

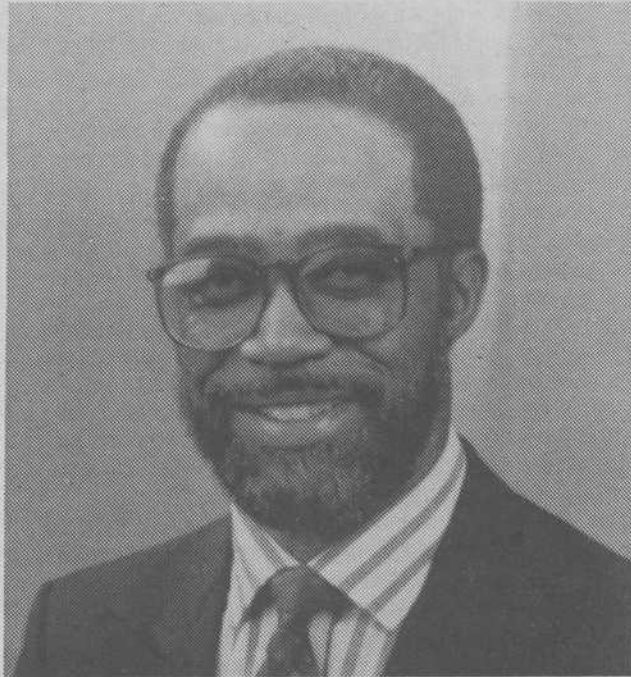
AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH NEVADA'S DRUG CZAR

By Linda Porter
Feature Writer

This is the final segment of an exclusive interview with Mujahid Ramadan, Nevada's Drug Czar.

SENTINEL-VOICE: I heard you say that there will be strategic planning for the drug program that will take place over a period of time. About what time span are we looking at?

RAMADAN: The first plan will be a year's plan. That will go to the governor on September 1 of this year. That will be the first plan, but this will be an evolutionary plan because each year we will update and upgrade that plan. I'm going to suggest that the second plan is not a one year plan, but possibly a 2½ to 3 year plan and the third plan will be a 5 year plan, because it's not feasible to plan for one year. Anybody who's in anything where they are trying to accomplish goals and objectives, they plan for 2, 3, 5 or 10 years. So we need a plan to say we're going to introduce programs that will require funding for 3 or 5 years so that the Prevention Programs won't have to keep coming back every year for more funds. They need to know that we could do this in 3 years instead of every year, but the plan will be a progressive plan. The first one will be a 1 year plan. And I'm going to recommend, and I bet the Governor may not go for it and the Commission may not go for it, but I'm going to recommend to the Commission and the Governor that we adopt a progressive plan. I would like to see the plan go into 3 or 5 years. That's what some of the major urban areas are doing, because you can't fight the War on Drugs year by year. Most of us don't even plan our budget based on that. I mean, people who are effective in growth, business people, they don't plan for one year. They plan for 50 years. So this problem is going to be around, if only for an hour or for 50 years. But that's what we're going to do.



Mujahid Ramadan

SENTINEL-VOICE: Do you think you're going to get some assistance from the Legislative branch of the state. Do you feel that they will start allowing and providing money to come in, because I know that they weren't acceptable to the idea of this position in the last legislature.

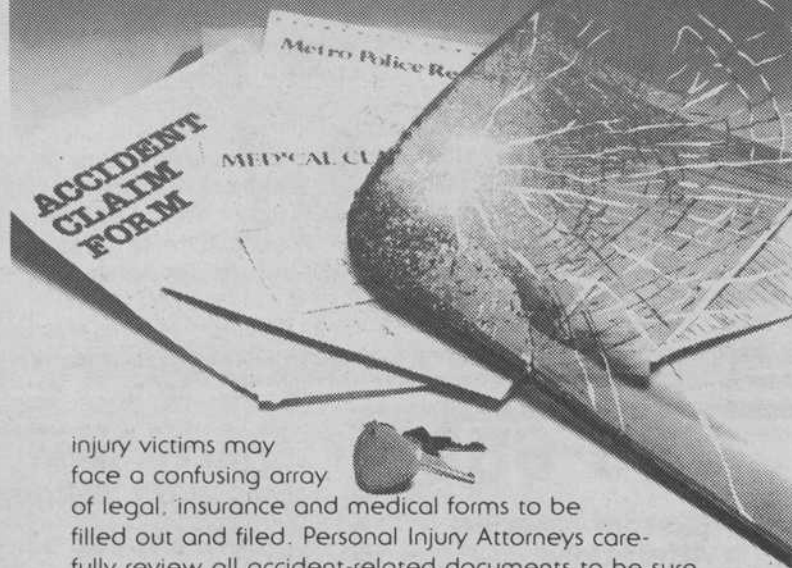
RAMADAN: Well, yeah. We're going to get some assistance from some and assistance from others. Because there's a lot of turf that we're going to have to cover, but we think that we can, when we present a plan that says 'Okay, John Doe, Public Citizen, cocaine use in the work place is costing Nevada, to hyperthetically throw out a figure, 30 million

