



A Response to Injustice

July 15, 2013

Greetings:

I'm not going to beat around the bush this afternoon. This is about justice denied.

I am writing to surface the Trayvon Martin verdict and remind all of us of why our work to advocate for justice at every level remains so important. This will be one of those moments in this country -- you remember where you were when you heard it. I was sitting in a concert at the Delta Sigma Theta Centennial Convention of all places when this murmur started in the back of the room and made its way to the mid-section where I was sitting. At that point, Angie Stone stopped singing and said, "not guilty". If you can imagine 25,000 Black women in one place going from dancing in the aisles to shedding tears and holding on each other. Patti LaBelle, India Aria and Sheryl Lee Ralph all came on the stage and we sang a few songs together. We all needed a healing moment together.

Like many of you, I have gone through a range of emotions. Hurt, anger, disgust and back to anger again. It was not until an inspiring sermon on Sunday that made me whole again -- the importance of faith and spirituality never fails us. Delta Sigma Theta's National Chaplain, Dr. Rev. Vashti McKenzie re-wrote her talk for the day on the spot -- and she named it, "Stand Your Ground." She encouraged us to turn our anger into power and reminded us of biblical references that it will not always be this way. I left that powerful service singing, "after you do all that you can, you just stand".

Stand... stand our ground. We at ABFE are on the right side of this work. So for every young Black boy, we must stand a little taller and be more visible. Delta is joining the NAACP and others in asking the Dept of Justice to open a civil rights inquiry into the death of Trayvon Martin. We at ABFE will do the same. The string of events this summer -- turnback of voting rights, the Zimmerman verdict against justice for Trayvon Martin, abuses in the CA correctional system coming to light, and the list could go on-- will make it one of varied interventions. Let us stay focused on the work but also open up more conversations with each other about action. We want to hear from you about action. And share your thoughts and emotions -- this is heavy stuff and we have to keep each other "up".

It is difficult and seems dark, but we must transform our anger into power and remember the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Arc of the Moral Universe Is Long, but It Bends Toward Justice."

Be well,

Susan Taylor Batten

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ABE



Promoting Black Leadership and Participation in Organized Philanthropy