

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Sentinel-Voice deserves respect

What's the deal with some of our black elected officials? Well if you watch, listen or read the media outlets not controlled by African-Americans, then we're sure you know what's happening with their successes, trials and tribulations.

But if you've been turning to our pages for the straight skinny, you've found that for some reason we've been shut out.

As a viable media entity dedicated to giving Las Vegas' black community a sounding board and a place to be heard, the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice should be afforded more respect.

For years, we have covered stories that the mainstream media dismisses as minority folly. But to their credit, they do read our publication to find out about our community. Though we do not have the manpower of daily newspapers, we work hard, if not harder, to ensure the quality and variety of our product. Have you noticed we've improved during the past year?

Where we do beat the mainstream papers is in our commitment to community news. Given that commitment, it saddens us that many in the community, especially those in high positions - either elected or appointed - treat us as a second-rate operation.

We have amiable relationships with many of the city's minority power brokers. But time after time, these same people refuse to confide in us, leaving us to learn about their adventures from the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Sun, K-NEWS radio or Channels 3, 8 and 13.

And once any of these media outlets misquotes or misinterprets them, they get tight-lipped, thus leaving us out of the loop a second time.

We aren't concerned that mainstream outlets continue to view us in a little-brother sort of way - and while they continue to gloss over us, we will continue to improve - but it angers us that many in our own community do not have confidence in us.

We do not and will not be looked upon by our "leaders" as their personal mouthpiece during election time, the glory days when the grass is green. When you stumble we still need to hear from you when we call. We will attempt to call it as we see it, but if our leaders want to put blinders on us then our readership gets only half the story.

Look brothers and sisters don't shoot the messenger. We ain't mad at you, but you can do better.

POINTS TO PONDER BY PROFESSOR HARRIS

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF A PARENT WHO WILL GIVE THEIR CHILD \$100 FOR A PAIR OF GYM SHOES, BUT CAN'T FIND \$1 TO GIVE TOWARDS THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION?



HARRIS * P.O. BOX 4770 CHGO. IL 60680



HOW MANY KLANSMEN DO YOU SEE SELLING DRUGS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITIES? (O.K. THEN..... WHO DO YOU SEE?)

HARRIS * © 1997

Blacks need reparations

Special to Sentinel-Voice

People have been asking what I think about all the talk about whether the nation should apologize to African-Americans for slavery. Combined with President Clinton's recent call for Americans to dialogue about race and his apology to the victims of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, much attention seems to be focused on righting our past sins as we prepare for a new century and a new millennium.

Having visited the "slave castles" in Ghana and Goree Island in Senegal where my ancestors were held until the slave ships arrived, I know some of the physical and psychological pain those men and women must have felt. This nation, and others, have much to atone for when it comes to slavery.

Unfortunately, slavery is not all this nation has to apologize for to African-Americans. It has the lynchings of thousands of black men and women and it has decades of Jim Crow laws of segregation. It has political disenfranchisement and destruction of whole towns like Rosewood, Fla., and whole communities like Greenwood Ave. in Tulsa, Okla., to apologize for.

I must admit it's difficult to find words to express what I feel about all of this. As a Christian, I truly believe in the power of forgiveness. As a student of language, I understand the power of words.

But, as a student of American history, I know that

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



words alone can ring hollow. I know of the many times our nation has signed treaties with our native American brothers and sisters, only to break them when they were no longer convenient.

Words alone are too easy. Words must be accompanied by repentance — by empathizing with the people who were hurt and acknowledging the wrong that has been done. Words alone, without wrestling with the pain of the broken relationship, are not true apology, they are only words.

Many cultures of people of color around the world are based on relationship and include a formal or informal process for reconciliation. Native Hawaiians, for instance, call this process ho'oponopono, which means setting to right. It is based on the word and concept of pono or righteousness which is always connected to right relationship and requires one to keep working at relationship until it is right. Ho'oponopono includes prayer and a conversation among those whose relationship has been broken. Confession is made; restitution is offered.

Forgiveness follows.

Without all these steps, apology doesn't mean much. And while I have heard some in Congress willing to apologize, I haven't heard much support for restitution. In the 1960's and 70's, we called it reparations and Congressman John Conyers had even introduced a bill calling for some kind of payment to African-Americans. The bill may still be languishing somewhere in the basement of the Capitol, but we haven't heard it mentioned in the discussions about apology.

Reparations are probably politically problematic. But, if

Congress is serious about apology, then restitution might take the form of college scholarships, job training programs and prison intervention and alternative programs. If Congress is really serious about apology, how about increasing Head Start programs and providing health care for all African-American children.

It's a little difficult to take seriously all the talk about apology from a nation which is quickly retreating from the closest thing we have had to restitution — affirmative action — after only thirty years. It is difficult to hear a president talk about race and racism only months after he signed a welfare reform bill which he knew would make 1 million poor children — many of them children of color — poorer.

African-Americans are not likely to get those forty acres and a mule promised at the end of slavery. But without the modern-day equivalent, we can talk about apology, but I don't know if we can really have true, lasting reconciliation.

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Contributing Writers: Lee Brown, Carl Chamberlain, Loretta Arrington Hall, Sharon Savage, John Stephens III, Fred T. Snyder. Photographers: John Broussard, Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor; Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager; Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor; Damon Hodge, Staff Writer; Diamond Ross, Staff Writer; Crisandra Varnado, Staff Writer; Willis Brown, Production Manager; Don Snook, Graphics; Ed & Betty Brown, Founders. Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association