

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Communication is the key

The sage who birthed the adage, "You can never get too much of a good thing," apparently never met the folks at the national office of the NAACP.

By most accounts, the now-defunct local NAACP Community Development Resource Center - one of nearly a dozen started by the group's national leadership - was a good thing.

The center contracted with U.S. Bank, issuing more than \$22 million in loans for first-time home purchases, refinancing and start-up business financing in its three-year existence. It also provided myriad other services including credit and budget counseling, fine tuning for business plans and running a program designed to teach youth to be entrepreneurs. Center officials claimed to have helped more than 1,000 people.

Now this good thing is gone. Why? Because folks at the head of the nation's oldest civil rights organizations won't return phone calls.

For six months, U.S. Bank unsuccessfully tried contacting NAACP president and CEO Kweisi Mfume to begin negotiating a new deal as the initial three-year contract was coming to term. Mfume never returned the calls.

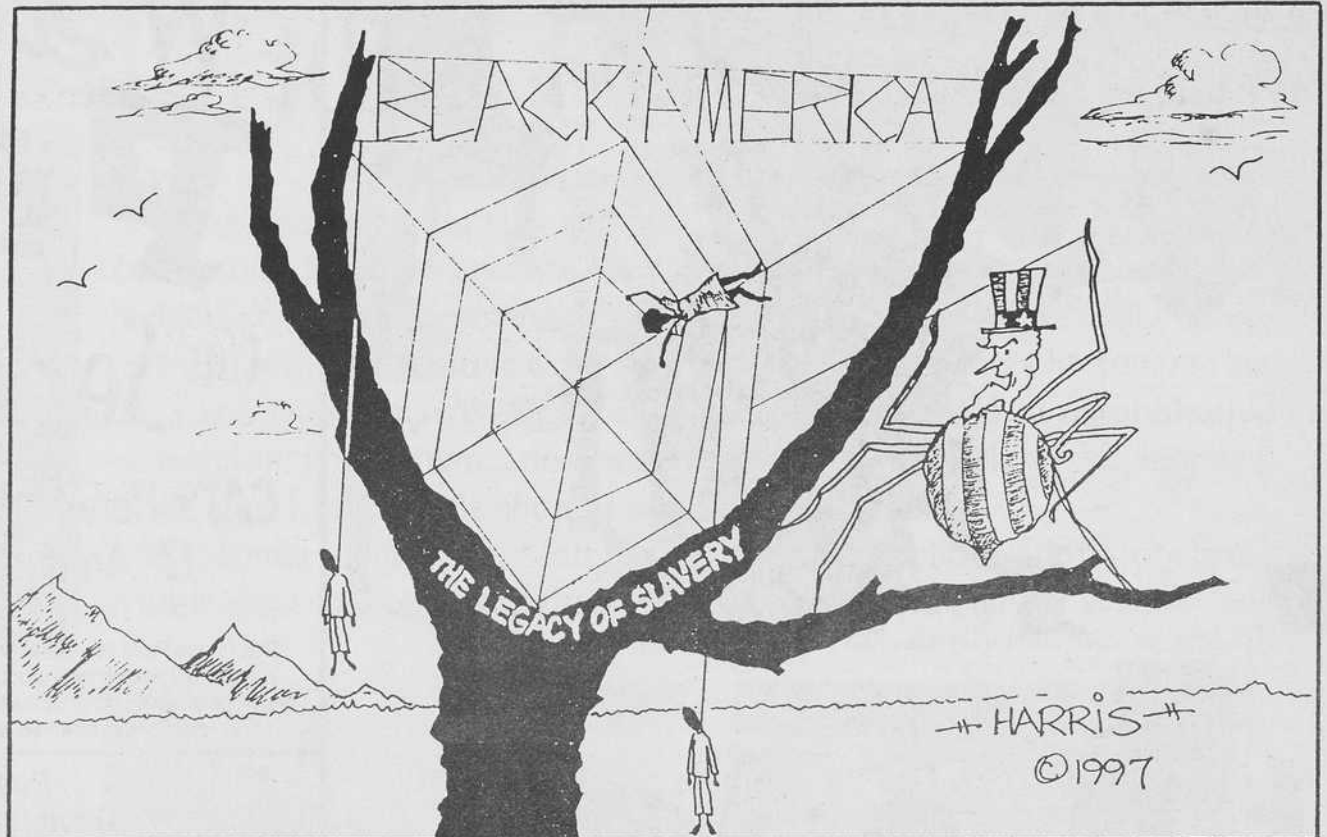
The bank ended the relationship after national director Smyther Fallen asked for more time to respond to the one-year proposal. Fallen, who came to Las Vegas earlier this month, then called U.S. Bank racist, accused them of "prostituting the NAACP" and vowed to ink a deal with another major bank to continue the services the center provided. Fallen promised to elaborate on the charges once he returned to headquarters. Once there at the group's headquarters back East, he failed to return repeated calls from us — go figure.

