

BLACK HISTORY

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to Las Vegas was simple: money. But the stories of the indignities they suffered are legend. One story, as told by Billy Eckstine years ago, recalled how Hazel Scott had jumped into the shallow end of the hotel pool one day, and by the time she got to the deep end, the water was down to her knees, showing how fast the pool was drained because a Black person had dared to enter. A similar story reportedly happened to Lena Horne's daughter, Gail, and Sammy Davis Jr. even had to have one of his white employees gamble his money at the tables because no Blacks were

allowed to participate in casino activities.

Aside from the few Black performers and their crews, you wouldn't see a Black person for days on the Strip. But over the years, these performers brought much progress to Las Vegas, insisting that Black friends and fans who came to see them be offered better treatment, and refusing to sign contracts unless they were assured that all hotel accommodations be opened to them and their crews.

In the mid 50's the Sands Hotel became the first to allow Black performers to stay on the premises, and while performing to record breaking audiences at

the New Frontier's Venus Room, Sammy Davis Jr. broke tradition by inviting his grandmother, stepmother and sister to sit in the front row, becoming the first to tear down the barriers of a Las Vegas showroom.

Shortly after, the \$6.9 million Moulin Rouge Hotel/Casino opened in West Las Vegas. Being the first interracial resort in the city, the Rouge proved to be just as plush and elegant as any resort on the Strip. Joe Louis could be found greeting guests at the doors of the establishment that offered all the entertainment, gaming and comfort that could be found anywhere, and featured a mixed

chorus line and the music of Lionel Hampton.

The Moulin Rouge quickly became the meeting place for Black and white entertainers alike, who had performed earlier in the evening on the Strip. The list included: Harry Belafonte, Louis Armstrong, Lena Horne, Frank Sinatra, The Treniers, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Tullulah Bankhead, Donald O'Conner, the Mills Brothers, Gregory Peck, Dorothy Lamour, Bob Hope, Milton Berle, and many others. Unfortunately, business difficulties and poor management forced the Rouge to close only six months after opening.

The late 50's and into the 60's were turbulent times for Blacks everywhere, and very few visited Las Vegas then.

However, by the early 70's, things began to change. A lot of the progress made back then was due to the earnest work of a few local residents who fought hard for racial equality, and took their lumps in the process; Rev. Marion Bennett, Doctors James McMillan and Charles West, Marjorie Elliott, Sarann Knight, Gwen Weeks Ranier, Jim Anderson, Sarah Hughes, Assemblyman Woodrow Wilson, and

former entertainer William (Bob) Bailey.

It was Bailey who, as a member and then chairman of the Nevada Equal Rights Commission, fathered the civil rights law (Attorneys Charles Keller and Earl Wright wrote most of the statute) that was later passed by the state legislature, requiring a fairer share for Blacks of the city's then half-billion dollar annual income. Pressure for the new law was also brought by the city's NAACP chapter and the League of Women Voters.

But when hotels were slow to comply with the new law, it was Bailey who, as head of the Equal Rights Commission, gave Strip bosses 30 days to make changes or else he would call in the Justice Department.

In 1972, a staggering 90,000 Blacks visited the city, and according to Ebony Magazine (April 1972), Las Vegas had become the "Black Entertainment Capital of the World."

In a single, month-long, pre-holiday stretch in 1971, 16 Black stars and an assortment of musicians graced the stages of seven major hotels, earning an estimated total of \$300,000 weekly. The marquee at the Sands boasted the named of

Sammy Davis, Jr. and Billy Eckstine; down the Strip at Caesar's Palace, Harry Belafonte and Nancy Wilson headlined the action; across the street, Ella Fitzgerald and Hines, Hines and Dad played the Flamingo, while the Mills Brothers and Sonny Charles (formerly of the Checkmates) packed the lounge. Billy Daniels was still at the Desert Inn, Redd Foxx was cracking up audiences at the International Hotel, Slappy White played the Sahara, and singer Jim Randolph opened the show at the Riviera's supper club.

The cast added up to the greatest ensemble of working Black stars in one locale at the same time in memory, and was, furthermore, indicative of a new significance in a city that, until the latter part of the 60's was one of the most segregated towns in America.

Since that time, the native's top Black artists have continued to prosper on the prosperous Las Vegas Strip. But, probably never again will an array of artists like those that gathered here at the end of 1971, come together in this desert oasis, again earning the city the title of the "Black Entertainment Capital of the World."

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CENTEL

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CCSD-UNLV PROGRAMS

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education in the United States. The selection was announced last week at the association's 73rd annual convention in Los Angeles.

"It is a national validation of everything we are trying to do with the university to ensure that our students are exposed to a culturally diverse, well-prepared group of educators," said George Ann Rice, CCSD assistant superintendent of personnel services. "We are absolutely thrilled."

The collaborative effort between the school district and UNLV's College of Education features several programs that promote the goal of celebrating and expanding cultural diversity of local teachers.

One such program is "Our Future," which helps minority support staff employees of the school district with some college experience and an interest in teaching to obtain their education degree

from UNLV. Twenty-seven support staff employees, who include teacher's aides, clerical staff and custodians, began taking classes - while continuing their jobs - in April 1992. Tuition and books are paid for by outside grants and donations.

Other programs include fifth grade visits, in which two minority students from each elementary school attended a full-day of activities at UNLV geared toward the teaching profession; the 1992 Summer World Cultures Camp, in which more than 200 elementary students attended 10-week classes on world studies taught by U.S. and international teacher education students at UNLV; and cultural diversity task forces, groups involving the school district, UNLV College of Education, UNLV and the community that meet monthly and have adopted plans for a minority student mentoring program and a program through which businesses "adopt" minority teachers.

LETTERS

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I say here and abroad because we all are faced with white world supremacy (who are less than 11% of the world's population), white aggression and potential destruction. We must exculpate our minds with all false, negative, ambiguous information, fill our minds with factual, positive knowledge and then this will enable us to begin fighting the war.

Kevin D. Thomas
Las Vegas, NV.

NAACP ELECTION

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challenge votes: 5. Challenge votes were not counted in election tabulation; amongst others.

On February 5, Rev. Scott mailed a letter to the national office, denying all allegations made against him.

As a result of the formal complaint, the national office sent Mr. William Penn Sr., national director of branch operations, to hear the complaints at a special meeting held at Second Baptist Church on Sunday February 14. After Penn heard all of the charges, he went back to Baltimore to place the issue before the NAACP National Board of Directors, who in turn, ordered the new election.

It is believed that a natural party (someone from the regional office or the national headquarters in Baltimore) will be sent to oversee the new election.