

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Reach for the sky

As the back-to-school rush subsides and our children prepare for their third week of class, this week's U.S. Open performance of teenage tennis player Venus Williams holds a lesson to young people and adults alike.

Williams, the 17-year-old tennis player from Compton, Calif., advanced to the semi-final round of the prestigious Grand Slam tournament and in so doing became the first unseeded player to reach the semifinals of the Open since 1976.

A major accomplishment in itself considering Williams had never advanced past the quarterfinal round of any other tennis tournament that she's competed in during her brief professional career.

But just when she had a perfectly legitimate reason to bloat (if just a little bit) after her victory in New York City, the braids-and-beads wearing Williams saw only room for improvement in her game. Her serve has already been measured at 119 mph, tops for any woman in the Open.

"I was playing a little lackadaisical," she said; and on her first advancement to the semi-final round, Venus said of herself, "I always knew I could do better."

I ALWAYS KNEW I COULD DO BETTER.... How did Venus know that?

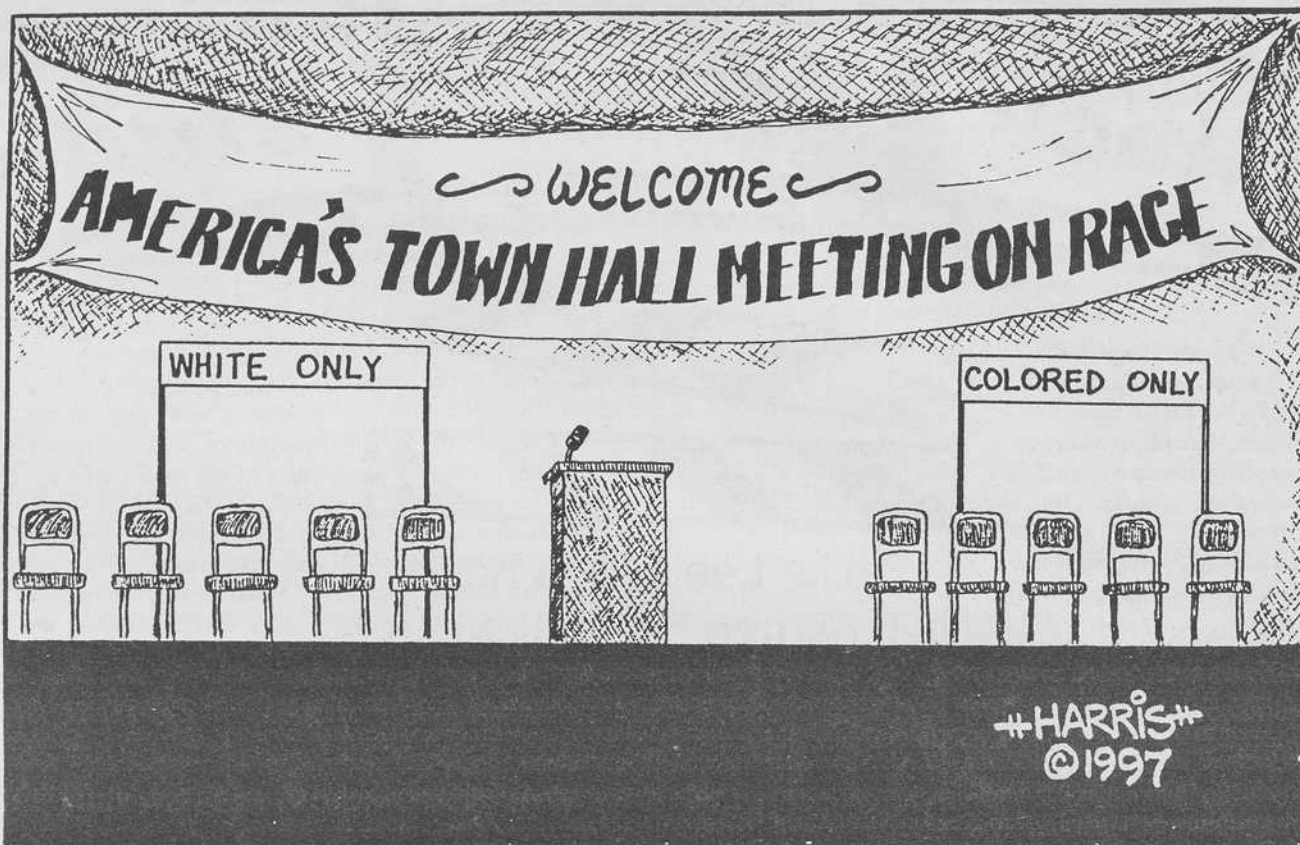
It was through the encouragement and support of her parents, family and friends.

