

CHANNEL ONE NEWS SHOW SCRIPT 9/27/07

Topics covered:

- Jena, LA backgrounder
- The noose: a symbol of hate
- Jena roundtable discussion
- Your turns: What do you have to say?

TONY: IT'S THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2007, WE'RE AT JENA, LOUISIANA, AND WE'RE GOING TO LET YOU KNOW THIS DAY WHY THIS SMALL TOWN IS GETTING SO MUCH ATTENTION.

BY NOW, MOST OF YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD ABOUT JENA, LOUISIANA. THIS SMALL TOWN HAS MADE INTERNATIONAL HEADLINES BECAUSE OF A SERIES OF RACIALLY CHARGED EVENTS THAT BEGAN AT THIS HIGH SCHOOL RIGHT BEHIND ME. NOW, THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF FINGER-POINTING FROM BOTH SIDES OF THIS CONTROVERSY, BUT WE'RE GOING TO BREAK IT ALL DOWN FOR YOU AND LAY OUT THE FACTS OF THIS STORY.

TONY: IT ALL BEGAN ABOUT A YEAR AGO, SEPTEMBER 1ST, 2006. THREE NOOSES WERE HUNG FROM A SHADE TREE AT JENA HIGH WHERE WHITE STUDENTS USUALLY GATHERED. THIS, AFTER A BLACK STUDENT, ACCORDING TO PUBLISHED REPORTS, ASKED AT A SCHOOL ASSEMBLY TO SIT BENEATH THE TREE. IN THE MONTHS AFTER, STUDENTS SAY, TENSIONS ROSE BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES. FINALLY, LAST DECEMBER, A FIGHT THAT SENT A WHITE STUDENT, 17-YEAR-OLD JUSTIN BARKER, TO THE HOSPITAL. SIX BLACK STUDENTS, NOW KNOWN AS THE "JENA SIX," WERE CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED SECOND-DEGREE MURDER. IT WAS, MANY SAID, A PUNISHMENT THAT DID NOT FIT THE ALLEGED CRIME.

TINA JONES: "We're not treated equal in this town, you know, so I'll just leave it at that."

TONY: THE CHARGES WERE LATER REDUCED. BUT SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD MYCHAL BELL, THE ONLY ONE OF THE SIX TO ACTUALLY BE TRIED FOR A CRIME, WAS FOUND GUILTY OF SECOND DEGREE BATTERY. AND THOUGH HIS CONVICTION WAS OVERTURNED, HE REMAINS IN JAIL.

PROTESTERS: "No justice, no peace..."

TONY: WHICH BRINGS US TO LAST THURSDAY, WHEN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF DEMONSTRATORS FLOODED THE TOWN TO SUPPORT THE JENA SIX. THE PROTESTORS PERCEIVE A DOUBLE STANDARD IN THE TREATMENT OF THESE STUDENTS.

REV. AL SHARPTON: "We sit and stand in a city that says it's a prank to hang a hangman's noose but that it is attempted murder to have a fight."

TONY: STEPHANIE, WHO PREFERRED WE DIDN'T USE HER LAST NAME, IS A JENA NATIVE AND PERSONALLY KNOWS JUSTIN BARKER, THE VICTIM AT THE CENTER OF THIS CASE.

STEPHANIE: "He was unconscious the whole time, he couldn't fight back, and they just proceeded to keep kicking him until somebody got them apart."

TONY: SHE BELIEVES PROTESTERS AND THE NEWS MEDIA HAVE BLOWN THIS STORY OUT OF PROPORTION.

STEPHANIE: "Justin was walking out of school and six people jumped him. It wasn't a color issue. If it would have been six white boys then they would have been in just as much trouble."

TONY: WHILE EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED IN THE ATTACK REMAINS UNCLEAR, MANY JENA RESIDENTS FEEL THEY'RE BEING UNFAIRLY CATEGORIZED AS RACIST.

TIFFANY THOMPSON: "I just feel like our town is just being seen as a really bad place. Like an old western. Like we're just horrible and not all of us are."

TONY: BUT FOR MANY AMERICANS, THE EVENTS IN JENA HAVE AROUSED THEM TO GET PERSONALLY INVOLVED.

MALE PROTESTER: "I think that this Jena Six movement is gonna be the beginning of something bigger you know. I just want to be a part of it."

TONY: THE BARRICADES ARE STILL HERE AT THE LA SALLE PARISH COURT HOUSE. A REMINDER OF THE THOUSANDS OF PROTESTERS THAT WERE HERE ONLY A WEEK AGO. LOOKING AROUND, THINGS SEEM PRETTY NORMAL, BUT IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT JENA OR THE COUNTRY WILL EVER BE THE SAME. TONY ANDERSON, CHANNEL ONE NEWS.

