

# To Whom Does It Belong? The West Las Vegas Power Structure Part V

By George A. Burns

*This is a continuation of a series of articles presented over a 12-week period giving an overview on the West Las Vegas POWER STRUCTURE. At the end of this series, the SENTINEL-VOICE will print in its new magazine, BRONZE LAS VEGAS, the complete series in this new venture for Las Vegas and Nevada.*

This week's article will focus on the three candidates currently seeking the office of President of the local chapter of the NAACP.

The candidates, Lubertha Johnson, Jesse Scott and the Rev. James Allen, will discuss their opinions on what they feel the makings of a good, strong leader to be; if the West Las Vegas area presently has a person (or persons) of that caliber; if they consider themselves to be leaders; and what they'll be primarily focusing their attentions on, if elected President of the Las Vegas Branch of the NAACP.

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*"People talk about Dr. King and His Dream, but what they fail to realize is that he worked out His Dream before he told others of it."*

Lubertha Johnson

*"We'll get THEIR attention with our unity."*

Jesse Scott

*"Whether the power structure likes it or not, I'm here, and I'm here to stay."*

Rev. James Allen

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One candidate for the presidency of the local chapter of the NAACP felt that in the past, our most outstanding leaders here in West Las Vegas have been affiliated with that organization, and the work that they did and their contributions were greatly responsible for progress made in this area. "It does appear, however, that we don't have that same 'sense of dedication' today." Another felt that what he's not really seen at all is a "true role in leader-

ship potential in Las Vegas." A third felt it unnecessary and refused to comment on past or present leaders and their leadership roles. The two who did comment felt compelled to say that West Las Vegas has and still does suffer from a "lack of leadership" in some instances.

Lubertha Johnson felt apathy has played a role in our present leadership crisis. "Those in the forefront now due to their past success somehow feel that we've got it made and it doesn't require so much effort at this time." However, she does feel optimistic about the future of West Las Vegas, especially in regard to the upcoming leadership. "I see young people becoming involved, so much so to the point that they will become more dedicated to the 'cause.'"

"The only TRUE role of leadership that I've personally witnessed the past 14 months here in Las Vegas comes out of the pulpit, and not all preachers have shown those leadership qualities," says Allen. He followed up by saying, "To be a good leader means you must be a good follower. He must know how to lead and have no fear. He mustn't show weaknesses in the eyes of his enemies. He must be courageous and show no partiality towards friends. If a white person was discriminated against by a black person, the President of the NAACP, as its leader, must take the lead to defend him. For the past 79 years this organization has stood firm against discrimination and WE shouldn't show any less."

Did each of the three candidates feel themselves to be leaders? "I'm not so immodest as to not feel that way," declared Scott. He went on by saying, "Anyone who has a gleam of circumstances and willing to DO something about it and articulate those views is always assured of a leadership role. Yes, I assume that I'm a leader."

While Lubertha Johnson is firm in her belief that she can get things done, she doesn't feel herself to be a leader. "In order to be called a leader," she said, "one MUST be able to influence a very large majority of people, in this case, in a community. I don't feel that I influence that many."

As far as Allen went, he was quickly responsive, brief and to the point with his response to the question of whether he felt himself to be a leader. "Yes, I do!"

Can one person (or leader) make a difference in changing our course here in West Las Vegas? "Yes, I believe that to be true," responded Johnson. "One could, but he must prove himself first. You don't just 'make a difference.' PEOPLE TALK ABOUT DR. KING AND HIS DREAM, BUT WHAT THEY FAIL TO REALIZE IS THAT HE WORKED OUT HIS DREAM BEFORE HE TOLD OTHERS OF IT. He worked it out individually, long before he shared that dream and told us about it."

"Sure, I believe that one person can make a difference," said Allen. "There's been instances in history where one person has made a tremendous difference. Many have been Biblical characters, but one man who stood for what he believed in and showed that 'there is a chance' was Dr. King. He didn't have harmonious crowds behind him in the beginning."

With power, does corruption and greed overtake our leadership? Allen feels that this is generally the

case. "You can't leave your lunch with a hungry man and expect it to be there when you return," he elaborated. The only way he felt that this could be offset was by having a "genuine love for one's fellowman and belief in Jesus."

Johnson felt that "that's not always the case. "There are too many examples of people sincerely dedicated to the 'cause' for which they worked. They worked and dedicated their lives to achieve their goals and not become involved in any unsavory actions or unsavory affairs."

## As NAACP President, What They'll Do

Rev. James Allen:

"I have the community at heart or else I would have no business being here. WHETHER THE POWER STRUCTURE LIKES IT OR NOT, I'M HERE, AND I'M HERE TO STAY. My top priority as President will be to have a hand in helping to reestablish dignity, pride and joy of the NAACP back to the community. To regain the community's respect and confidence. To make it viable once again. People don't mind supporting an entity that supports them. We need 1) a strong affirmative action program; 2) effective labor committee; 3) closer watch on schools; 4) better police protection rather than brutality and more blacks on its force; 5) effective job training programs; 6) establishment of a food bank and child welfare and nutrition program for the community; and 7) a low income child care center."

Lubertha Johnson:

"I would like to say that I know that we can change things, but only through sacrifice. One cannot accomplish any really serious goal without this. I think we need humility and to understand that every single person can make a contribution. And if the NAACP is to become a really viable and successful organization, we must involve all types, classes and groups of people.

I also know that one main thrust at this time must be that we will actually fight to gain our fair share of America's resources, because we have paid the price for whatever this country possesses. We've paid our share in blood, sweat and tears, so whatever we ask is simply collecting a debt that has been long overdue."

Jesse Scott:

"Employment and economic development will be my top priority. 25 percent unemployment among us and 50 percent among our youth are serious problems which must be faced. We must seek economic development in our community. We should be saying to our city and state government that "we have much land here; how about much needed building of medical and legal offices, a convention center, stores, shopping centers and a repavement of some of our streets. These things will boost the economy as a whole and will provide some desperately needed jobs. What I'll do is implement the NAACP's role as researcher of what the government can and can't do and disseminate those findings. I'll stress more community meetings, not done on a crisis basis, but on a continuing basis. At those meetings, we'll discuss present problems, repetitions and focus in on some solutions. I'll also strive to increase the present memberships. With a city population of 50,000 blacks, we should be at approximately 3000 members instead of the current 500-800. The present power structure won't make a move unless there's a substantial number of blacks rallying around our projects. WE'LL GET THEIR ATTENTION WITH OUR UNITY!"

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Bob came to Las Vegas from Phoenix, several years ago and resides with his wife Jo Ann. He serves his clients and customers in real estate as vigorously as he serves his tennis, which is one of his many sports activities. Bob has been associated with Toler Realty for two years and his specialties include residential and land sales.

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