

\*\*\*\*\*  
ASSOCIATED BAPTIST PRESS  
\*\*\*\*\*

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

Editor: Greg Warner Phone: (904) 262-6626 Fax: (904) 262-7745

July 5, 1994

IN THIS ISSUE:

- \* Supreme Court draws line on abortion-clinic buffer zones
- \* Independent group to monitor violence on TV networks
- \* Hispanic Texas Baptists focus on youth, future
- \* Preventing violence part of 'mission' for Baptist at Justice Department

Supreme Court draws line  
on abortion-clinic buffer zones

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- When the U.S. Supreme Court weighed free-speech rights against the right to privacy June 30, the difference came down to a matter of feet -- 264 feet to be exact.

The nation's highest court ruled 6 to 3 that protestors may not closely approach persons on public sidewalks and streets that are within 36 feet of abortion clinics. But the court said that judges could not enforce a buffer zone prohibiting protestors from approaching patients and clinic staff that are 300 feet from clinics and their residences.

The court examined the two buffer zones created by a judge that limits anti-abortion activities at a Melbourne, Fla., abortion clinic. Protesters were forbidden by a 1992 injunction from trespassing or blocking clinic property, as well as physical abuse of patients and clinicians. But in April 1993, the court took further action, amending the injunction to create 36-foot and 300-foot buffer zones where speech is limited.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, in writing the majority opinion, said, "On balance, we hold that the 36-foot buffer zone around the clinic entrances and driveway burdens no more speech than necessary to accomplish the governmental interest at stake."

Rehnquist said that noise control is important around hospitals during surgery and recovery periods, adding that the ordinance did not overburden free-speech rights any more than necessary to ensure the health and welfare of patients.

"The First Amendment does not demand that patients at a medical facility undertake Herculean efforts to escape the cacophony of political protests," Rehnquist wrote.

Justices Harry Blackmun, Sandra Day O'Connor, David Souter and Ruth Bader Ginsburg joined Rehnquist. John Paul Stevens concurred with the majority on the buffer zone but dissented on other aspects of the ruling. The other three justices concurred in part and dissented in part.

But the court also held that prohibiting free speech in public areas, such as streets and sidewalks, from 300

feet away was going too far.

The record does not contain sufficient justification for so broad a ban on picketing, the court said, adding that limiting the time, duration and number of pickets outside a smaller zone could protect those coming and going from the clinic.

"But it is difficult, indeed, to justify a prohibition on all uninvited approaches of persons seeking the services of the clinic, regardless of how peaceful the contact may be, without burdening more speech than necessary to prevent intimidation and to ensure access to the clinic."

The court also held that the injunction's ban on "images observable" from the clinic, such as signs and banners, is too sweeping and violates the First Amendment. The injunction does not attempt to discern signs that could be interpreted as threats, the court said, but blankets all visible images.

Justice Antonin Scalia in a dissenting opinion called "deceptive" the appearance of moderation in the ruling.

"The judgment in today's case has an appearance of moderation and Solomonic wisdom, upholding as it does some portions of the injunction while disallowing others. That appearance is deceptive. The entire injunction in this case departs so far from the established course of our jurisprudence that in any other context it would have been regarded as a candidate for summary reversal.

"But the context here is abortion."

An attorney for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission charged that, because the case involved abortion, the court used a double standard, applying a more restrictive test than in other free-speech cases.

"... The court was willing to gag pro-life persons from standing and praying on a public sidewalk, while permitting pro-abortion activists to speak freely within the same 36-foot zone in front of the abortion clinic," said CLC General Counsel Michael Whitehead in a prepared statement.

Noting that the Supreme Court rejected the "strict scrutiny" test for free-exercise of religion in the 1990 case of *Employment Division of Oregon vs. Smith*, Whitehead said, "The court seems to be doing to the free-speech clause what they did to the free-exercise clause in *Smith*."

"Today it applies only to pro-life protesters, so there is little outrage from civil libertarians," he said. "But the exception will grow like a breach in a levee ... ."

The case, *Madsen vs. Women's Health Center*, was the last one handed down this term.

Justice Blackmun, known for writing the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, stepped down from the bench on the last day of the term. Confirmation hearings for Judge Stephen Breyer, nominated to replace Blackmun, are scheduled to begin July 12.

-30-

Independent group to monitor  
violence on TV networks

WASHINGTON (ABP) — ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX have selected an independent monitor to assess and report on television violence.