JESSICA: WE'VE BEEN FLOODED WITH EMAILS ABOUT THE JENA 6 CASE FROM ALL OF YOU, AND NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY.

BREANA FROM LOUISIANA WRITES: "IT IS SAD TO SEE THAT IN TODAY'S SOCIETY, AFTER ALL WE AS AMERICANS HAVE BEEN THROUGH, THINGS LIKE THIS ARE STILL GOING ON."

SPEAKING ABOUT MYCHAL BELL, THE BLACK STUDENT IMPRISONED FOR ASSAULTING THE WHITE STUDENT, ZACH FROM LOUISIANA SAYS: "I THINK THE GUY SHOULD STAY IN JAIL, BECAUSE IT DOESN'T MATTER IF WHO HE BEAT UP IS WHITE OR BLACK. HE STILL BEAT UP SOMEONE."

AND FROM SOUTH CAROLINA, DISIREE TOLD US: "RACIAL TENSION BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES WILL NEVER STOP IN MY OPINION..."

JESSICA: WE'LL SHARE SOME MORE OF YOUR THOUGHTS A LITTLE LATER ON.

ANNOUNCER: TO SEE IMAGES OF PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES FROM THE PAST AND THE PRESENT, LOOK FOR THE TOLERANCE TEST AT CHANNELONE.COM, AND LAUNCH THE PHOTO GALLERY.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

BROWNE: MANY BELIEVE THE CONTROVERSY BEHIND THE JENA 6 CASE BEGAN WITH ONE POWERFUL SYMBOL OF HATE: THE NOOSE. NOW, WE'LL TAKE A DEEPER LOOK INTO WHY THE NOOSE HAS BECOME A SYMBOL OF RACIAL INTOLERANCE, AND WHY

FOR MANY, IT STILL REPRESENTS AN UGLY SCAR ON THE FACE OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

BROWNE: LYNCHING WAS ONCE CALLED "OUR COUNTRY'S NATIONAL CRIME." IT REFERS TO THE PRACTICE BY WHICH A MOB TAKES THE LAW INTO ITS OWN HANDS IN ORDER TO EXECUTE A PERSON ACCUSED OF WRONGDOING. LYNCHING TOOK ON ITS CURRENT MEANING AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, DURING A PERIOD IN THE SOUTH CALLED RECONSTRUCTION, WHEN FREED SLAVES WERE TRYING TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES, MOB VIOLENCE BECAME A WEAPON USED AGAINST THEM. THE MOB'S USUAL MEANS OF EXECUTION: THE HANGMAN'S NOOSE. A POWERFUL SYMBOL EVEN TODAY. SPOKEN WORD ARTIST, DEVYNITY WRAY.

WRAY: "The noose is a part of my American history, it's my heritage of tragedy, it's my current reality... It means slavery, it means suppression, it means death, it means slaughter."

BROWNE: LYNCHINGS WERE SEEN AS A WAY OF "PUNISHING" AFRICAN AMERICANS AND OTHERS WHO THREATENED WHITE DOMINANCE. AND IT DIDN'T STOP AFTER SLAVERY. IN THE 1960'S, CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS WERE OFTEN TARGETED. HISTORICAL RECORDS SHOW BETWEEN 1882 AND 1968, OVER 4,000 PEOPLE WERE KILLED BY LYNCH MOBS. 80% OF THEM WERE BLACK AMERICANS. MEXICAN AMERICANS WERE THE SECOND MOST TARGETED VICTIMS. THE LEGACY OF LYNCHING IS ONE OF HATE AND INTOLERANCE. AND ALTHOUGH IT NO LONGER OCCURS TODAY, YOU CAN SEE WHY LYNCHING HAS LEFT BEHIND SUCH A POWERFUL SYMBOL. CHRIS BROWNE, CHANNEL ONE NEWS.

TONY: WE WANTED TO TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE SOUTH ABOUT THE RECENT EVENTS IN JENA. SO WE CAME TO NEARBY LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AT ALEXANDRIA AND HAD AN OPEN DISCUSSION WITH SOME COLLEGE STUDENTS. TAKE A LOOK.

TONY: SO WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE WHOLE JENA 6 SITUATION?

MALE STUDENT #1: "The media has over-hyped what a small situation turned into a large situation now because of the media."

MALE STUDENT #2: "I actually don't believe the media blew it out of proportion. It's a big deal to me. I believe it's a big deal, what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong."

MALE STUDENT #3: "Their attitude towards the little town of Jena in general...to say that there's not racism there is kind of ridiculous because, I mean, it's just a ubiquitous type thing. Racism exists wherever there's people."

TONY: DO YOU FEEL AS THOUGH, YOU KNOW, COMING FROM THE SOUTH, AND BEING A LOUISIANAN, THAT A LOT OF TIMES PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU AS THIS RACIST PLACE?

