

THE COMMUNITY TRIBUNAL SEGMENTS AND THEIR POWER

By Bob Palm

EDITORS NOTE: This is the final in a series of articles prepared on the COMMUNITY TRIBUNAL SEGMENTS AND THEIR POWER. This week the series again deals with the political aspects.

Wheel within wheels, spinning this way then that way, describes the political atmosphere in the black community.

When the black community first began, more than 40 years ago, the alliances and power-structures were much more easily identified than they are today.

At one point many years ago, political deals were made in smoke-filled rooms with a few powerful preachers holding court. Money changed hands and a candidate could pretty much count on getting a big chunk of the black vote on election day. Those were the years before the black community was carved into districts to assure the election of a few black candidates. The money was being paid to help white candidates.

Then in the early 1970s, laws were passed to insure the election of two black assemblymen and one black senator.

Former Clark County Commissioner Woodrow Wilson became the first black to be elected to the state Legislature; he was followed by former Assemblymen Marion Bennett, Cranford Crawford and Senator Joe Neal.

Shortly after that Aaron Williams became the first to

sit on the County Commission, and Robert Reid the first Justice of the Peace.

Later Bernice Moten became the first black to be elected to the School District Board of Trustees, and Robert Mullen became the first black Municipal Court Judge.

The districts greatly diminished the political power of some black ministers, because they could no longer guarantee a white candidate a certain number of votes, but most importantly there were no longer that many white candidates needing the black vote.

That cleared the way for young black men with brains, ingenuity and political savvy to carve out a place for themselves in the small political world in the black community.

Stepping forward to take advantage of those changes were such men as former Assemblymen Lonnie Chaney and his brother, Jim. They put a political machine together that kept Chaney in office for about a decade.

They used that power to create and to nurture the first black owned bus company in the state, Westside Charter. The bus company employed about 150 people and helped to feed the families of those

employees for many years.

It has been said that Chaney got his power base from friends and relatives who were from the same area of Louisiana as himself, Tallulah.

Some people once erroneously believed, and some still do, that only candidates with ties to the Tallulah clan had a chance of being elected, but the facts don't show that to be true. Chaney and Neal are the only people from Louisiana to ever be elected to the Legislature, before the 1982 election of Assemblyman Gene Collins, who is from Lake Providence, La., about 20 miles from Tallulah, the home of his wife.

Collins said he never believed in the so-called Tallulah machine, but being from Louisiana, "hasn't hurt me any," he said.

However, Collins said Chaney had many people from Louisiana to help him (Chaney) get elected and stay in office almost longer than any other black politician in the county.

Chaney could not be reached for comments.

Collins said Chaney had "a mixture" of people who worked for him and supported him because "they felt he could do the job, and Chaney did a tremendous job. He hired about 150 people and fed a lot more."

When Chaney left the Legislature in 1982 to run for the county commission, other changes started to take place in the community, Collins said.

Of course, one of the biggest changes in Collins' eyes was when "I defeated the preacher," Bennett. "Before that, the community did not have a voice from Carson City. Bennett didn't keep the people informed, and the black community was not involved in politics the way it is now," Collins said.

He said the black community is more aware now of what is going on because the Legislature is reporting back to them with the facts about the issues, and black are making up their individual minds on how to vote for candidates and to vote on the issues.

Collins, who switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party in 1985, to the chagrin of staunch Democrats, said his new party is emerging as a stronger force in the community.

He said he expects to prove that this year in his bid for reelection.

"I think I will get 90 percent of the vote. I will consider myself a loser if I don't get 90 percent of the vote," he said. He also expects to capture the lion's share of the vote because "I have the best record of any politician who has ever served in the state."

However, Collins is expected to be facing Bennett once again, whom he defeated by only 80 votes in the 1984 election, and school teacher Wendell P. Williams. Both are considered viable candidates.

The Republican Party is expected to pump more money into the black community this election than it has ever done before.

