

Race and Penn State's Child Sex Scandal

Enough of the ghoulish, sordid facts are known about the Penn State University child sex scandal to say this. The alleged child rapes were known by some athletic department members, up to and including the football program boss, JoePa, Joe Paterno. The rumors -- or worse, knowledge -- of the rapes may have been carried by others still unnamed in what could become a winding tangle through university staff, faculty, administrators, trustees, corporate donors, and politicians.

The two prime offenders charged with the crimes were not some casual locker room jocks and hangers on, but long term, respected, and highly positioned athletic department mainstays. The Second Mile Foundation that served as a cover for the alleged rapes by its founder, the disgraced and accused child rapist Jerry Sandusky was not some fly-by-night, drive by, fast buck operation, but a well-established foundation that had been in business for more than three decades. Sandusky was with the Foundation from the start in 1977 until just last year. Even as the scandal unfolds, it is still in business. It has a big, impressive, full bodied website that boasts of its accomplishments, has three offices, and is actively soliciting donations. The reporters that have tried to get a comment from foundation officials have been summarily hung up on. There will be more sordid facts and cases to emerge in the coming



THE LAST WORD

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days and almost certainly more alleged victims will come forth. The question that's bantered about, and agonized over, is why those who knew didn't blow the whistle on and ensure that the cuffs were slapped on the offend-

Foundation's founder and accused Jerry Sandusky openly bragged that it was in the business of helping "underprivileged" youth, always the polite code word for poor, at risk, young blacks and Hispanics, it's hardly a stretch to connect the dots to race.

Put bluntly, if Penn State officials kept their yaps shut for years in the face of open knowledge of and strong suspicions of the child rapes and the victims were young black males, then the last dot connected is the charge that black lives are routinely devalued when

leged" in the parlance of Sandusky's The Second Mile Foundation.

A study in the March issue of the Journal Pediatrics, "Racial Bias in Child Protection? A Comparison of Competing Explanations Using National Data," found that poverty was a huge determinant not only of levels of abuse. The study predictably found that a disproportionate number of the reported child abuse cases in 2009 which spanned the gamut from neglect to child rape were African-American children. The study directly linked the abuse to poverty. Parents and caregivers that are desperate to provide their children with a pathway out of harm's way from any and every type of abuse that comes with poverty latch on to organizations that promise to provide resources, mentoring, nurturing, and a protective environment for at risk black children. The Second Mile Foundation that so persuasively and passionately marketed itself

grabbed at as the ticket out of the ghetto for the kids. Given the name and the prestige of those behind this Foundation, why would anyone in their wildest nightmares ever think or suspect that colossal evil lurked underneath the façade of its alleged unadulterated philanthropic and do good aims? In the days to come as more details unfold about how the Foundation under Sandusky used its good name to commit alleged serial heinous crimes, all with the tacit blessing of Paterno and university officials, the hard suspicions and hints that the target of the crimes were young black males may well be confirmed. If that's the case, then the deep soul search that university and others everywhere who turn a blind eye to child abuse must undergo will be rudely forced to confront one more horrifying possibility. And that's that race was one more reason for that blind eye.

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ers years ago? The stock answer is that it was a case of fear, protectiveness, ego (Paterno's), football deification and prestige, decades of institutional sports cronyism and the bushels of money that Penn State and other big time Division 1 schools haul in every year from their flagship football programs. This is all true.

But with the strong hints came the public finger point by a parent of one of the victims that they were in her words, "Blacks about 10-12 and had a tall slim muscular build." The Second Mile

it comes to officials taking action to protect them. This charge has repeatedly been leveled in serial murders, inner city gang carnage, and against child service agencies that ignore or downplay repeated reports of abuse when the victims and the abused are black. That's only part of the problem. Race can't be separated from poverty or "underprivi-

under its accused founder Jerry Sandusky, and with the resources, clout and national name recognition of Penn State University's premier football majordomo Joe Paterno to boot, as just such an organization would be hungrily

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