The UCLA Center for Communication Policy will spearhead the project, announced CBS Senior Vice President Martin Franks June 29. The goal is to obtain a qualitative assessment of the violent content found in network entertainment programming.

Center Director Jeffrey Cole said the research conducted should provide solutions to the problem of excessive violence on television.

"We're not just generating research," Cole said. "We'll produce narrative results that don't require a Ph.D."

to understand."

The study, which will be available to the public, will assess the content on the four networks for the 1994-95 and 1995-96 broadcast seasons. Cable, independent stations, PBS, theatrical movies and video games also will be studied to place network programming in the context of all other video sources that enter the home.

The analysis will not only count instances of violence, but it also will evaluate the context -- specifically the extent of violence, motivation, relevance to plot, consequences of violence, time of broadcast and whether an advisory was attached.

Sen. Paul Simon, D-Ill, who has led the effort to reduce television violence, supports these self-regulations.

"This marks a step forward in cultural change," he said. "Independent audits on TV violence will be a new feedback loop that will pinpoint responsibility and give viewers a way to compare."

Speakers at a recent national conference on gun violence said that the media's saturation with violence is contributing significantly to the gun epidemic.

"If we are even marginally responsible, we feel an obligation to do something about it," CBS's Franks said.

"Today's announcement is just the latest in a nearly two-year-long effort to reduce violence in our programming and reassure our viewers of our sensitivity to how violence is portrayed on our air," Franks said.

In December 1992, the four networks announced joint standards on violence. They have implemented the Advance Parental Advisory Plan, sponsored an industrywide conference on television violence and decreased the violent content in programming.

Most recently, CBS and FOX joined to present the telecast "Kids Killing Kids/Kids Saving Kids." During the telecast, 66,000 people called a special hotline for dealing with threats of firearm use, gang-related abuse and other violence.

The telecast was the culmination of "Let's Stop Kids Killing Kids" week that focused on reducing youth violence.

-30-

-- By Elizabeth Rivers

Hispanic Texas Baptists  
focus on youth, future

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (ABP) -- Messengers to the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas looked toward the 21st century with an emphasis on youth, elected new officers and celebrated their heritage on the 30th anniversary of unification with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

About 2,000 messengers and visitors attended the convention June 27-29 in San Antonio, Texas.

"The youth of today provide the hope of tomorrow," said William Pinson, executive director of the BGCT. "Our youth are our future." Children have the right to be "born safely and healthy, brought up carefully and prayerfully, and launched into the world confidently and joyfully," Pinson said.

Texas Attorney General Dan Morales echoed the same theme, telling Hispanic Baptists that "a generation of children angry at life" must be given hope rooted in love and faith.

Morales, introduced as "the highest-ranking evangelical Hispanic in Texas government," said the juvenile justice system needs to be reformed to demand personal responsibility both of children and their parents.

Educational opportunities for disadvantaged youth should be expanded, he added, and basic human needs must be met.

But while government can address the symptoms, Morales said, churches and families can provide the cure for troubled youth by offering foundational values and role models.

"We can show them it is not necessary for them to choose gangs and drugs and violence. We can show them how to choose faith and love and the Lord," he said.

Convention-goers also heard from a panel of eight Hispanic Baptist youth who asked their elders to provide them with positive examples, offer them ministry opportunities and communicate with them honestly.

Messengers elected Rolando Lopez, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel in McAllen, as president. Other officers elected were: first vice president, Ramiro Pena of Waco; second vice president, Roger Pequeno of Houston; and secretary, Victor Lopez of San Antonio.

The Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas approved resolutions opposing the legalization of casinos in Texas, citing the problem of violence in society including family violence, and recognizing the importance of today's youth to the future of Hispanic Baptist work in Texas.

Messengers approved a "Proclamation of Unification" commemorating the 30th anniversary of the unification agreement between the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas and the BGCT.

Noting the three decades of progress experienced since the unification agreement, Jerold McBride, president of the BGCT and pastor of First Baptist Church, San Angelo, said Christian unity depends upon behavior that is compatible with the believer's high calling and that is humble, gentle, patient, magnanimous and peaceable.

"Few church splits can be traced to bad theology. Most can be traced to bad behavior," McBride said. "And what is true of a church is true of a denomination."

McBride encouraged Hispanic Texas Baptists to be aware of the ongoing work of the BGCT Cooperative Giving Study Committee and their recommendations that will be considered at the state convention in Amarillo, Oct. 31-Nov. 1. The committee is considering several plans, including one to allow churches to choose which national ministries to support with their contributions and still count those gifts as Cooperative Program.

