

# THE RAY WILLIS REPORT

# THE SOWETO ENCOUNTER



RAY E. WILLIS

seem to override common sense and reality. Are there any takers out there?

**By Ray Willis**  
The Soweto Encounter, a unique South African experiment in race relations, designed to offset stereotyped misconceptions about Blacks based on apartheid, is being credited with a growing turnaround in racial attitudes and the same formula shows promise if applied here in the U.S.

Just what is the Soweto Encounter and how does it work? It's a live-in cultural experience where white South Africans spend a weekend in the Black township of Soweto with a Black family.

The program is designed to counter White images of Black life in South Africa which are shaped by biased news accounts which typically dwell on crime and political violence to the total exclusion of any positive attributes. Sound familiar?

In South Africa, like in the U.S., most Blacks commute to work in white areas, but Whites rarely enter the townships except as part of an elite military/police corps whose sole mission is to "keep the peace." Likewise, this circumstance closely parallels Black communities in the U.S.

According to organizers of the Soweto Encounter, it is successfully accomplishing what it set out to do. That is to introduce Blacks and Whites on a social level. The down side of the Encounter is that liberal Whites tend to participate but those on the conservative side by-and-large do not. Just as in the U.S. where liberal-minded social activists who are already sensitive to racial issues would be more responsive.

Comments from those who have participated in the Soweto Encounter cover a wide range. Some were disappointed that they spent the weekend with a middle class Black family not much different from their own. Awww! Others said they got a "realistic" experience because they were paired with a poor Black family living in abject poverty. By-and-large, everyone who participated felt they benefitted in some way or another.

But whatever the case, the Soweto Encounter demonstrates that the racial isolation between Blacks and Whites that

is characteristic of Southern Africa, closely parallels the situation we find ourselves in right here in the U.S.

Typically, for instance, here in Las Vegas, Blacks who live in the predominantly Black community, commute outside their

community to work because that's where most of the jobs are. While at work, Black West Las Vegas typically interact and deal positively with Whites. But on weekends these same Blacks retreat into almost total social isolation within the Black com-

munity. Obviously, there's more than one way to view the Soweto Encounter and its potential applications in the U.S. and on the Westside. And who's to say social interaction between Blacks and Whites is the answer

to improved race relations anyway?

Just maybe though, something similar to the Soweto Encounter is worth a try here. It certainly could be a positive tool to dispel certain far-fetched racial stereotypes which often

## A SENTINEL-VOICE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

# "THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS"

**By Muhammad Abdullah**

In our daily lives there are issues concerning family, the economy, religion, culture, business and our civil and human rights that are being discussed daily in the United States Congress and Senate chambers, the State Houses of each of the 52 states as well as on a local level in our city and country commission chambers. The Sentinel-Voice will attempt to keep our readers abreast of pressing issues in our local, state, city and country government in order that our voice will be heard.

Beginning two weeks ago the State Legislators began conducting public hearings at the Cashman Field Complex in an unprecedented move to bring Carson City closer to home. According to Steve Watson, Manager, Administrative Division of the State Legislature. It is hoped that these sessions will be well attended and will serve to educate more of our citizens of how laws are made, enacted, debated, amended and finally made into laws...

Irregardless of whether you vote or not, these laws will affect every aspect of your life. It is important to note what committees and or subcommittees make up the Senate and the State Assembly. The committees of the Senate are as follows:

- 1) Commerce and Labor
- 2) Finance

- 3) Government Affairs
- 4) Human Resources and Facilities
- 5) Judiciary
- 6) Legislative Affairs and Operations
- 7) Natural Resources
- 8) Taxation
- 9) Transportation

Committees of the State Assembly are:

- 1) Commerce
- 2) Education
- 3) Government Affairs
- 4) Health & Welfare
- 5) Judiciary
- 6) Labor and Management
- 7) Legislative Affairs and Operations
- 8) Natural Resources, Agriculture and Mining
- 9) Taxation
- 10) Transportation
- 11) Ways and Means

Each of the above legislative committees draft, introduces review and amend legislative bills to be presented to the governor for final passage or veto. The proposed legislation of both houses (Senate and Assembly) receives at least (3) three readings before the final draft is sent for passage. All Assembly legislation must be sent upon approval by the Assembly through the Senate before the proposed bills can be made into law.

Ignorance of the legislative process can have a negative affect on all parties concerned

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