

LAS VEGAS

# Sentinel Voice



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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

## Camp's diversity attracts youth

By Damon Hodge  
Sentinel-Voice

From shy teen to renown blues singer Ma' Rainey, Andrea Daniels has traveled far in her short stage career.

"I took acting because I wanted to get comfortable with my voice and to become outgoing," said the 15-year-old Clark High School sophomore.

Daniels' ode to Rainey Thursday night highlights the final week of the West Las Vegas Performing and Visual Arts Summer Camp. The 6:30 p.m. performance will showcase the skills acquired by the camp's 70 youth, ages 10-15. The free performance will be held in West Las Vegas Theater, 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd.

Daniels will do a monologue on Rainey. Daniels said her experience in the Community Youth Theater - attached to the arts center and not the camp - boosted her confidence.

West Las Vegas Arts Center Coordinator Marcia Robinson said the 8-week camp - started last year by Robinson and Ricky Watts - provides

"The camp opens new avenues for the kids."

— Henry Shed, musical instructor

the students with hands-on experience in their fields of interest. Though the students chose their disciplines, she said they study in all the camp's offerings: visual arts, dance, music, choir, film/video, theater arts and the steel drum orchestra.

Each discipline will perform: the choir will sing the "Lord's Prayer;" the band will play "A whole new world" from the movie Aladdin; and the film/video students will watch a film - that they acted in - about the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of black World War II pilots, and their attempt to save then-President Harry Truman from a dreaded villain.

The camp is supported by Community Development Block Grant funds. It operates like a school, with breakfast and lunch pocketed in between daily classes from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Students begin and end the day in the unity circle which outlines the day's duties and encourages unfamiliar students to work together.

(See Camp, Page 2)

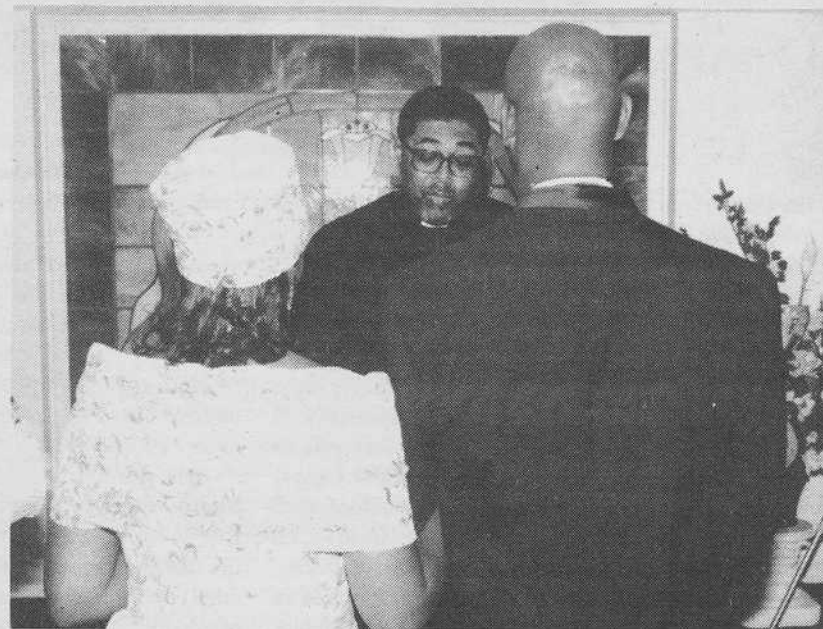


Photo special to Sentinel-Voice

The Rev. Emmanuel Wasson presides over a recent wedding at Jamillah Ali's five-month-old Heritage Wedding Chapel inside the Plaza Hotel.

## Black chapel owners are few and far between

By Damon Hodge  
Sentinel-Voice

Wedding chapels line the Las Vegas Strip beckoning lovers to take the plunge into marital bliss.

But few black wedding proprietors exist in what is one of the city's most lucrative industries.

Jennifer Garland says racism has a lot to do with it.

Until Jamillah Ali opened Heritage Wedding Chapel in February, Garland's Mission of the Bells Wedding Chapel was the city's lone black-owned wedding chapel.

Last year, Clark County marriage license officials issued more than

104,000 marriage licenses, none of which they categorize racially or ethnically. Since wedding chapels are in a private sector industry, officials said they cannot

estimate the industry's economic impact on the city.

Tennessee-born, but reared in Las Vegas, Garland's foray into the wedding industry began in 1984 when she used her 401K retirement to open Rancho Florist & Gifts.

After the 1992 civil unrest sparked by the acquittal of the police officers in the Rodney King trial, business soured. In 1993, she moved the flower shop to its current spot at the Thunderbird Hotel

and Casino, 1205 S. Las Vegas Blvd. That same year, she started Rancho Limousine Service, which catered to minority patrons.

She financed Rancho Bridal and Formal Wear in 1995, despite having her loan requests rebuffed. The wedding chapel came a year later, completing her one-stop wedding service facility, and beginning a tenuous existence.

In the past year, she has had tires flattened, signs leveled and trees stolen. She said couples routinely tell her how other chapels bad mouth her: "Oh, she (Garland) is black, she doesn't know what she is doing," she said.

She said couples change their mind

once inside the chapel - which she says is presently the state's largest with its 125-seat capacity.

"Business is good," she said. But she plans to continue fighting the racism she

says hinders it from being better and leaves other potential black wedding proprietors out in the cold. "It's a long uphill struggle, but I will not give up."

To date, Ali's ride has been less tortuous. She said she has yet to encounter racism. Her biggest obstacle: finding customers, not funding.

After two-years of fine-tuning the idea, the Louisiana-born Ali opened the Heritage Wedding Chapel, inside the Plaza Hotel. (See Chapel, Page 13)



## NAACP teaches entrepreneurship

By Crisandra Varnado  
Sentinel-Voice

Bishop Gorman senior Christian Smith wants to own a medical office. The NAACP Resource Center hopes to give her that chance.

"We want to change minds so the youth will be prepared for the future," program director Dora LaGrande said. "We also want to teach the youth to be creators of their own destiny so they can ultimately employ their own people."

The free entrepreneur institute aims to equip youth with the skills to run their own businesses.

Started in the summer of 1994 by the national headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the institute has graduated between 35 and 40 youth. The 6-week summer program averages 10 students, ages 12-21. The students in this summer's program graduate Friday.

LaGrande solicits sponsors to fund the program and to give the students a small stipend at the program's end.

Smith learned the in's and out's of different medical procedures.

There to help her was Dr.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Antar Sha Dee (left), Dwight Jones and Maurice Jones are abuzz Tuesday at the NAACP Resource Center.

William Dugan, her mentor.

"I wanted to show Christian what it takes to be a physician," said Dugan, a medical physician and 23-year veteran of the medical profession. There is both a medical aspect and business aspect to being a doctor, he said.

After learning about each student's interest, LaGrande tabs African-American professionals in those respective fields to be mentors. The students spend two hours a week at their mentors' business, she said.

Students' interests vary. Among this summer's job interests: an aircraft mechanic,

an artist, an auto mechanic, an elected official and a computer technologist.

Karen McCall worked with Arial Walker, an aspiring computer engineer. McCall owns Priori Enterprises - a project management and business management company.

The mentors also double as interviewers during the selection process. They choose the students, LaGrande said.

Coety Wyse got a jumpstart on his political dreams. The 18-year-old - headed to the University of Nevada, Reno this fall - was paired with North (See NAACP, Page 2)