

Follow Sojourner's spirit

Mars exploration may provide future opportunities

By Stephanie E. Myers
Special to the Sentinel-Voice

This year's Fourth of July carried a special thrill for me. After the smoke from the fireworks had cleared, my husband and I sat in front of our personal computer and surfed the NASA Internet site where photos were being transmitted from Mars, 118 million miles away.

The pictures beamed via satellite in "real time" were taken by the Sojourner Truth Rover, a toy-sized, land rover transported to Mars by the Mars Pathfinder.

We were thrilled by the experience on several levels.

First, we realized that we were eyewitnesses to a worldwide historic event. Second, as publishers we were impressed that we were able to get the information and photos at exactly the same time as the rest of the world.

And finally, having served four years as director of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Commercial Space Transportation, I was gratified that my work, along with many other advocates of the commercial use of space, had resulted in pushing NASA to allow citizens and businesses direct access to information from space research.

This means that commercial companies have more opportunities than ever to find ways to create products and



SOJOURNER TRUTH

explore economic opportunities through space exploration.

Although excited, I did, however, feel a tinge of sadness because I realized that in all probability most African-Americans could care less.

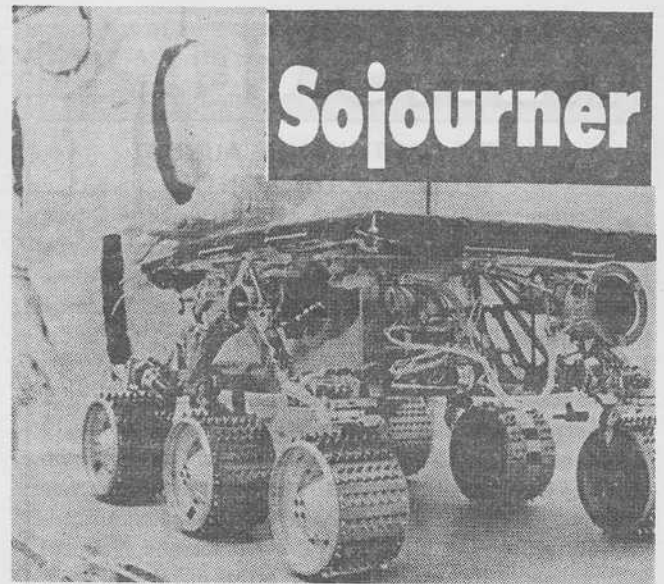
Most of us are so involved with issues of survival, that we don't have the time or energy to think about making money from space exploration. But, I would like to suggest that African-Americans pay more attention to the Mars Exploration project and get with it! *Let's follow Sojourner Truth...again!*

If history is full of lessons, maybe there is a message for us in the life of the Sojourner Truth, after whom the Mars land rover was named.

Born into slavery in 1797, Sojourner Truth was a unique, charismatic woman who was fearless, strong and dynamic. She traveled extensively, forging new ground in the fight against slavery. Considered illiterate, she was faced with overwhelming problems, but rose above her daily conditions and dealt with the larger issues of her time. Today, she is recorded in U.S. history as one of the most powerful abolitionists of the 1800s.

During slavery, our ancestors followed Sojourner Truth towards freedom. Today, it is important that we follow the spacecraft Sojourner into the 21st century.

We must realize that, along with everyone else in the world, we are in a new era. This is a time when regular citizens, and entrepreneurs can gain access to cutting edge information at the same time multi-national corporations and heads of governments



Sojourner Rover is transmitting pictures from Mars.

receive its data.

But, what does it matter—you ask? Who cares? If you know history, you will realize that our ancient ancestors built advanced civilizations based on their knowledge of astronomy and science.

Thousands of years before America existed, ancient Africans had knowledge about the planets and stars that modern man still can't decipher. And, Christian history tells us that Moses led the children of Israel out of the wilderness by knowing how to read the constellations in the sky. And wasn't baby Jesus said to be found by the wise men using their ability to navigate the stars?

Science, astronomy and space research are all frontiers of the future global economy. In order to profit from this booming global growth, African-American families should spend more time reading about and participating in the exciting discoveries
(See Sojourner, Page 14)



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Freed Black Panther awaits new trial

By Farhan Haq
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Militant black activist Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt gained his first taste of freedom after 25 years following a court ruling that his murder trial in 1972 had not been properly conducted.

Pratt is finally a free man after he was released on \$25,000 bail on June 10, 1997, but he awaits notification of a new trial.

Pratt, a former leader of the Black Panther Party, has been regarded as a political prisoner by many human rights activists.

He did not get a fair trial in 1972 because prosecutors suppressed information that the key witness against him was a police informer, Judge Everett Dickey ruled in Orange County, California.

Although the District Attorney's office in California could still appeal against the

reversal of Pratt's conviction, his lawyers argue that Pratt's ordeal may soon be over.

"We don't think there's going to be a retrial," attorney Stuart Hanlon told IPS. "We think the case is just about done."

Any new trial would face the same hurdles for the prosecution that won the reversal from Dickey: The information that witness Julius Butler, a former Black Panther whose testimony was central to Pratt's conviction, was a paid informant of the Federal



ELMER "GERONIMO" PRATT
Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
"The original attorneys had no idea that Butler was an informant of the Federal
(See Pratt, Page 5)

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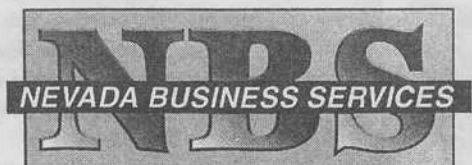
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