

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

WILL CHOICE SIDETRACK SCHOOL REFORM?

By John E. Jacob

After a decade of school reforms, there's been very little change in educational quality. I've often felt that the frustrations of trying to change the schools might drive people to seek a simple solution, even if it was the wrong one.

That appears to have happened, as "school choice" has become the standard buzzword in all discussions of school reforms.

It was even a presidential election campaign issue. President Bush championed a voucher system that would give token payments to parents who move their children to private

schools and Governor Clinton supported choice within the public school system.

The choice concept may be a viable reform that can make a difference, if adopted together with such other reforms as parental involvement, school-based management, better teacher training, equalized school resources, and others.

There's never been any mystery about what our schools need to become better. But when the discussion revolves around the choice issue, as if it were a magic cure for all of the system's ills, then choice itself can be an obstacle to sound reform.

But what about choice —

does it work and should it be the centerpiece of school reforms?

Not according to a comprehensive study of current school choice systems released last month by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The study indicates that school choice programs have not resulted in improved educational results, and finds little relationship between school choice and school improvement.

Where there were educational gains in choice districts, the study suggests other factors were involved. Choice was accompanied by new programs, extra funds, empowered teach-

ers, and programs to inform and involve parents.

Take away choice, but leave those elements — more resources, empowerment, parental involvement—and you would still get good results.

The Carnegie study suggests that some of the arguments of choice are off-base. Advocates claim, for example, that parents would investigate and transfer their children to schools that are good academically.

But the report found few parents bothered to choose new schools and those that did base their choices on non-academic factors, like convenience.

Another troubling aspect of

the choice boom is the vagueness about what will happen to the children in failing schools. Surely, school reform should bring all schools up to a very high standard, not close them up.

Choice really goes off the rails, however, when it takes the form of voucher systems designed to pull students out of public schools and into private schools.

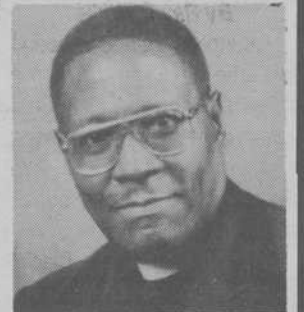
That would divert scarce resources from public education and destroy one of our basic institutions. And, if the Carnegie study is any indication, it would fail to improve educational quality.

The vast majority of poor children and minority children will continue to attend public schools, and a system that drains resources, students, and public

THE NAACP AND YOU!



Rev. Jesse D. Scott
President
Las Vegas, NAACP



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE NAACP

JANUARY - The Las Vegas Branch of NAACP, held Jubilee Day at St. Paul Church of God in Christ. In observance of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln, freeing the slaves.

FEBRUARY - Held our organization Luncheon commemorating Sixty-Three years of organized branch history. Also organized a chapter of WIN, Woman In the NAACP, at Neham Lincoln, freeing the slaves.
(See NAACP, Page 4)

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Brown Publishing Co. Inc.
1201 South Eastern Avenue • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 383-4030

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Members:
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This newspaper is audited by:
Community Papers Verification Service,
6225 University Ave., Madison, WI 53705
(608) 238-7550

Subscriptions payable in advance
Six months \$15.00
Twelve months \$25.00
The rates apply to
Continental United States only



We Are Accountable To Who?

The Las Vegas Clark County Library Board and its director Charles Hunsberger have really gone wild now. This latest ploy to show the public how stupid that they think it is, is almost unbelievable. I said almost! How much more will it take to convince this "Library Club" that the jig is up and the free ride is over? Well, we will just have to find out. Again, by any means necessary, we will.

The key issue is not about an unhappy employee or a few little misunderstandings as the director and board would have you to believe. The key issue is that the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District is using taxpayer dollars and spending it as they will. Its the old "taxation without representation" at its worst.

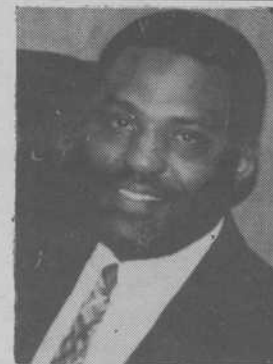
And especially in these times of scarce dollars should taxpayers be assured the highest degree of accountability of how their dollars are spent. With this, the district is

surely not accountable to the U.S. or Nevada Constitutions. With this, the district is surly not accountable to the people that pay their salaries, we the taxpayers. Millions and millions of taxdollars should not be left in the hands of uninformed board members who are appointed and answer to no one but a dictator who poses as an executive director. Clearly, this free-wheeling unchecked spending must stop until the government gives the taxpayer some factors of checks and balances.

In this latest ploy, the library board, without an official meeting, has hired the public relations services of Dan Hart. Keep in mind that they have hired this firm without a written contract and without determining how much it will cost. Of course they do not care how much it will cost because they don't have to pay for it; we will. If its one thing the district is good at, it spending taxdollars without a conscience. However, what's more terrible is that they hired this firm with a signed blank check and we'll

receive the bill. Thanks alot Charles! You're so kind Diana! (Charles & Diana, sounds familiar, maybe thats part of the problem). The peasants really appreciate how you take care of us.

The important thing to remember is that the Library district hired this PR Firm to do what it calls "creating an image of accountability" to the patrons of the West Las Vegas Library. In case you missed the latest insult to your intellect, last Sunday the good ole boys and girls down on the library plantation spent more of our tax dollars (again without anybodies approval) on a half-page ad in The Las Vegas Review-Journal written as an open letter from Prince Charles and Princess Diana telling the West Las Vegas peasants how accountable they are to you. Wait a minute here, why should they have to buy an ad in the newspaper to tell someone that you are accountable to them. Hell! Just do it, and they'll know it. It is sort of like working with children, until they know you care



Assemblyman
Wendell P. Williams

about them, there's very little else that you can convince them of. Surely you won't convince them by putting it in the hands of a high priced PR Firm. The point that folks at the library district are missing is that, if you just do the right thing for everybody, you will not have to pay someone to tell them they will clearly know. Its one thing to say that you're accountable, but its another thing to show proof that you're not.

I sincerely submit to the library district that the community has proof. So Mr. Hunsberger, just keep spending our money to tell us that you're accountable, very soon we will show you and this entire valley, proof that you're not.

Stand up like a man and admit that there is a problem or continue to live in a sea of denial, and watch how reality can WAAK-YOU-UP!

Its your call.