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Sentinel



Voice

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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

# Drill team coach faces sex charges

By Nancy Watson  
Sentinel-Voice

Larry Thomas was led into District Court in chains this week where he listened as a 17-year-old girl told the court about the sexual encounters four years ago between her and the 30-year-old man.

Thomas - the former director of the Queenettes, a drill team for girls that he founded and coached - is facing 13 sex-related charges including statutory sexual seduction, sexual assault and sexual assault with a minor under the age of 14.

The girl, who had been a member of the Queenettes for eight to nine months, said Thomas often told her she was the prettiest girl on the drill team.

At the end of a practice session in October

1993, after other girls had been taken home, the two were alone in a drive way in his truck.

"He put his hat and pager on the dashboard and looked at me and then started kissing me," said the girl who was 13 at the time.

The girl testified that Thomas' fondling of her genitals caused her to bleed. The incident then stopped.

She testified that in February 1994, Thomas again tried to have sex with her, but due to her age and inexperience, he was unsuccessful in his attempt.

However a month later, Thomas persisted and "forced" himself into her. There were five other sexual encounters between the girl and Thomas, she said, only occasionally would he wear a condom.

She said she told her mother about the incidents in May 1994. A medical examination revealed the girl had been infected with chlamydia, a sexually transmitted disease.

She said Thomas never threatened her if she told what was happening between them.

Under cross examination, the teen-ager said she didn't remember a statement she had made to police at the time saying Thomas did threaten her if she revealed the encounters.

Charles Cano, defense attorney, told jurors during opening statements last Thursday that none of the witnesses against Thomas were credible. He said all the girls had crushes on Thomas and made up their stories to retaliate for hurt feelings.

A 15-year-old testified last Friday that she was 12-years-old the first time Thomas drove her to a

vacant parking lot and attempted to have sex with her.

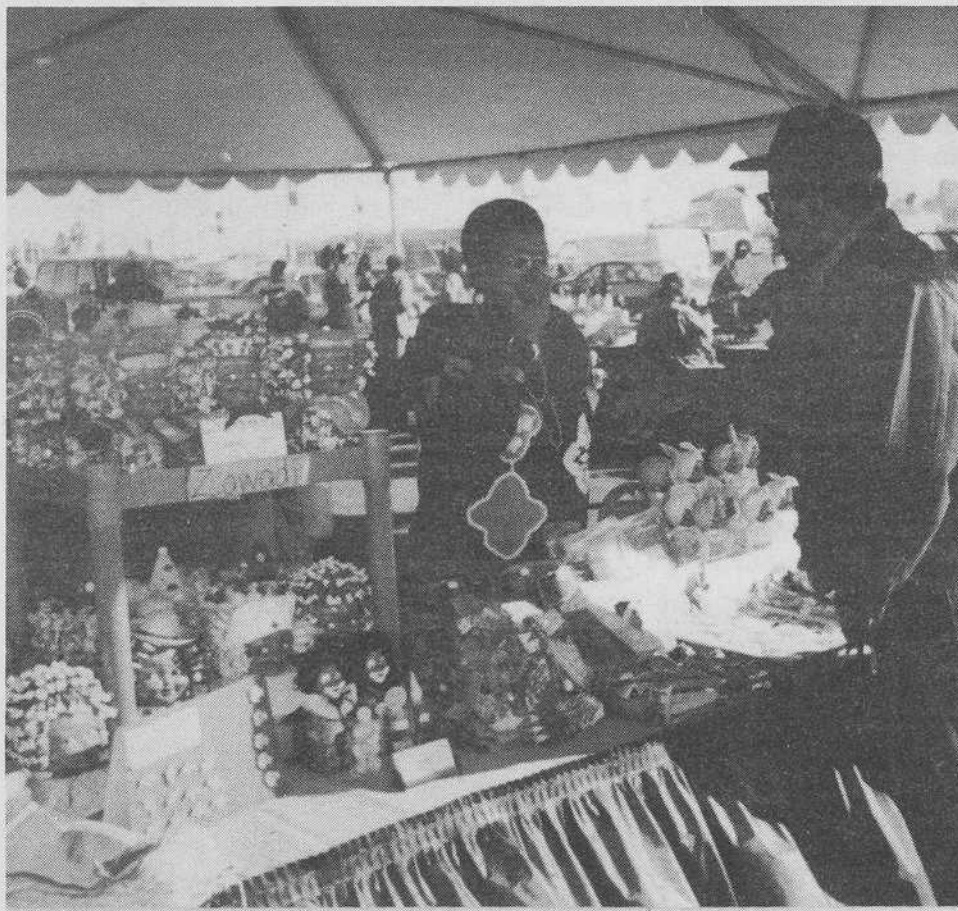
"I told him it didn't feel right. It scared me. I didn't understand. Why me?" she said. She also told the court that she did not try to stop Thomas and he did not force her to do anything.