Not only do the Republicans want to establish a stronger beach head in the black community, but they need a hefty chunk of the black vote for their candidate, former Congressman Jim Santini, to defeat Congressman Harry Reid for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Paul Laxalt.

The other assemblyman in the black community, Morse Arberry, said his birthplace had nothing to do with him being elected for the first time in 1984. Arberry took over Chaney's old seat. Ar-

THE NAACP AND YOU!



Rev. Jesse D. Scott
President
Las Vegas, NAACP



Las Vegas Black Leadership--We Need You Now

When I arrived in West Las Vegas, late in July 1970, many people were in the forefront for the Black cause in the NAACP and the community generally.

To be sure some of these individuals who were very prominent and on the scene are now deceased or have moved out of town. The following is a partial list: The late Rev. Prentice Walker, Judge Robert Reid, Sarah Hughes, Dr. V.C.L. Coleman, Rev. J.L. Simmons, Jim Anderson and there were many others just to name a few -- Atty. Charles Kellar, Mr. and Mrs. J. David Hoggard Sr, Bernice Jenkins, Jan Smith, Helen Anderson, Lubertha Johnson, Lucille Gee, Rev. Marion Bennett, Father Ben Franzinelli, Jim Shipp, Tony McCormick, Amos Knighten, Addie McLemore, Dr. & Mrs J.R. Crear, Grace McGlothen, Rev Albert Dunn,

berry said he was born in Oakland, Calif., but was raised in Las Vegas since he was three years old.

He said people in general elected him because they wanted a change, and wanted to "give me a try."

He said he does not believe Chaney was so successful as a politician because he was from Louisiana, but because "he was well organized and knew how to run a campaign."

Arberry said since his election, he has seen some changes in the mill, such as people working harder to eliminate redlining in the community by lending institutions.

He said his generation is getting more involved in politics, even though many of them don't live in the community.

He said they are working in the community to pay their dues by donating their time and expertise.

He also said blacks are more politically aware now than they ever were. "They know what's going on; they are not blind."

Herb Toberman, Raymond Blankes, Trudi Henderson, Erma O'Neal, Eleanor Walker, Judge Robert Millens, Woodrow Wilson, Aaron Williams, Ruby Duncan, Atty. Robert Archie, Senator Joe Neal, Gwen Weeks Rohner, Rev. Donald Clark, James Chaney, Lonnie Chaney, Amos Seastrunk, Dr. Kenny Guinn, Jimmy Gay, Sarann Knight-Preddey, Dr. Claude Perkins, Mr. and Mrs H.P. Fitzgerald, Archie Perry, Jacqueline McKinny, Theron Goynes, Dr. Hershel Williams, Dr. & Mrs Porter Troutman, Ida Gaines, Cornelia Kellar, Ruby Garland, Majorie Elliott, Mary Aderholt, Jewel Scott, Ethel Pearson, Rev. Leo Johnson, Dr. & Mrs James Pughley, Mr. & Mrs Otis Harris, Rev. I.W. Wilson, Rev. S.P. Parks, Larry Wilburn, Rev. F.N. Addison, Dr. James McMillan, Judge Earl White, Judge A.D. Guy, Alice Key, James Tyree, Rev. McKinley Smith, Rev. C.C. Smith, Mr. & Mrs. Johnus Geran, Rev. & Mrs Jesse Wesley, Rev. & Mrs. Larry Burton, Dr. & Mrs William Pearson, and the late Dr. Charles West and Mrs Dottie West.

The purpose of this column is to say those who are named and are not both involved in the NAACP and the community work we miss you and need you badly -- Please come back home!

--The NAACP Needs You Now!--

No matter who you are, if you read this column you are the person that I am speaking to. An old Chinese proverb says, that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. If you will agree to do your part today, we together can get started to rebuild the Las Vegas Branch NAACP to a high level of responsibility and respectability it once had.

This is what you can do, take time out and renew your membership. It's only \$10 per year. Come to the Branch meeting the Second Sunday in April at 4:00 p.m. The Branch office is located at 940 West Owens in the Nucleus Plaza Center next to the U.S. Post Office.

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