

## Afrocentricity

### The Ray Willis Report

By: Ray E. Willis

Harkening back to the days of Marcus Garvey who earlier this century started a major Back-To-Africa movement among U.S. Blacks which did not prove successful, a new such groundswell seems to be sweeping the nation. However, this time focus isn't specifically aimed at going back to Africa, but in redefining what it means to be Black.

Like I always say when someone mentions "going back to Africa" to me

I've never ever been there. And even so, I was born right here in America. So it is impossible for me to return to Africa!

While the present Black consciousness movement is based on Black pride and a genuine love and respect for Black heritage and culture, it does not reject the notion that America is our proper home.

The term used to describe a predominant philosophy and a way of life for people who come from African-American backgrounds is "Afrocentric." To be Afrocentric means to focus on life from an African viewpoint. From hairstyles to dress to literature to culture and all other aspects of life.

Whereas in the U.S., most of our traditions, social patterns, customs, education and other aspects of life which engulf us daily are Eurocentric--having their basis in European thought and tradition.

America is billed as a vast melting pot where people of all colors, all nationalities and backgrounds meld together into one fabric to become Americans. Why is it



Ray E. Willis

then that African-Americans, who can trace their origin in America back to the 1600s, are still disenfranchised? Why are Blacks accorded second-class status in their own country?

The answer perhaps lies in our African heritage. Those same roots that appear foreign to us because we lack a direct relationship to or identify with "The Motherland" is also an albatross around our necks to a certain extent.

In short, we don't really know what we want to be because we lack a true historical reference from which to operate.

If we choose to adapt and "give in" to the system, we face rejection. If we adopt the opposite stance and fight the system we could very well wind up behind prison bars or at the very least as permanent outcasts of society.

So then, how do we as Black Americans best deal with the system? Should we take the line of least resistance and just go with the flow, or should we take a stand and fight?

Make no mistake about it. African Americans are citizens in a country whose guiding principles are Eurocentric because those who founded the country and

## Centennial Park Arms Apartments: The New Gerson?

By Muhammad Abdullah

They shut off the main power box, started a fire in a dumpster and started a street brawl on Donna Street in North Las Vegas in front of the Centennial Park Arms Apartments Security Office. All this on the same night!

who have controlling interests are of European descent.

While people of almost any other nationality have been absorbed rather quickly into the American mainstream within a short period of time after having arrived in this country, Blacks still languish for the most part in a near-suspended state of nonacceptance.

What will it take for us to be accepted like most all of the others? A commonly held belief in some circles is that WE SHOULD TALK AND ACT THE PART. In other words be white. Yet another viewpoint suggests that we resegregate ourselves, withdrawing from all contact with people of other races. Most of the prevailing beliefs are a combination of these views.

Even now, in 1990, Black Americans have a dual existence very similar to the way it used to be before integration. True, certain flagrant barriers which discriminate and separate the races have been eliminated. But the continued existence of major Black institutions such as colleges, Black communities, churches and publications are indicators of just how separated we still are.

The overall scope of how Blacks fare in America may not be nearly so bleak as it might seem on face value. Even though Black culture doesn't celebrate the traditional values of our African roots, it does serve to provide a common bond among us.

The big question mark which remains to be answered for African-Americans is, "To what extent are we willing to express ourselves Afrocentrically?" Or, "Are we willing to fully accept and live strictly within the Eurocentric guidelines which are already established for us to follow?" Increasingly, the trend seems to be that Blacks are adopting the Afrocentric approach.

If he were alive among us today, Marcus Garvey would be pleased at such a widespread resurgence of interest in the African legacy which is distinctly our own.

They knew the schedule of the security guard. They knew when he would return to the office after making his night round. Moments later, Officer Sieur Coaxum lay sprawled on the sidewalk in front of the security office with his head in a pool of blood. This was an apparent stake-out ambush.

There were conflicting stories about what happened as is always the case with witnesses. Some say it was a drive-by shooting. Others said that a rifle shot was fired at the victim from an assailant on the premises. Several eyewitnesses said the Donna Street Crips were tired of Coaxum's constant harassment and his seriousness in cracking down on drug activity and gang violence in the area. They knew he was about to start a Neighborhood Watch Program and felt threatened. The truth may never be known.

That was four months ago. Today Officer Coaxum is in a coma in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at University Medical Center (UMC). It is uncertain whether or not he will recover consciousness. Since Coaxum's incident, there have been 2 or more homicides, one involving a white male in a drug deal gone sour. Where will it end?

What will be the aftermath? Will the tenants band together to carry out Coaxum's wishes? Are his efforts in vain? What is management's position? Has security been tightened down in the area? What is North Las Vegas Police Department's strategy? Where are the politicians? Are they taking action?

This week we will attempt to answer some of these and other questions that need to be addressed concerning the area.

We began our investigation by interviewing Eli Gray, Police Services and Tenant Relations Director of Housing Resource Management, Inc. (HRM), the management company of the complex.

Gray has been with HRM

for seven years and is presently a security consultant. HRM is based in Santa Monica, California.

Centennial Park Arms Apartments consists of 156 units and is 84% occupied. Several other properties are being managed by HRM including the Thunderbird Apartments at the corner of Donna and Carey Avenue and the Spencer Apartments at 1711 E. Rawhide, near UNLV.

When asked about the present situation at Centennial Park Arms, Gray said that he has presently designed a training program that will make the security officers more efficient. He said that there are presently seven officers on staff and they are being trained on how to become more aware of "people problems."

"I am training the officers on how to make the entire scope of security more efficient by becoming more involved with the tenants in the complex," he said.

Some of the activities being created are 1) meetings with civic and social agencies and organizations to get the children involved in them; 2) staging plays in the park on the premises to promote

positive-thinking in the youth residents; 3) sponsoring Clark County Juvenile Authority to put on parenting programs and programs on motherhood to attempt to help tenants become better and more informed parents; 4) pre-screening prospective tenants and counseling them on life in the low-income projects and encouraging them to pull themselves up and eventually become homebuyers; 5) "Operation Identification" - having tenants mark all of their valuable property and teaching them how to report a theft, a drug transaction in progress, or an attempted burglary or mugging; 6) encouraging the senior residents to join the Senior Citizens Protective Association in an effort to protect themselves from youthful offenders; 7) encouraging tenants to step forward and identify undesirable in the area who cause trouble; and 8) developing a plan to block-in the whole area and limit access of non-residents to the area, especially drug traffickers.

The Sentinel-Voice reported two weeks ago on the Carey Arms Apartment com-

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## Memorial Service and Musical Scholarship Fund Set for the Late Anthony Thomas

Memorial Services for the late Anthony Thomas will be held on Sunday, April 29 at 4:00 P.M. at the Second Baptist Church, located at 500 West Madison Avenue, Las Vegas. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Choirs and groups are encouraged to attend rehearsal and to be a part of this memorial service.

Rehearsals will be held on Tuesday, April 24 and Saturday, April 28 at 8:00 P.M. at Second Baptist Church.

For additional information please telephone Charles Holder at 453-2684 and Rev. Sam Roberson at 648-8180.

A Memorial Music Scholarship Fund has been organized in remembrance of Anthony Thomas. Nevadans Against Apartheid, of which Thomas was the founder, is coordinating this effort to perpetuate music education in Anthony's name.

Those interested in donating to the scholarship fund should contact Julie Kitchen at 438-0418.

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