"If we can cooperate with our Catholic friends with whom we disagree on nearly every major doctrine ... surely we can find a way to cooperate with one another with whom we agree on nearly every jot and tittle of doctrine, differing only in our methods of giving," he said.

-30-

Preventing violence part of 'mission'  
for Baptist at Justice Department

By Ken Camp

DALLAS (ABP) -- Nancy Ferrell feels God gave her a passion for justice. And for the past nine years, she's been in the right department to pursue that passion -- the United States Department of Justice.

Based in Dallas, Ferrell works with the Justice Department to prevent youth violence. Conflict resolution, mediation and prevention of youth violence are among her responsibilities as senior conciliation specialist for Community Relations Services, an agency within the Justice Department.

"This is the highest calling I've ever had," said Ferrell, a member of Royal Lane Baptist Church in Dallas. A graduate of two Southern Baptist seminaries, Ferrell has worked with young people in two previous Baptist jobs -- as a Baptist Student Union director and state Acteens leader.

Ferrell said she has always felt a deep commitment to "God's message of justice." The Bible gives Christians a mandate to work for peace and for just treatment of all people, she said.

"Through this job, I can help make that happen," she said. "I can teach people in a community on the verge of riot how to work together and bring about justice and harmony.

"This job has been a gift to me in that regard."

Ferrell majored in business at Florida State University but then pursued a calling into ministry. She served as a Baptist Student Union director in Tulsa, Okla., and as state director for Acteens with Woman's Missionary Union in Kentucky. She also worked five years as a private management consultant.

A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., Ferrell is completing a doctorate in community policing at East Texas State University in Commerce.

"When I entered the doors of Southwestern Seminary, I never thought that today I'd be working in the Justice Department," she acknowledged. "But I've always felt a sense of calling toward being on mission."

Ferrell's "mission" took her to Brookhaven Retreat Center in East Texas in late June to teach conflict resolution to about 150 adolescents from inner-city Dallas. The event was a leadership development camp sponsored by the Dallas Housing Authority and Drug Prevention Resources, Inc.

Youth from Glenview Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, worked as peer counselors at the camp. While volunteers from Glenview Church led some of the inner-city middle schoolers in games designed to foster teamwork and enhance self-esteem, Ferrell led others in role-playing activities and conflict-resolution exercises.

"When you start drawing lines in the sand, it had better be worth something really important," she told participants in one session as she helped them explore ways to achieve consensus.

Avoiding involvement in gangs and settling differences through discussion rather than fighting were among the major emphases of her presentations to the youngsters.

"If you get in the company of someone determined to do violence, you're going to get involved in violence -- no two ways about it. The best way to deal with that is to stay away from those people," she told one group.

Though she was unsure whether any of the young people attending the camp were active in gangs, their playtime activities and role-playing choices revealed a frightening familiarity with gangs.

However, she said, they also were familiar with the costs of gang involvement, as well as the consequences of substance abuse, promiscuity and other dangerous behaviors.

About one third of the inner-city adolescents attending the camp attended the pilot camp last summer, according to Richard Henderson, minister of music at Glenview Baptist Church. Campers were selected on the basis of their perceived leadership potential.

Drug Prevention Resources secured grants to provide partial funding for the camp, and the organization solicited the balance of support from businesses, churches and individuals around the state.

The camp is part of Drug Prevention Resources' ongoing intervention strategy in cooperation with the Dallas Housing Authority.

Another aspect of that strategy is the creation of youth councils in public housing projects. The councils are designed to provide young project residents an opportunity to assume responsibility and develop leadership skills, said Jan Daehnert, director of operations for Drug Prevention Resources.

Tehisha Ford, 13, has served about three months on the youth council at the Little Mexico housing project. In just a few days at the leadership camp, she said she saw a marked difference in the behavior of her peers as they applied the conflict resolution techniques Ferrell taught them.

"Instead of fighting, they're communicating," said Tehisha, a ninth grader at Arlington Park First Baptist Church in Dallas. "They're either talking things out or else going to tell a grown-up what's going on."

Communicating, consensus-building and enlisting the help of third-party mediators are essential skills for survival in community, Ferrell tried to teach the youngsters.

"I want them to understand the different ways we all look at things. Another person is going to see the world differently from you, and that's OK," she said. "We just need to learn how to talk about it, not fight about it."

\*\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*\*