

'Budget Cuts Killed My Baby Sister'

Rev. Clarence Turner III, pastor of Fruit of the Spirit Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., addressed the Feb. 6 emergency Meeting to Save D.C. General, where he announced that he would begin a vigil and fast at D.C. General Hospital the next day. Rev. Turner was a delegate candidate for Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche in the May 2, 2000 Washington, D.C. primary election. Here are excerpts of his remarks.

I was treated at D.C. General Hospital, in 1959. If you look carefully, you'll see I stand straight. My back was broken in three places. My neck was broken. But on the third day, I got up out of the bed at D.C. General Hospital, when I thought I was going to die. But God chose to allow me to live.

But let me take you a little further. I've got a son that had been beaten almost to death, about five years ago. He works as a fireman and a paramedic now. We got him to D.C. General Hospital in about eight minutes. Finally, they were able to work on him. He stayed in intensive care for five days, [with an] induced coma because of brain swelling. He survived, and he's now doing everything he can to make sure people live.

I've been in Code Blue [inpatient life-threatening emergency, such as cardiac or respiratory arrest] seven times. Four of those times were in D.C. General Hospital. Those doctors got on their job. They found out the problem, worked right on it and got me out of there.

My baby sister had all kinds of insurance. My baby sister did not have to die. Somebody said it was D.C. Gen-



Rev. Clarence Turner III

eral's fault, but the biggest problem, was because of the budgetary cuts, and some doctors that were so busy trying to save money, that they didn't deal with her situation: She was sent home, and in an hour and a half or two hours, she was dead. The same ambulance crew that delivered her, had not even gotten off their shift, came back to pronounce her dead.

I've watched them in those ambulances fighting to try to save somebody's life, trying to keep blood from running out of people's bodies. They suffer harder than you do about somebody dying. And can you imagine, they have to go another 10 or 15 minutes somewhere—it's not going to work, folks.

A change has to happen in our system. Our system is set up for you to die. If they snatch D.C. General Hospital, what do you think they're going to put in there? High-rises and beachfront condominiums and properties. How many of you are willing to die, because somebody wants to make a few extra million dollars?

Whatever way you do it, you'd better take it back now, because tomorrow might be too late.

passion to these people? Or, are we turning them away and saying, "Get your compassion elsewhere, because you just don't matter to us"? I think, at the end of the day, we are all measured by what we've done in life. How will the District of Columbia and its leaders answer up? You turned your back on your very young and your very old. How will you answer? I don't think you can.

To be honest with you, I see the faces of those individuals I can't help, because the system has failed them, and they ask me for help. What do I tell them? You never want to lie to a patient. You want to be honest and up-front with this patient. But you reach a point where, in some cases, it's best that you say nothing. How can I tell a family member sitting across from me, in the back of my ambulance, with their loved one

lying on my cot as I do CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] on them, "Ma'am, I'm sorry, we're going to have to go on the other side of the city because D.C. General is closed"? Then, when we get there, the doctors come to the family member and say, "I'm sorry, your husband, your son, your daughter, your child, has died."

I explain that to them: We passed the hospital that may have made the difference in this case. The ability to care, to show compassion: It's just apparent to me that that just doesn't exist now.

EIR: There are various schemes and plans, that people have tried to come up with, around the hospital. Of course, it all boils down, as Mr. LaRouche has said, to a question between