

Nevada Artist Initiates Bicentennial Project



BENI CASSELLE

A Black artist who was saddened by the conflict and the misunderstandings surrounding the 1975 Black History Week celebrations in the Clark County High Schools has started work on a project designed to help avoid a repetition of those occurrences in 1976.

Beni Casselle, a marketing professional with special skills in art and creative writing, was invited to show slides of some of his past works at several local high schools as a part of the 1975 celebration.

Casselle states: "When I went into the schools I observed a lot of shaking and bumping going on up on the stages during the special assemblies, and I was shown soul food menus being offered that week in the lunchrooms. But I saw little dealing with Black contributions to the cultures and civilizations of the world. Before the week was over it had been marred by a couple of serious incidents at several schools. I have been a student of Black history most of my adult life and as such, I know full well what I observed in the schools was not what Dr. Carter Goodwin Woodson had in mind when he established the celebration many years ago.

Dr. Woodson started Black History Week to instill a sense of self and selfworth in all people of Afrikan ancestry around the world. The observance was also meant to serve the dual purpose of enlightening those of the European and Asian ethnicity about the many Black contributions to world and to American history.

In other words Black History Week was designed by a world renowned scholar who wanted to instill a sense of dignity and pride of history in persons of Afrikan descent while also gaining the respect of accomplishment for Afrikans from all other races on this planet."

Not one to sit idly by and to do nothing, Casselle then enlisted the aid of several state and national groups to help him in a program to change the image of Black History Week in the state of Nevada. The idea was simple. He would research and render paintings illustrating the little-known contributions of six (6) Afro-American heroes made to this country during the American Revolutionary War. These six paintings would then form the hub on the core of a much larger month-long Bicentennial year exhibit in the local high school. This series of exhibits will be made interesting to youth and all following the same specific theme and open for entry from all interested students in the district. He will give prize ribbons for the best entries in all categories as judged by a cross-cultural committee of art-oriented Nevada citizens.

Armed with this basic idea Casselle then enlisted the support of the Las Vegas Alumnae Chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.-a civic oriented Black sorority-to sponsor his proposed efforts. The Deltas sponsored Casselle's proposal when it was submitted to the Nevada State Council on the Arts for the materials grant needed to expedite the project.

Not only did the Arts Council approve the mini-grant proposal, but two of the local businessmen members of the Council were moved to match the grant with personal donations. They are Mel Moss and Norman Kaye.

So now the next step is for the artist to meet with as many Clark County high school art teachers as possible to enlist their aid in the project. He has started painting the first of the six art works after pouring over volumes of research materials for several months.

He states that the project embraces three established celebrations and then ties them into a single theme with the resulting very long official title: "The Bicentennial Black History/Brotherhood Week's Travelling Art Exhibit."

The exhibit and/or slides of the exhibit will be made available to all Nevada schools, organizations, and responsible groups on a first come, first served basis. Those person interested in the exhibit after 1 February, 1976, should contact the artist at P.O. Drawer #4609, Las Vegas, Nev. 89106.

Most youngsters returning to the same elementary school they attended last year are already registered, but there are exceptions, according to school officials.

Students new to the school they will attend September 2 should call the school for registration information if they have not been contacted by letter. Official registration days are August 28 and 29, but most schools are accepting registrations now.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Two new elementaries, Bill Tomiyasu at the corner of Annie Oakley and Rawhide and Helen M. Smith in Charleston Rainbow, must register their entire student bodies. At Tomiyasu, all students with last names beginning A-M are asked to register on Thursday, August 28. On Friday, August 29, those with last names beginning N-Z are asked to report.

Helen Smith Elementary is registering students this week according to schedules mailed to parents. Anyone not registering on schedule should report August 28 or 29.

The following schools are registering returning students by phone and requesting new students to report August 28 and 29: Paul Culley, Ira J. Earl, J.E. Manch, Gordon McCaw, John S. Park, and Tom Williams.

These elementaries are requesting that all students register at the school August 28 and 29: O.K. Adcock, C.C. Ronnow, Helen J. Stewart, Sunrise Acres, J.M. Ullom and Variety.

Classes for all students enrolled in the Clark County School District start September 2.



Noted Ventriloquist and audience pleaser, John Henry, just completed a successful engagement at Big Al's Hideaway.

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Skeptics may explain the position of black Congressmen as a simple quid pro quo for labor's support of civil rights measures. But they would be wrong, dead wrong. For blacks have a very real stake in construction workers gaining status equal to that of industrial workers. At just the time when significant numbers of black are beginning to move into construction and other high-paying, high-skilled union jobs, anything which weakens unions will have the most tragic consequences for the black community. Conversely, measures which strengthen unions will mean more high-paying jobs available for blacks.

The vote of black Congressmen on this issue offers a clear refutation of some common, but profoundly mistaken views. We are frequently told that the interests and objectives of the American trade union movement are in fundamental conflict with the interests and objectives of black people. There are even some liberals and blacks who would have, in effect, argued for the crippling amendment from their mistaken view that the way to end discriminatory practices in the construction unions is to weaken those unions and that the way to help blacks is to weaken the unions in general.

Such views, held against the overwhelming weight of evidence, have been and remain a source of great danger to black people. For the union movement is a social force in which black people have an enormous stake. If blacks criticize unions in such a way as do them irreparable harm, or stand idly by while others attack the unions, it will ultimately be blacks who are harmed.

With staggering unemployment in many black communities, many blacks are being attracted to gimmicks which offer no solution to the basic problems of unemployment, poor housing, inadequate schools, and poverty. Moreover, these gimmicks would set worker against worker. The active role Congressmen Clay, Parren Mitchell and others played in turning back the attempt to divide unions and blacks on the site picketing bill is heartening, for it is absolutely indispensable that black political leaders recognize that the most important things that can be done to advance civil rights is to strengthen the labor movement and enact labor's program for economic recovery.



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