Since it appears Mfume and Fallen have phonophobia, we might never know if the charges had merit.

Scream racism, OK. But be able to prove it. Texaco employees proved the oil giant harbored racist policies and won \$176 million settlement. Though the fine did little to hurt the company's financial health, it did enormous damage to its image. Denny's is still trying to regain African-American acceptance after a boycott sparked by the food's chain discrimination against half dozen black Secret Service agents several years ago. In New Jersey, owners of an apartment complex agreed to pay \$1.5 million to tenants who charged them with using discriminatory housing practices. The powers-that-be listen when there's proof.

If the NAACP has proof that U.S. Bank did racially discriminate against them, prove it.

We abhor racism and join the NAACP on its journey to end it. Let's hope we don't need a phone along the way.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

R-J's criticism misplaced

Concerning the *Review-Journal* article (College Hiring Williams) written by Natalie Patton, Aug. 21, and R-J follow-up editorial (The Guest Lecturer) on Aug. 24, I was appalled by the blatant misinformation and defamatory and racist policy of that newspaper's reporting.

Despite having information or access to information to the contrary, the R-J deliberately misrepresented and editorialized that Assemblyman Wendell Williams was unfit and unqualified to lecture to CCSN students in hotel, restaurant and casino law classes.

The newspaper also demeaned the reputation of the college and me by implying that CCSN does not possess the professionalism and judgment to educate its students and select guest lecturers.

I am demanding a retraction and apology on behalf of myself, the college and Assemblyman Wendell Williams.

The CCSN public affairs office sent a media release to the reporter, explaining Mr. Williams' educational background and legislative experience.

The reporter conveniently omitted a key reason why Mr. Williams is more than qualified to contribute interesting, hands-on information to our students: "Williams has often been involved in legislation regulating the resort and gaming industry.

In addition he has served on the Judiciary Committee dealing with legislation about issues regarding employee rights and benefits, injuries and

punitive damage."

Had the reporter wanted to conduct accurate research, she would have discovered at least a dozen pieces of related resort industry legislation in which Assemblyman Williams was involved in the last three sessions.

These dealt with numerous aspects of Nevada gaming, room taxes, business taxes, collective bargaining, civil liabilities and punitive damages and various other employer-employee relationships applicable to the content of the hotel, restaurant and casino law classes at CCSN.

I can only conclude this information was left out to misinform the readers and defame two African-American leaders in the community.

The R-J's depiction of Mr. Williams and myself was the lowest form of irresponsible journalism because it sinks to defamation and seeks to racially polarize the community. It was vintage racist reporting, a throwback to Alabama in the '60s.

The R-J continues to misuse its power to characterize and alienate our community with sensationalized tabloid journalism, all for the sake of a buck. Newspapers are supposed to factually and objectively report what's newsworthy, not make up the news.

I was unanimously elected chair of CCSN's Resorts and Gaming Department by my colleagues because I work hard and sincerely put my best effort forth for my students and the department. People who know Lonnie Wright knew that the articles were untrue and were another attempt to hurt two profiled African-Americans in the state of Nevada.

I have always been cognizant of giving my students the best opportunity I could offer in their attaining information and experience in the hospitality business when I taught at UNLV and here at CCSN.

To ask busy community and business leaders to give of their time to enhance the knowledge

of our students is always a labor of love on their part — this is especially true of Assemblyman Wendell Williams who has served this community and state so well and so unselfishly. In fact, it was publicly known that he intended to donate any lecture fees to Kit Carson Elementary School.

I asked Mr. Williams to participate in our Hotel Law classes and share his experiences in legislation impacting the Nevada resort industry.

An educator and a citizen legislator, he is well-qualified to make his lectures a great learning experience. I can only hope that the R-J's false reporting will not prevent that.

CCSN Professor
Lonnie G. Wright

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