dollars a year; every crack cocaine baby, and this is not a hyperthetical figure, every crack cocaine baby costs \$125,000 per year for his medical care; the fetal alcohol syndrome baby is now in the educational arena and it's causing increased burdens of tax dollars to educate those children; we don't know what type of behavior these crack cocaine addicted babies are going to take into the educational arena; we're already having problems in terms of funding health care in Nevada, so every child that comes into this world addicted to crack or has something from FSA (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) is causing an over burden on health care organizations and health care dollars.' I was just reading that we in Nevada, from 1983 to 1988, had a 149% increase in our prison population. The highest in the Western United States. We will spend 98.6 million dollars on prisons and prison populations in 1990. So you see, the taxpayers are just paying through the teeth. So when we introduce those figures to them, then hopefully the legislature will put so much money into the War on Drugs, because the most prisoners now, a large portion of the people breaking the law, and committing crime generally, we will find that the statistics state that the crimes are drug related and so that means that now and then, because the war on drugs, they're arresting more people. Being that we're arresting more people, that means we need more law enforcement. If we need more law enforcement, that means we need more lawyers to prosecute. If we have more lawyers to prosecute, we need more district courts and district court judges to administer that prosecution. If we need that, then we need to build more prisons to house those people whom we incarcerate, so we're putting money into a sandy hole and it's just disappointing. So we need to go in there and say, 'hey, look, how can we begin to address some of these problems at the front end, because, as the saying goes, 'you've got to pay me now or pay me later.' We have to improve our educational system. Every child that drops out of school costs the taxpayers dollars. They can't enter into a marketable job. If they're girls and they have a baby, they usually end up on Welfare. If they're boys and they can't get a job, they go out and sell drugs. Then they go to jail, we have to pay more tax dollars for their incarceration and we lose tax dollars because they're not working. So those are the things that people also probably want to criticize me for, because I say that if the problem is bigger than this, you just can't keep saying that we need more law enforcement. I want our neighborhoods and homes and streets to be safe, but that's a quick fix, that's a quick fix. I've heard of dope dealers who actually turn in other dope dealers. So what will happen? Until we can deal with the demand side, the supply side, drug selling is a demand driven problem. It's driven on demand. If there were no demand, there would be no need for a supply. For years we've been attacking the supply side. It's only now that we have begun to deal with the demand side, and I want to increase the effort on the demand side. I refuse to ask for, well, I won't ask for more tax dollars for law enforcement, but we're going to ask for much, much more for education, prevention and treatment.

SENTINEL-VOICE: I want to coin a phrase that a lot of times is used in boxing and other arenas - the Great White Hope. It's a phrase that's always used to solve a problem. Do you feel that since you can't be the Great White Hope, that that has created a problem in your position?

RAMADAN: I think not for Nevadans, not for the citizens of Nevada. I don't think the citizens of Nevada care who is the point man in the War Against Drugs in Nevada. But I cannot say that there aren't individuals out there who may feel as though, 'we don't want a person with his background.' I can't say that, so I don't take a position on that. But I think the citizens support what we're doing and I think they don't care. They care about their children. They care whether their children are going to be in an environmental climate that is safe for their children to stay off of drugs. They care about their children getting a quality education without having to fear of getting shot. I think that's what they care about. Now I can't say whether there are some personalities or minds or characters out there who may still live in the dark ages, who still may be prehistoric creatures and still have a degree of feelings that no matter what solutions you may bring that will help them, that it won't make any difference. They will cut off their noses to spite their faces.

When accidents shatter more than windshields . . .



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SCHOOL

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tending summer school classes.

Tuition is \$70 per student. Registration must be completed no later than May 25. Forms are available in each school office.

An information booth to provide information to the public about the elementary summer school program will be open at the Meadows Mall on May 5. Summer School Site Administrator Hal Fincher will be at the booth to answer questions and assist parents who wish to register children for summer school classes.

"To focus positive attention on summer school education, elementary summer school has been given the name 'Sunshine Academy,'" said Area Superintendent Herschel Williams. "We selected this title for summer school because we want parents and students to feel good about the enrichment they will derive from this extended year school experience," Williams said.

For more information about elementary summer school classes, contact your nearest public elementary school.