FEMALE STUDENT #1: "People think Louisiana is just a bunch of rednecks. Uneducated people down here, missing their teeth in their head, and it's not like that at all. I'm sure there's a lot of people in Jena that are not racist. But if you have a few, or a group, or if you're ever labeled that, you'll be labeled that forever."

TONY: HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED ANY RACISM? ANYBODY CALLING YOU A NAME?

MALE STUDENT #1: "Yeah, I have, I've actually had at my grandmother's house, we actually had a white neighbor, one day my little sister went over there and he pulled his daughter to the side and said listen, what did I tell you about hanging with those N-words. We actually talked to the guy and he admitted it and everything, it's not the first time I encountered it, and it definitely wasn't the last time."

TONY: HAS ANYBODY HERE GONE TO THE RALLIES? HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE, GOING THERE?

FEMALE STUDENT #1: "I was there. I had a white lady on the side of me, we were singing Lean on Me, and we were having fun. It wasn't about black, it wasn't about white, Hispanic, Mexican, it was about right and wrong and about justice."

PROTESTERS: "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!"

FEMALE STUDENT #2: "Once you got in that crowd, Al Sharpton was preaching, and he was screaming to the crowd. What do we want? And everybody was, Justice! I wasn't [unintelligible] but I was right there with it, and I was just shouting, go for it! I'm Cambodian, and if I would have jumped on somebody, I would highly doubt somebody would make a rally for me. I doubt Al Sharpton would have come down here you know and spoke for me to get out of jail, it just wouldn't happen."

MALE STUDENT #1: "Black and white people do not represent this country. We're not it. Especially right now when there's, what, the Latino population is probably growing larger larger than either of us."

TONY: DO YOU FEEL THAT THIS JENA 6 SITUATION IS GOING TO CHANGE ANYTHING, OR IS IT JUST GOING TO STAY THE SAME?

MALE STUDENT #1: "If Jena 6 never came up, and we never known about it, we probably be the same way. But if we don't change, we got to be able to [unintelligible]."

FEMALE STUDENT #1: "In 6 months, I don't think there's going to be any Jena 6 hype at all. It will just kind of get blown away. But I think in that town and in other small towns, politicians will have to treat everyone more equally, or they'll have to face the consequences of the media."

FEMALE STUDENT #2: "It has made history. And I think it's gonna go down in history, in world history."

TONY: HEY GUYS, WHEN WE WENT TO LOUISIANA, WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT. BUT YOU GUYS SHOWED US A GREAT TIME, AND WE WANT TO THANK YOU. WE ALSO WANT TO THANK EVERYONE WHO SENT US EMAILS, WE APPRECIATE IT SO MUCH. IF YOU WANT TO CONTINUE TO GIVE US FEEDBACK, LOG ON TO CHANNELONE.COM AND CLICK ON "YOU TELL US." BECAUSE WITHOUT YOU, THERE IS NO US.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

CORRESPONDENT: EARLIER WE SHARED SOME EMAILS WITH YOU ABOUT THE JENA 6 CASE. AND HERE'S SOME MORE VIEWS ON THIS HOT-BUTTON ISSUE.

CHANDLER FROM NEW ROADS, LOUISIANA, WROTE: "IF MYCHAL BELL WAS GOING TO BE CHARGED WITH ATTEMPTED SECOND DEGREE MURDER, THE KIDS WHO HUNG THE NOOSES FROM THE TREE SHOULD HAVE DEFINITELY BEEN EXPELLED FROM SCHOOL AND MAYBE EVEN HAVE CHARGES PRESSED AGAINST THEM FOR COMMITTING A HATE CRIME."

AND 16-YEAR-OLD KATELYN, ALSO FROM LOUISIANA: "TWO WRONGS DO NOT MAKE A RIGHT! WHITE KIDS DESERVED HARSHER PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR ACTIONS. THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN EXPELLED. BLACK KIDS SHOULD HAVE RESPONDED WITH AN ORDERLY PROTEST & NOT VIOLENCE."

AND DARNELL FROM NORTH CAROLINA SHARED THIS COMMENT: "I THINK THAT IS GOING WAY TO FAR WITH THE ROPE ON THE TREE. I ALSO THINK THAT AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE DOING GOOD WITH THIS SITUATION. I KNOW THAT MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. IS LOOKING DOWN SMILING."

TONY: ALRIGHT GUYS, THAT'S OUR SHOW FOR TODAY. REPORTING FROM JENA, LOUISIANA, I'M TONY ANDERSON, WE WILL SEE YOU HERE TOMORROW. SIGNING OFF FOR CHANNEL ONE NEWS. TAKE CARE.

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