the criminal justice system falls overwhelmingly in the face of communities of color. CCJ is committed to providing service delivery by culturally trained people of diverse expertise.

The CCJ Call-to-Justice forum will take place Wednesday, June 28, at Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC), 1501 Hennepin Avenue, from 8 am to 4:30 pm. For more information, call CCJ at 612-348-7874 or visit [www.criminjustice.org](http://www.criminjustice.org).

Lauretta Duvall welcomes reader responses to [lilalad@spokesman-recorder.com](mailto:lilalad@spokesman-recorder.com).

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Consequences and Causes.

- Action Steps for Undoing the Racial Disparity Within the Justice System.

"This is a first for Minnesota. Nothing has ever been done on this scale," said Gay Gambill, advocacy coordinator for CCJ, a nearly 50-years-old Minneapolis nonprofit agency that does research and advocacy for social justice.

"This is a large public forum with a wide buy-in. It involves research and a broad coalition of organizations moving to make something happen," he said.

The idea for this forum was derived from a compilation of 18 research reports that document ways in which disparities are evident in the criminal justice system. The CCJ also has a history of being involved in Police Community Relations Council (PCRC) meetings, working with neighborhood organizations, and advocating for families of incarcerated people.

Demographic and socio-economic trend data used by the Itasca Project Consortium of more than 40 CEOs, mayors and community leaders, funded by the McKnight Foundation and the St. Paul Foundation, was also contributed to CCJ's research and will be presented at the forum.

In these sources and many others, issues relative to disparity were found. The cause and consequences were clear, but it would require outside partners to approach solutions in a meaningful way.

From the 18 research reports, which will be presented by CCJ President Tom Johnson, one fact remains clear: Disparity in the criminal justice system should be addressed from the time an individual comes in contact with law enforcement. "Contrary to what has been done, [society] views the criminal justice system like a barrel, where barriers can be reduced at the court level. The fact is that all disparity begins at the point of contact. [Therefore], the disparity

issue has been pushed through a small [tube]. Unless we concentrate at the beginning [of the process], we will always end up with a disparity," said Sarah Walker, Call-to-Justice coordinator for the Council on Crime and Justice.

Traffic stops are one area of racial disparity. According to research done by CCJ, "Blacks are more likely to be searched and least likely to have contraband compared to Whites," said Walker. According to the Call-to-Justice statistics on Minneapolis traffic stops, "African Americans accounted for 37 percent of traffic stops citywide, [but were] 18 percent of the population in 2000."

Misdemeanor arrests for offenses such as loitering and driving offenses can be destructive to a person of color's future due to criminal record accessibility. "Even if a case is dismissed, the record stays. This is a new restrictive characteristic in addition to race. Many arrests are never found guilty, but still [produce] a record. The justice system is being used to deal with problems that should be dealt with in the community," says Gambill.

A revised expungement statute will also be presented by CCJ. "The proposed bill offers a balanced approach to alleviate the negative consequences of certain criminal records without jeopardizing its availability for use by law enforcement," as stated in the general overview of the criminal record accessibility bill. "The burden of fixing [this problem] falls on the one arrested. It should fall on the state," said Gambill.

CCJ also found that promoting family while a loved one is incarcerated also reduces disparity. "It benefits re-entry and even public safety," said Gambill. "Communication needs to be maintained between the incarcerated and their families. Studies show that 80 percent of children with incarcerated parents will go to prison themselves. They need services such as mental health or even school counseling. This is where the partners would step in," he said.

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