

Former FBI Director Addresses Spying on Black Activists

'I tried to make the FBI stare at that history,' Comey tells Howard students

By Alexa Imani Spencer and Kayla Irby
Howard University News Service

WASHINGTON — Former FBI Director James Comey, speaking to Howard University students, professors and staff, this week distanced himself from an FBI report that said “black identity extremists” were responsible for “increased violence” by African-Americans against law enforcement.

The report, entitled “Black Extremists Likely Motivated to Target Law Enforcement Officers,” has raised concern among many, including the 49-member Congressional Black Caucus, which met with the current FBI directly shortly after the report’s release last August.

Comey said he was not aware of it while he was with the FBI.

“The memo that generated all of the controversy was written after I was fired, so I don’t know exactly,” said Comey who was released May 2017 by President Donald Trump following Comey’s refusal to drop an investigation into Russian tampering in U.S. elections. “I never heard the term ‘black identity extremists’ while I was director.”

Still, Comey offered his interpretation of what the report might have been trying to say.

“I think what it is, is an effort in the domestic terrorism part of the counterterrorism division to understand the threat that might be coming from people who by a distorted view of their own race believe they have to engage in acts of violence,” Comey said.

Ironically, the FBI’s counterterrorism division assessment made news shortly before a 32-year-old woman was killed and 19 others were injured when a white supremacist rammed his car into a group of counter-protesters in August of last year during the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Va. Despite terrorizing minorities, LGBTQ



Former FBI Director James Comey (right) and Justin Hansford, executive director of the Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center, discussed the FBI’s role in spying on African American organizations and the ongoing tension between black communities and police.

community members, Jews and Catholics for over a century, committing atrocities designed to induce a state of terror, no white supremacist groups have ever been designated as a terrorist organization.

Comey, the Gwendolyn S. and Colbert I. King Endowed Chair in Public Policy at Howard, was joined in a discussion on law enforcement and race by Justin Hansford, executive director of the newly-opened Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center in the Howard University School of Law.

Comey said his life had been affected by issues of race when he was a student at College of William and Mary, the nation’s second oldest college. A friendship with one of few Black students on campus had a major impact on his life, he said. Comey said he had almost no interaction with African Americans early in his life.

“There was only one other Black family that lived in my town on my street, the Jacksons,” he said, “almost an entirely White high school. William and Mary just by accident puts me in a suite with another 18-year-old from inner city Philadelphia named Greg Samson, who’s African American, and our lives couldn’t have been more different,” he said.

Comey stated that his friendship with Samson affected him tremendously.

“It lit a flame in me to understand dif-

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Rauch

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“The opportunity to move to New York to lead the Perelman Center is tremendously exciting,” Rauch said. “I’m honored to be able to create transformative art and cultivate a community gathering space at a site that has such powerful emotional resonance for our country and the world.”

“Bill’s time as OSF’s artistic director has been and will continue to be extraordinary,” said OSF Board President Peter H. Koehler, Jr. “Thanks to his talent, vision, passion and unflagging energy, OSF is now at the center of the national theater conversation. We’ve been honored with the Festival’s first Tony Award for Best Play and first Pulitzer Prize, seen numerous world premieres go on to great success across the country, begun a decade-long journey through Shakespeare’s entire canon, and become a leader in

the field with our equity, diversity and inclusion efforts.”

“I so look forward to the heights we will continue to scale in our next 18 months together,” added Koehler. “And I know that our future after Bill will be just as exciting, thanks in part to his phenomenal contribution to OSF for 13 years as our artistic director.”

OSF Executive Director Cynthia Rider praised Rauch for his achievements and is grateful to continue working together for 18 more months. “I’m so fortunate to have had the opportunity to partner with Bill these last five years,” Rider said. “He is a truly remarkable artist, a passionate leader and one of the kindest people you will ever meet. His tireless work in producing a record number of plays written and directed by women and artists of color will be a huge part of his legacy. I’m so glad we have a year-and-a-half to keep this collaboration going.”

Rauch became OSF’s fifth artistic director in 2007, after five seasons at the Festival as a guest director. He has directed seven world premieres—Off the Rails, Roe, Finger-smith, The Great Society, All the Way, Equivocation and By the Waters of Babylon—and 17 other plays. In the 2018 season, he is directing Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Oklahoma! and Shakespeare’s Othello.

Among his initiatives at OSF, Rauch, along with longtime collaborator Alison Carey, committed to commissioning 37 new plays to dramatize moments of change in American history. American Revolutions: the U.S. History Cycle has premiered nine plays at OSF to date, many of which have moved on to other theaters across the country as well as Broadway, including a Tony-winning production of All the Way that was directed by Rauch.

Read the rest of this story at TheSkanner.com



In Loving Memory of Willie Rutherford on his Birthday Known as George and G.W.

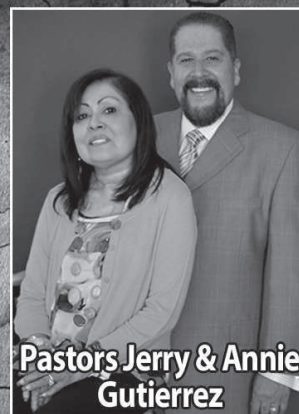
Born February 22, 1941, Died August 5, 2016

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Your Wife, Ann Rutherford

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