

# LVABJ

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with the same intent in mind and that was, "to assure that African-American media persons in particular, received just and equal employment opportunity and more importantly that they utilize their media talents to create more positive images of the "state-of-the African-American experience" which by-and-large has been viewed in the newspapers, on radio, television and other media as negative, drug-ridden, violent, and self-destructive.

LVABJ has held several forums to educate the public. It is comprised of media personalities dedicated to creating a more aware public and devoted to making sure that the negative press and broadcast images of the past are buried and that the positive, active, and the attractive side of the African-American experience in Las Vegas and Clark County are always brought to the forefront. So far the public support for LVABJ has been very good and has been increasing with every planned forum.

The moderator for the forum was Juana Hart, newsreporter, KLAS-TV, who did a superb job in introducing the panelist and presenting questions for discussion as well as keeping the audience interaction moving in pace with the time available.

Other members present and being dutiful were Wendy Nichols, LVABJ Secretary, Bob Rodgers, Vice President, Ramon Savoy of the Las Vegas SENTINEL-VOICE, Muhammad Abdullah, Treasurer, SENTINEL-VOICE reporter, Carla Alston, KLAS-TV reporter, and Posey Davis, member.

The panelists included, Tom Rodriguez, Clark County School District Affirmative Action Officer, who began by giving some statistics on the hiring practices at the school district. Rodriguez said that he was proud of the record of the district in reference to the hiring of minorities. He did mention however that the district has a challenge when it comes to recruiting African-Americans and other minorities for teaching positions because of the recent drop in enrollment of Africans and other minorities in the nations colleges. He said that minorities are going into other fields such as engineering and "higher paying" fields. But overall he was pleased with the School Districts Affirmative Action program.

School Board member Yvonne Atkinson Gates was on

hand to ask questions as well as respond to questions concerning "minority hiring" practices.

During the question and answer segment Rodriguez was asked about the present suit against the school district. He said that the desegregation aspect of the suit was primary and the assignment of upper level administrators to other posts was a secondary issue.

Next to be introduced was George Cotton, Affirmative Action Officer of Clark County. Cotton said that the county was getting better in reaching the affirmative action goals that have been set, but he admonished the audience to understand that there must be follow-ups when discrimination or grievances exists. Cotton responded when asked about how aggressive he could be as an (Equal Employment Opportunity) EEO official, by saying that he could hire and fire. He also said that he receives excellent support when it came down to the final selection process. Finally, Cotton said that he would go to bat for any minority who was willing to come forward, and if they did not, it would weaken his case.

Diane Santiago-Cornier, Affirmative Action Office, City of Las Vegas was the next panelist to speak. Cornier said that there has been recent changes in the hiring practices at the City of Las Vegas. She said that she would not reveal some of the recruitment methods due to the competitive nature of the city and county. She did however state that the city is falling short - when it comes to African-Americans in top-level management positions. Cornier said that unlike the county, (which has higher salaries to attract applicants and the power to hire and fire.) she was not given that authority. Cornier said that she can make suggestions during the initial interviews and the final-selection process.



Newly elected Nevada State EEO Officer Fernando Romero fields questions from the audience. (Photo by Savoy/LV Sentinel-Voice)

Finally, Cornier stated that the city was currently re-vamping and restructuring its hiring activities to bring about more cultural diversity at the city level.

Lastly the State of Nevada EEO officials Fernando Romero, Nevada EEO officer, Las Vegas and Perla Davis, Nevada EEO officer, Carson City, spoke about affirmative action at the state level.

Davis said that the governor has signed an Executive Order that has mandated that affirmative action takes place in the hiring of minorities at the state level. She said that it has been an uphill battle but that governor Bob Miller has been extremely supportive in insuring that the EEO goals of the state are being met. Davis admitted that the state has been lagging she attributed this lag to insufficient funds, not enough staff, and so on. However, Davis said by this time next year she hoped to have a better report.

Rounding out the panelists was Davis' Las Vegas counterpart, Fernando Romero, who created quite a stir in the audi-

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Responses to questions asked were not in full agreement with the audience concerning equality and job promotions. (Photo by Savoy/LV Sentinel-Voice)

ence when he told them not to accept just the statistics presented. Romero said that the Residents should doubt the word of the EEO officials because they are paid to make things look better than they are.

Romero concluded by saying that he was new at his job and that the state had a long way to go. He said he was committed to making sure that there were changes at the state level, and that he supports Governor Miller's goals 100% and would carry them out.

The forum ended with refreshments and contacts were made and questioned were answered that will hopefully lead to more exchanges in the future, especially for those who are seeking employment at the

school district, city, county and state levels.

LVABJ is committed to bring more educational forums to our community. Please support their efforts by your presence.

For more information about how you can participate, volunteer, or join write the Las Vegas Association of Black Journalists, P.O. Box 4878, Las Vegas, Nevada 89127-0878.

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