She said she later fell in love with Thomas, but that as she got older she regretted the relationship because "of the way people look at me and the reputation I got because of it."

Much of her testimony came from a diary she kept during the relationship.

On Thursday, a 14-year-old girl testified that Thomas tried to have sex with her and she resisted by closing her legs.

In Nevada, children under 16 are presumed  
(See Coach, Page 5)



## Celebrating black heritage

A variety of local vendors took part in the Black Tavern Owners Trade Expo held recently at Nucleus Plaza. Several events are planned to kick off Black History Month this weekend. See inside stories. Photo by Savoy/LVS-Voice

## Group wants justice, AG's and Gov.'s help

By Nancy Watson  
Sentinel-Voice

Angered by a lack of response from Las Vegas politicians and police regarding the shooting death of a 21 year old Hispanic man, a citizens group has spent the past week seeking answers from state officials.

In a press conference held Wednesday, the Coalition of Concerned Citizens expressed frustration concerning a response from Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa regarding their request.

On Tuesday, the group sent a letter to Del Papa requesting that her office intervene and investigate Metropolitan Police Department officer Christopher Brady for violations of the drive by shooting law.

Brady was driving the vehicle Dec. 28 when his passenger and friend, Metro officer Ronald Mortenson, fired a gun into a crowd and killed Daniel Mendoza.

Brady admitted to a grand jury on Jan. 16 that the two were celebrating Mortenson's birthday by drinking, driving recklessly and harassing "dopers and bangers." (See related story on page 12).

Despite the drive-by shooting law which was passed in 1991 and requires that vehicles involved

in drive by shootings be confiscated and all occupants arrested, Brady is not facing any charges.

In her response to the request, Del Papa stated it would be "inappropriate and premature" for her office to intercede because neither Metro nor the district attorney's office have completed their investigations.

"It's just a smoke screen," said Minister Duke Muhammad at a press conference on Wednesday. "Brady's attorney and Bell (district attorney) have both stated that Brady will not be charged," he said.

Muhammad also questioned the depth of the two investigations because victims of police brutality have told stories of illegal activities and entrapment used against gang members.

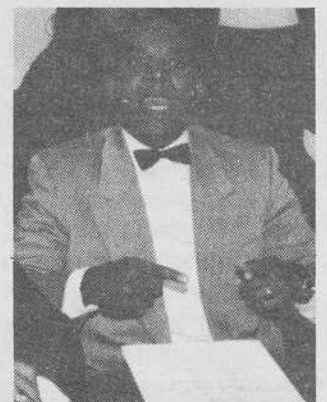
"It's time to hold public hearings to gather information from the community regarding the police," he said.

He presented a list of the Coalition's demands which calls for the arrest of Brady and demands that Gov. Bob Miller use his official influence to press for a special prosecutor to investigate and prosecute this case.

A letter informing the governor of the group's demand was received by the governor's office Wednesday afternoon.

Richard Urey, the governor's press secretary, said the governor required more time to comment on "such a weighty issue." He added that the governor is closely following the case.

Also included on the group's list of demands is one that will be addressed soon by the legislature, the creation of a civilian control board that has  
(See Protest, Page 5)



DUKE MUHAMMAD

## Health center faces personnel crisis

By Nancy Watson  
Sentinel-Voice

The fate of Community Health Centers of Southern Nevada is apparently better than indicated in a report published Tuesday in the Las Vegas Sun.

At least that is the hope of Joe Solario, chairman of the centers' board of directors and Larry Gamell, director of community relations for the clinic.

Problems surfaced at the clinic in January when 12 physicians and registered nurses signed a letter demanding the removal of Executive Director Ed Martinez.

Gamell said he knew there were problems, but the letter is the first he'd heard of the concerns of the doctors and nurses.

Several complaints about Martinez were addressed in the letter including his "autocratic style of management." Also mentioned was "the rupture in communication, understanding and confidence."

The group complained that Marcus Barber, medical director, has become little more than a "figurehead," and that hiring decisions are made without his knowledge or participation.

Gamell said the problems are the result of

growing pains and are not uncommon for an organization that is growing as fast as the clinic is.

The clinic sees 180 patients each day.

He maintains that everyone is working to resolve the problems. A consultant, Joe Hayden, will work with the group this weekend to address the problems. Twice in the past he has successfully worked with the clinic on other situations.

At the suggestion of Martinez and Barber, the two will meet face to face to discuss their problems.

"I have confidence in Ed and Marcus," said Solario. They're both good capable people and I'm sure they will come to a consensus.