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### Rev. Paul Hall Still Full Of Fight

February 28, 1992 | By George Papajohn.



Rev. Paul Hall never went away. Not to prison. Not into seclusion or oblivion or whatever place you would expect a beloved, energetic community activist to go after he has been convicted of molesting a boy.

Staying out of prison the last two years required \$2,500 in bond money and an appeal, still pending.

Remaining a community activist required faith, his own as well as that of his followers, plus a fax machine and a good eye for photo opportunities. Hall has all these in abundance.

See him on the 10 o'clock news early this month lighting more than 900 candles in his Christ Universal Church for Chicago's 1991 homicide victims.

See him in color in last Sunday's Tribune, wrapping a memorial ribbon around a tree near the site of a random shooting that took the life of a 2-year-old boy, Mykel Scott.

See him quoted on the news pages of the Sun-Times. In Kup's column, boldfaced, like any other celebrity.

Or in the Chicago Defender, the African-American daily, which pictures him turning in a rifle to police as part of his campaign to get weapons of the streets, and with a mother and two sons who sought refuge from gangs at his boys club.

In the second photo, the mother and sons hide their faces out of fear, but Hall's concerned gaze is fixed on the lens.

The man with both a long record of activism and a short criminal record says all this has nothing to do with self-promotion.

``I`m not hung up with titles,`` Hall says in his office at 9039 S. Ashland Ave., where he runs the Paul Hall Community Services Center, his non-denominational church and Mothers/Men Against Guns and Gangs, known as MAGG.

``I don`t seek gratification in my name appearing in the press,`` he says. ``I`m just a humble servant of the Lord.``

Hall, 45, has been doing community work since age 14, when he formed a club to keep teens off the street. It became known as the Paul Hall Boys Club. Later, there was the Paul Hall Warriors Drum and Bugle Corps.

MAGG is a more recent, post-conviction endeavor, and Hall`s name is at the end of a long list of members on its stationery.

However, a one-page faxed release this week did happen to mention the reverend`s name 10 times in announcing that he and MAGG members were attending the Scott funeral.

``I`ve been doing this 32 years, and I haven`t stopped one day,`` he says. ``In the midst of the trial, I came here and worked.``

Besides the sleek fax machine, his office is appointed with an old wooden desk, two aged couches, an aquarium and a TV.

On the wall behind him is a framed poster of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a plaque with the likeness of Richard J. Daley, two of his heroes, he says. The plaque, from the Lions Club in 1986, honors Hall.

Also behind him, on a table, is a Bible and several stacks of photocopied newspaper clippings featuring Hall.

Testifying on the stand in 1989, and to this day, Hall has maintained his innocence.

A jury felt differently, convicting him of aggravated sexual abuse charges involving a 13-year-old foster son, one of many foster sons he has cared for over the years. Two other witnesses, both young men who stayed at Hall`s home, also testified that Hall had enticed them into sex.

When indicted, Hall faced more than 20 charges involving sexual assault, but he was convicted on four of the lesser charges.

Though Hall was represented by one of the city`s leading defense attorneys, Patrick Tuite, he still complains, ``I`ve never had anybody to help me, to fight my battles.``

Even though a jury heard his side, he believes that wasn`t enough. He says he should have spoken out in the media, against the advice of his lawyers, about how he was the victim of a conspiracy.

``This is the biggest frame that has ever been put together by people in the city of Chicago,`` he says.

``The reason I didn't talk about this trial is I didn't want what happened to appear to be a racial problem.

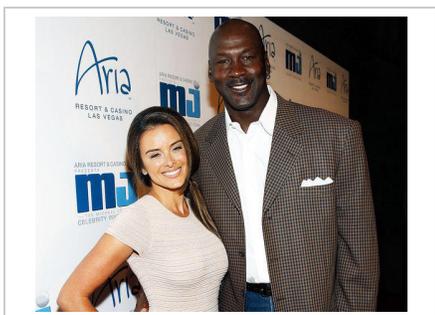
``I didn't want to say, here's another black leader, which is true, that they're picking on. As soon as a black leader mustered together a group of people and tried to educate those people somehow the system-I'm not calling names-ends up getting you.``

He has faith in his appeal, he says, because he has faith in God.

``He knows the hearts of those men that have to make a decision on this,`` Hall says. ``He knows my heart. He knows the truth, and he knows the lies.``

Final judgment, here or elsewhere, will depend on the facts, but in the here and now, image may well rest with the fax.

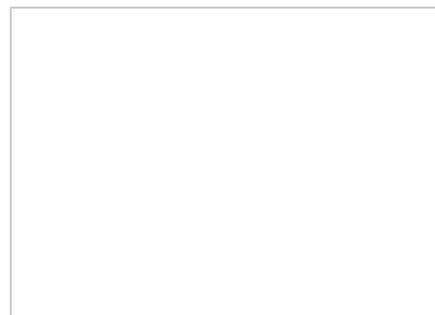
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