



Verita Black

NORTHERN NEVADA UPDATE By Verita Black

APARTMENTS

The northeastern Reno Community Anti-Drug Task Force is a newly formed group of residents who want to deal with drug abuse and selling in their neighborhood and other youth-related problems.

They will be holding a meeting April 21 to discuss creating youth programs, a multi-purpose facility and drug prevention programs.

Many of the complaints of the residents in that area are the blatant selling of drugs on neighborhood streets, people from other locations in Reno pimping and using their neighborhood as a "drug store" while their neighborhoods remain seemingly drug free, young people with too much time on their hands after school and during the summer, and that the media is grossly unfair when reporting on stories in that area.

All of their complaints are valid. Drug selling is right out in the open. And what is even more infuriating is that these are babies selling the drugs to adults and other babies. Another good point that is being raised is, "Where are these kids getting the drugs?" Why are we allowing whites to use minority neighborhoods as "drug stores?" These questions will be addressed at the Task Force meetings.

The children don't have anything to do, especially in the summer. Case in point: A youngster, 14 years old, really beat the bushes last summer to find work. He was repeatedly turned down. He

never found a job. Discouraged, he went the way of quick money and now this 14-year-old is so caught up in that lifestyle, that he couldn't get out of it if he wanted to. Something has to be done. Young people in Reno and everywhere else need viable alternatives. The media's portrayal of the neighborhood is atrocious. Last summer there were three African-American young men fighting in Pat Baker Park. The media coined it as a near riot. Now the contrast, a couple of weeks ago, about 150 white kids were causing a disturbance at a local restaurant. About ten police cars responded to the call but there was no media coverage. Why? Differences such as these must be addressed and dealt with by the community. They should demand minority affairs boards at each television station. The Reno Gazette-Journal currently has such a board in place. The Task Force is an excellent idea. If we don't come together as a community to deal with problems, the police, prison system and morticians will.

Police protection is necessary in our society but when that authority is abused it creates problems. Recently residents of northeast Reno, an area that is heavily populated with African-Americans and Hispanics, complained to Reno police officers that blacks are being arbitrarily stopped and then harassed.

Police Chief Robert Bradshaw, who initiated the community meeting, said police would investigate residents' complaints and acknowledged that police have made some mistakes in the way they have dealt with problems.

Incidents that happened prior to the meeting included a college student being stopped as a suspected gang member because of his personalized license plates, an

elderly minister being asked to take a sobriety test because of the way he moves around, another minister being "roughed up" because he was confused with a burglary suspect and then being refused a complaint form when he wanted to file charges against the officers. All of the officers in these situations have been reprimanded.

On one Saturday night, I was out with a few of my friends. We met at a local restaurant and when we arrived the police were breaking up a party, and as we were leaving an officer began to question a friend of mine and when my friend asked why he was being questioned, the officer told him to shut up. When this incident was reported the police were very apologetic.

All in all, what I observed from the police officers is that they will try to identify the officers that are doing this and deal with them. They seemed very cooperative and willing to work with the community. The officers don't want to cause strife in the area because they realize that in order to be effective, they need community support.

Police business cards are being printed and officers must give them to people they stop and question and race and community relations courses will begin next month.

A proposed policy to prohibit the use of "fighting words" in the University has stirred debate among students and faculty this week.

The University of Nevada, Reno policy calls for defining "fighting words" as a form of harassment which are

"personally abusive and inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction...and are recognized to be derogatory references to race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability and other personal characteristics."

The issue was debated by an African-American history professor, Michael Coray, and a Jewish professor, Richard Siegel, who is chairman of the political science department and chairman of the minority affairs committee.

Coray argued that "the policy should be instituted because the university setting has to provide an atmosphere that does not allow for verbal assault." He also said that this policy is no more of an abridgement of freedom of speech than safety rules in a public building.

Siegel, on the other hand, who is a former member of the National Board of Directors for the American Civil Liberties Union, said the policy is vague and that there is no universal agreement on what is considered racial or abusive. However, Siegel did agree with a restriction on intimidating speech.

