



message from Ravaughn

Dear Family, Friends & Supporters, (Circle of Love & Strength)

Please accept my sincerest thanks and highest respect to you for your unconditional support given to me in this most difficult time of my life. My thanks go out to all of those who have sent words of encouragement, sent up prayers and offerings, made financial contributions for my defense, visited me, or just plain kept me in your thoughts or provided moral support to my family.

Thanks goes out first and foremost to God who has been my constant source of strength along with my immediate family, especially my mother and father, who have stood by me from my first breath in this world and have taught me solid values, a love for knowledge and education, an appreciation for the contributions and sacrifices of those who came before me, a sense of personal and social responsibility and a respect and love for life. Their teachings and guidance give me strength to face the challenges before me and assure me that I do not walk alone. Thanks also go out to all of my relatives and extended family. They remind me of where I come from, what I represent and the work that lies ahead for me.

Thanks also go out to those many people who I have never met but who have extended their support through my parents, schoolmates, relatives, acquaintances, churches, mosques, synagogues or temples. To all I say thank you very much (asante sana, medase, gracias or merci.)

Last but not least I send out thanks to the great creator and my ancestors. It is only through their guidance that I may be proven innocent thorough this legal process. I daily give my thanks for all that I have been blessed with and pray that I have the opportunity to show all who have supported me that I am worthy of their support and confidence.

May God continue to bless you all.

Humbly yours,

Ravaughn Harris

A Threat to Justice: The Case of Ravaughn Harris

By James C. Anyike

The April 28, 2008 arrest of Ravaughn Harris should raise concerns for every parent or person of reason. On one hand it is reasonable to feel a very visceral anger about the October 26, 2007 murders of two men who were only working to make a living for themselves when they were killed execution style during a robbery at Bellacino's, a Nashville pizza restaurant. It took less than 72 hours for the police to capture and charge Jason Bobo and Crystle Rutherford for the murders of the two men.

On the other hand, it took six months for the police to arrest Ravaughn, who after being questioned and released in October, continued with his studies at Tennessee State University and his job at Dillard's department store. After six months, Ravaughn was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder and especially aggravated robbery. These charges seem quite serious for someone who at worst is accused of being the "getaway driver," or at best is an unwitting ride provider for someone he considered to be a friend. The police say they "believe Harris had knowledge the two intended to rob Bellacino's before picking them up."

We should be concerned about this because Ravaughn has been pounced upon by the full weight of the Nashville legal system as if he was a known hardened criminal. It is true that there are young people who engage in serious criminal activities, but Ravaughn is not one of them. Ravaughn's arrest was reported in the local media as if the police had finally apprehended him after an arduous search. Ravaughn was arrested at his apartment, the same apartment where he lived when he was interviewed in 2007. The media didn't report that Ravaughn had just completed his junior year at Tennessee State University and that his classmates see him as a man of character and accomplishment and a model for his generation. They didn't even mention that he is from Chicago.

In such a high profile case, it is easier for local prosecutors to present Ravaughn as a cold blooded killer. Then they can arrest and charge him without a public outcry. However, the public should be crying out because Ravaughn is not the man that these charges indicate. If this can happen to Ravaughn Harris then it can happen to any TSU student or any of our sons and daughters living in this society. We cannot always shelter our children from potential threats found in casual acquaintances or close friendships, nor from potential threats from a society that feels threatened by them.

However, we must demand that the legal system be reasonable and fair to our young people, as it must be for everyone in the society, because "a threat to justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

James C. Anyike is a pastor in the United Methodist Church serving in Indianapolis, IN, and the author of several books.

Please write to Ravaughn at the following address:
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