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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

IN OBSERVANCE OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

McWilliams Townsite 1905 - Present

A HISTORY OF WEST LAS VEGAS AND ITS RESIDENTS

In honor of Black History Month, this is PART 1 of a 4 part series highlighting the history of West Las Vegas, and the men and women who worked hard over the years to improve the quality of life of its residents.

The history of Blacks in Las Vegas is as old as Las Vegas itself. From 1905 to the present Blacks have lived, worked and played here. Prior to the 30's when segregation arrived, Blacks enjoyed equal privileges in what was truly a frontier town.

No longer restricted by menial jobs, Las Vegas' Black population has moved up the ladder. Today, Blacks hold positions as doctors, lawyers, teachers, administrators, state assemblymen, state senators, judge, policemen and firemen, as well as gaming executives.

From 1930 through 1960 Las Vegas was one of the most segregated towns in America. Today Blacks are welcome to sleep, eat and attend entertainment anywhere in town and lose every cent they have at the casinos on an equal basis. Las Vegas has made a lot of changes and has come a long way toward social and economic equality, however, as we all know, racism is still very much alive and well in the Entertainment Capital of the World.

1904 - 1920

At the turn of the century the railroad

companies were eagerly vying for property in the Las Vegas Valley. The Oregon Short Line and the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad were planning to put the first tracks through Southern Nevada. Both companies chose sites in the valley as natural division points between Los Angeles and Salt Lake because of the availability of the water from artesian wells and timber from Mount Charleston.

In 1902 Helen J. Stewart of the Stewart Ranch hired J.T. McWilliams to survey approximately 2,000 fenced acres for sale to the S.P., L.A., and S.L. Railroad.

McWilliams, a tall red-haired Utah pioneer, quickly saw his opportunity and acquired an 80-acre government

track adjoining the Stewart Ranch. He laid out his townsite and began selling lots in "Las Vegas" in 1904. This area,

now bounded by Bonanza, Washington, "A", and "H" soon became a bus-

(See McWilliams Townsite, Page 5)



DO YOU KNOW YOUR BLACK HISTORY?



IF YOU DO, YOU MAY WIN A FREE DINNER FOR TWO!
SEE DETAILS, PAGE 18

JURY SELECTION PROCESS BEGINS IN RODNEY KING CIVIL RIGHTS CASE

Close to 400 potential jurors for the trial of the four white police officers charged with violating motorist Rodney King's civil rights, appeared for jury selection Wednesday, though the final 12 won't be seated for nearly two weeks.

The potential jurors filled out a 55-page questionnaire, but those who make the first cut won't be questioned in court until February 16.

On Tuesday, federal District Court Judge John Davies refused to delay the trial, after defense lawyers said it would be impossible to find a fair jury. It was last April when a nearly all-white jury in Simi Valley, California issued not-guilty verdicts on state charges against the 4 defendants: Theodore Briseno, Stacey Koon, Laurence Powell, and Timothy Wind, leading to the civil unrest in Los Angeles and other cities around the country, including Las Vegas.

With that in mind, no one is ignoring the potential for violence this time, especially coupled with the fear an-

other controversial trial next month — of three Black men accused of beating White truck driver Reginald Denney during the first hour of rioting — could mean trouble should the men be convicted.

"This country is on trial," stated National Urban League President John Jacob, referring to the fact that many minorities across the nation see this trial as the ultimate test for the U.S. Judicial system.

Rodney King didn't testify in the first trial, but is expected to in this case, as Judge Davies has ruled prosecutors won't have to prove the officers were racially motivated when they beat him. They need only prove that they violated King's rights willfully.

Reports have said that police departments in both Los Angeles and Las Vegas have stepped up their riot control training, and have even gone as far as purchasing new riot control equipment.

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