The policy proposed by UNR is similar to ones adopted at the University of Michigan and the University of California system.

The university should adopt this policy, but also support it with educational resources and programs to change the stereotypes and misconception that might cause verbal assault. The policy alone won't change anything but it will let students know that blatant verbal assault won't be tolerated.

JACOB

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produced free markets for farmers, and taken other responsible steps.

Such reforms should be rewarded by international assistance to help develop their economies, but that assistance has not been forthcoming.

We urgently need to frame aid policies that encourage economic development and political democracy in Africa. Much of that urgency stems from the coming negotiations to transform South Africa from a minority racial dictatorship to a racially equal democracy.

We can influence those negotiations by the promise of aid and private investment to help a newly democratic South Africa. And we can make our influence credible by implementing an enlightened aid policy for Black Africa today.

LOCAL AUTHORS WRITING ABOUT BLACK LIFE FOR OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS. SEND YOUR COMMENTS AND EXPERIENCES TO BOX 129, 3342 SOUTH SANDHILL #9, LAS VEGAS, NV 89121.

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plex and there appears to be some similarities shaping up. For one, most of the drug-traffickers live outside of the area, and two, the heaviest drug traffic has been in low income projects.

Gray said there are several reasons for this trend. "Take this situation, for example," he said. "Here you are living in a low income area and someone comes to you and says 'would you like to make \$500 per week?' You are broke and that sounds good to you. The person then says, 'I want to use your house two days a week and if you let me, I'll give you \$500.' This is called 'resident cover.' The resident is paid to cover up for the dope dealer and because he or she has no income, that is very attractive. So they feed off of the low income areas.

"It's hard to catch them many times because they have to stay on the move. 'Resident cover' makes it easy for them to stay transient...You can hire 50 or 100 police over here, but if you don't get the residents involved, it's a losing battle. So we are advocating getting more involved with the tenants."

"Sometimes you may go into an apartment and a mother has two color TV consoles, two microwave ovens and lots of fine jewelry and you may wonder how can she pay for those things with little or no income, paying \$47 a month rent and getting food stamps. You think she's going to tell on her son or daughter? She won't because she's reaping benefits...It's a vicious cycle and it has to involve more than just security, management and the police department," said Gray.

"Gang turf is no longer dealing with 'colors' like it used to be. They are now fighting over places to sell drugs...Many of these individuals live with their parents in homes and the parents cover up for them...We may '86' them from the property for loitering or trespassing."

Gray said that they are in the process of sponsoring a baseball team because there is nothing for the young people to do. Other efforts include annual Christmas parties and a reading program.

With 20 solid years of experience in security, Gray believes that his record speaks for itself and he does

command a caring, concerned and professional security force that has developed a tremendous rapport with the North Las Vegas Police Department.

In following up on the security report, I interviewed Willie Marrimon, manager of Centennial Park Arms Apartments, who said that one of the main problems is third and fourth generation welfare families.

Marrimon has been the manager for three years and has a total of 18 years experience in low income housing complexes. He prides himself on being a "tenant oriented" manager.

"The major problem as I see it is third and fourth generation welfare families...When I was in California we tried to re-educate the property. In other words, we orientated the prospective tenant to the bad side of low income housing first, in an attempt to encourage them not to become locked in...Low income housing is not a mainstay. It is a means to get on one's feet and move on," he said.

"The problem with crime in the area is a result of the lack of sensitivity by city officials as to who lives here or who comes and goes...Eighty percent of the people who live here are relatives...The way that the Neighborhood Watch Program was presented to the tenants, of which I am one, was that if you see your brother or your sister doing something wrong, you are supposed to snitch on them. As far as the people in this community are concerned, they won't snitch on family members. The residents don't feel they have a problem. Maybe, if the program was presented differently, we might be interested," he said.

Marrimon said that they are considering re-habing an entire building or using several units as a recreation center for the children. At this point it is only on the drawing board.

In reference to the City of North Las Vegas, Marrimon said that after attending several planning department meetings he found out that a shopping center was being built on Carey and Civic Center and that there were no Blacks hired on the construction site. "Where are the Black laborers?" he asked.

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