

EDITORIAL

Cold Cases Bill Must Pass

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act. That legislation would authorize \$10 million a year over the next decade to create a unit at the Department of Justice that would pursue unsolved civil rights cases.

The bill is named for Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who was murdered while visiting relatives in Money, Miss., in 1955. His killers were never punished.

The cold cases unit could prove vital in prosecuting men like James Ford Seale, who was convicted of kidnapping and conspiracy in a federal court on June 14. Had it not been for pressure from media reports and the persistence of Thomas Moore, the brother of victim Charles Moore, Seale might never have faced justice.

There is no doubt that other men continue to evade justice, hiding in the open in their old age. The cold cases legislation is our best chance for making them answer for their crimes.

The House approved the Till legislation by a vote of 422-2, but in the Senate, Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., placed a hold on the legislation. Coburn, who describes himself as a fiscal conservative, has said he will not support the \$11.5 million Senate bill until its sponsors outline how they will pay for it.

Coburn's reason for single-handedly derailing the bill is hard to take at face value. In 2007, the DOJ budget was nearly \$25 billion, with more than \$6 billion for the FBI alone. Assuming similar funding in 2008, spending on the cold cases unit would represent less than a 20th of 1 percent of the department's budget. Surely, we can afford justice when it comes at such a bargain.

The senator from Oklahoma has served in Congress for many years, and he has voted in the past for measures that could be described as fiscally irresponsible. In 2005, for instance, he voted to extend President Bush's tax cuts at a cost of \$69 billion while the government was running a \$318 billion annual deficit.

Coburn is free to vote against the Till legislation if he chooses, but preventing a vote on the basis of a misplaced if not disingenuous commitment to fiscal responsibility is simply unacceptable. Stalling a mere \$11.5 million in spending will not balance the federal budget, and it is a moral outrage that Coburn thinks he has the right to scuttle such legislation.

Justice is a central American value, and unless we do all we can to prosecute civil-rights terrorists like Seale, their crimes will haunt our national conscience.

Coburn must lift his hold immediately, and the Senate must pass the Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act.

KEN STIGGERS

A 'Sicko' Nation

Mr. Announcement: "On this episode of 'All God's Churn Got Shoes,' Nurse Tootie McBride and her certified nursing assistant, Nurse Tasha, are determined to beat down poverty in the ghetto. To complete this monumental task, they need a loan from Rudy McBride, president of Let Me Hold Five Dollars National Bank. But first, Tootie and Tasha must convince Rudy to loan them 'da money.'"



Nurse Tootie: "Nurse Tasha gave me the rundown about medical facilities paying thousands of dollars to train overseas folk to work as CNAs, aka certified nursing assistants. This smells like a covert method of outsourcing jobs to me. Now I'm all about helping people, but I believe we should deal with the unemployment and poverty situation that terrorizes our brothers and sisters in the funky ghetto. Nurse Tasha, a statistical math wiz, has figured out a way to beat down poverty by 33 percent. Do the numbers, Nurse Tasha!"

Nurse Tasha: "Let's say that approximately \$300 pays for one financially challenged individual to receive six weeks of intense training to become a CNA. If you loan us \$100,000, Nurse Tootie and I can train approximately 33 poor folk to obtain gainful employment in the health-care industry, earning about \$12 per hour."

Nurse Tootie: "Bam! That's the plan, Rudy! So will you let a sista hold a lil' something to help people—who live in a 'Sicko' nation—heal from the ills of poverty?"



KAMIKAZE

Three Strikes, and You're Out

I was browsing through a copy of the Mississippi Link the other day, and I was hit with a startling reality. It was a moment of clarity like no other. I scanned the page several times over just to make sure that my eyes didn't deceive me. But alas, it was true. Pictures don't lie.

Of the 16 valedictorians and salutatorians at Jackson Public Schools' eight area high schools, only one was male. Now as a card-carrying member of the male sex, I've always been aware of the premise that women are smarter than we are. That thought notwithstanding, I had to ask myself: Is society encouraging our young men to under-achieve? Are we seeing a trend where male students consistently fail to make the grade?

My hat goes off to those bright young ladies who have graduated at the head of their classes. Obviously, the desire to achieve has been instilled in them. That drive will translate to great success in their future. When you're confident despite obstacles, encouraged in spite of the odds, you are set to become a leader. I just hope we haven't

reached a juncture where our young men aren't being pushed to achieve academically. More specifically, I am concerned with young, African American males. (The one male was a white male from Murrah.)

The reality is that being "smart" is not seen as "cool" in young social circles. Raising your hand in class, turning in homework and making good marks on tests can make you a pariah in the classroom.

I see young males held to a ridiculous macho standard, where it's better to be proficient with your hands or feet than with your mind. You can become more popular for disrupting class than you can by excelling in it.

If you don't believe me, try being a fly on the wall at some of the schools where I speak. We've reached a sad state of affairs, folks. There are more African American men in prison than there are in college, and that negative conditioning starts early. When young males grow up in an environment where dope-boys are the mentors, many of whom have obtained wealth without education, that

is a strike against us.

Our students attend a school system



that gives star athletes preferential treatment. Plastering them on the front page of the paper, showering them with TV interviews and turning them into local celebrities while the star students get scraps is another strike. Add a few teachers who are more interested in drawing a check than motivating capable male students, and you've got strike three. We're out!

Just a few years back, there were no eligible candidates to be Lanier's valedictorian because no student in the school had the required GPA, yet they were basketball champions. We have to make sure that scenario is never repeated again.

Fellas, if any of you are reading this, we need to see more male forces as valedictorians or salutatorians next year. The ladies are making us look bad.

And that's the truth ... shonuff.

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