

OPINION

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The Racial Barrier 'Separate but equal' does not work

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

It has been more than 50 years since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, ruling that racially segregated public schools were unconstitutional. Over the years, the judgment has had its share of challenges but, with a few exceptions, the decision has remained on solid ground. Things may be changing.



a disproportionate number of under-qualified teachers than racially diverse schools or those with a majority white population do.

Combined with the lack of essential resources – current textbooks, modern computer labs – and you've got an environment that is not conducive to success.

Racially integrated schools level the playing field, providing all students with the tools they need to realize their dreams.

Fortunately, the court, although divided in its decisions, has upheld the basic principles of the 1954 *Brown* ruling. This is the first case of this kind the court has agreed to hear since ruling in 2002 that race could be a factor in admission at the University of Michigan. Why the court agreed to hear the case, however, is a mystery. All three federal appeals courts to hear both cases in the last few years

sided with the school systems; the Supreme Court usually only steps in to settle conflicts in the lower courts. With the lower courts in agreement, it appeared that this would not be a case for the high court.

Perhaps the current anti-affirmative action justices realized that, this time, they have the numbers they need to strike down affirmative action laws. The court is expected to rule on the cases some time next year.

"Separate but equal" does not work. It's a fact with years of data to support it. Let's hope that as these cases are considered, common sense and the needs of the larger society triumph over political leanings. It's beyond time for the Supreme Court, and those that continue to challenge diverse school systems, to move on.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

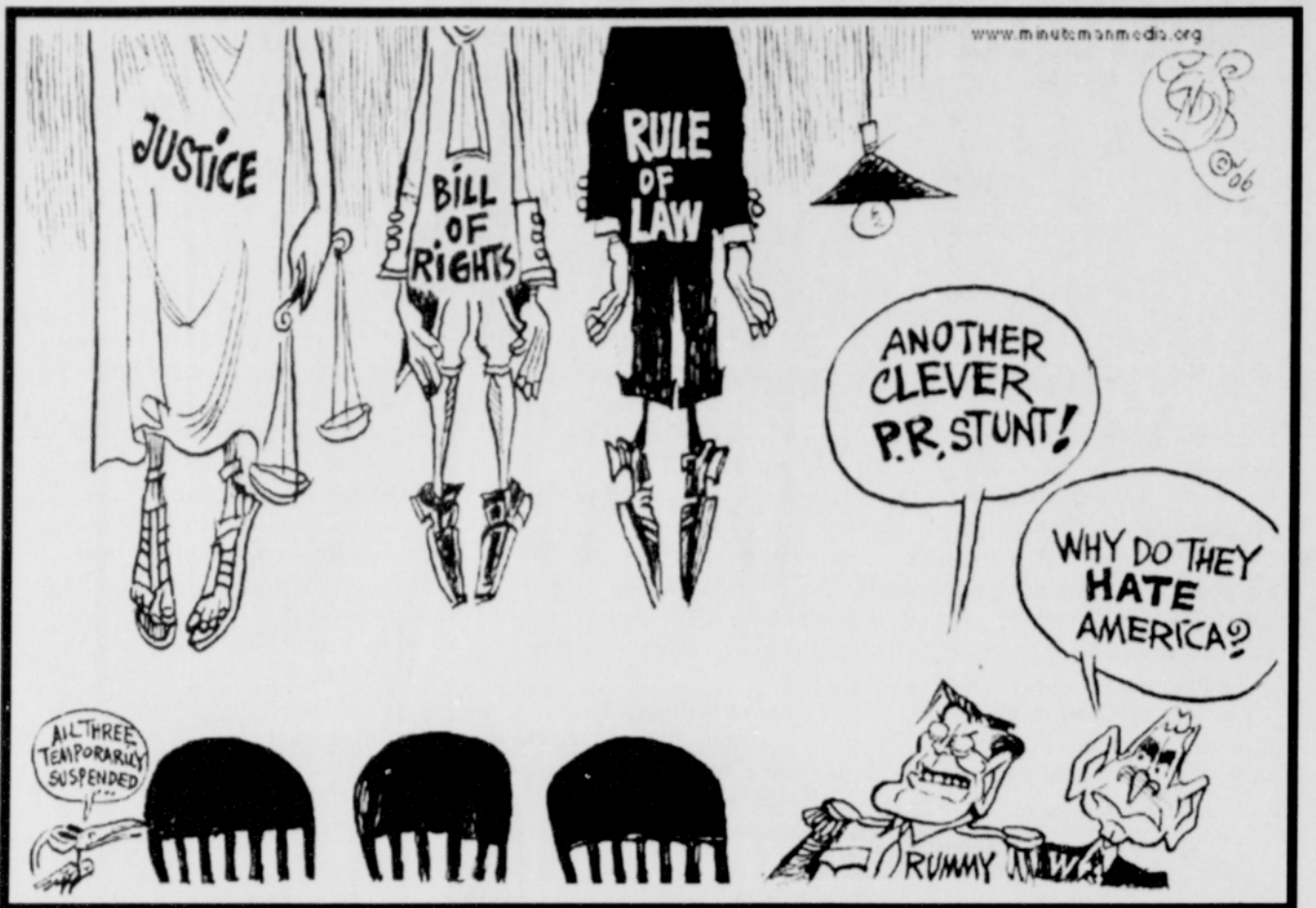
The court has agreed to consider two separate lawsuits filed in Seattle and Louisville. The white parents involved in each suit say the public school systems in their area unconstitutionally discriminate based on race. These will be the first race-related constitutional cases for President Bush's recently appointed, conservative justices, John Roberts and Samuel A. Alito.

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Despite the long hard fight for integration, many U.S. communities, and as a result, their schools, are voluntarily separated along racial lines. However, more and more school districts, like those in Seattle and Louisville, have begun to realize the importance of a racially diverse educational system.

An overwhelming majority of parents also support diverse schools. Study after study has shown that schools in predominantly black and Latino communities have



Civil Rights Law Sabotaged

Renew the Voting Rights Act

BY JOHN SWEENEY

We are extremely disappointed that a small band of extremists in the House of Representatives sabotaged the bill to renew and restore critical sections of the Voting Rights Act. The House was expected to vote June 21 on the bill.

Despite strong bipartisan support,

Reps. Lynn Westmorland, Charlie Norwood and others chose to derail all efforts to reauthorize the most successful piece of civil rights legislation ever adopted by the United States Congress.

The Voting Rights Act - adopted initially in 1965 and extended in 1970, 1975, and 1982 - codifies the 15th Amendment's guarantee that, throughout the nation, no person shall be denied the right to vote on account of race or color.

It's outrageous that our nation's lead-

ership can preach the value of freedom and democracy to audiences abroad and yet turn a blind eye to the systematic trampling of basic rights here at home.

We expect the House leadership to take the reins and move this bill past this small group of saboteurs before they leave Washington for a July 4th recess. The nation's continued progress towards equality demands it.

John Sweeney is president of the AFL-CIO.

Letters to the Editor

Congress' Censorship

The Republicans control the House, the Senate, the Presidency and Fox news. This leaves us with few options for unbiased reporting. Of course the Republicans hate National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting System. After all

both report the facts and are widely quoted.

Now the Bush Administration intends to eliminate both NPR and PBS by eliminating the funding. Please urge our Congress not to take this step towards censorship.

Fred Heffron, Southwest Portland

Now Is The Time to ... Focus ... Forward ... Finish

Welcome!

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National Organization Of Black Elected Legislative Women

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Featured in O Magazine, February 2006

Other speakers & presenters include:

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Dr. Carolyn M. West, Ph.D.

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