Rest assured that when Venus first started playing tennis on the city playground courts in Compton, there were those naysayers who probably told her she wasn't good enough or that she'd never become a world-class player. But her instilled-sense-of-self-assurance overrode all the doubters..

In much the same way, our children need to know we have high expectations of them in their school, extracurricular and community activities. If we don't set the barometer for them, how will they push themselves beyond the prevalent, "this is good enough" standard popular among young people?

Venus had a goal and set about to achieve it, expecting nothing less than the best of herself. In fact, she's poised to spark a renewed interest among young people in tennis, much like Tiger Woods did with golf.

Encourage your children and our young people to extend themselves and strive for excellence in education and other future goals. And never be quick to judge, for lest another Venus Williams comes forth ready to surprise us all.



Telling the truth about the Louima case

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Like most New Yorkers, when I heard the news that Abner Louima had been viciously assaulted by police at the 70th precinct in Brooklyn, I was horrified.

My heart went out to him and his family. I was personally acquainted with the racist brutality of police officers in the 70th, after a young black male — Tony Amos — was shot in the back by police several years ago. His family came to me for help, but we could not prevail upon the authorities who exonerated the police of Tony's murder.

But this time the circumstances were different. New York is presently in the throes of municipal elections and a high profile police brutality incident against a Haitian man could upset incumbent Rudy Giuliani's re-election bid. After all, New York's first black mayor was elected in 1989 after a highly publicized racial murder mobilized black community to the polls and defeated Giuliani's first mayoral bid.

So it was no surprise to anyone that Mayor Giuliani responded to the Louima beating by softening his "defend the police at all costs" posture while investigators, the Police Commissioner, and the District Attorney acted swiftly to indict the officers who perpetrated the beating and to uncover complicity on the part of other cops.

Giuliani also named a \$15 million task force to recommend solutions, which has been roundly and properly denounced as an election season ploy designed to cover over that the issue has been

This Way For Black Empowerment By Lenora Fulani



explored by many commissions — including most recently the Mollen Commission — but that Giuliani has purposely ignored their findings.

While all of these commentaries ensued, I got in my car and went out to the neighborhood surrounding the 70th precinct. Almost immediately I ran into people in the Haitian community I know or who knew me from my advocacy of the Haitian democracy movement.

I had traveled twice to Haiti — once in 1987, just prior to the vote on the country's new post-Duvalier constitution — and again in 1992, after the democratically elected Aristide government had been violently

overthrown — and had maintained a strong connection to the Haitian community here. Almost immediately people took me to meet the Rev. Philius Nicolas, pastor of the largest Haitian Church in the city, where the Louima family worshipped.

The Rev. Nicolas and I discussed the situation, the need to keep public pressure on the Giuliani administration, to bring an independent counsel in to coordinate the investigation and the prosecution. He described the desperate financial plight of the Louima, given Mr. Louima's hospitalization and inability to work. I called a good friend and colleague of mine, Abe Hirschfeld — a

successful businessman and now a builder of the Independence Party with me in New York — and described the situation to him and he wrote a check to the Louima for \$1,000 on the spot, saying that when a family is in trouble, New Yorkers have to help. At reverend's invitation, I presented the check to Mrs. Louima in church on Sunday at a beautiful service performed in Creole.

Abner Louima seems to be recovering from his injuries, and will hopefully be all right. Political gamesmanship on all sides continues unabated, as commissions, federal involvement, the police "wall of silence" and the reign of terror against black males is the subject of candidate debates, newspaper editorials and policy forums. Still, little of this public bloodletting brings us any closer to understanding what happened in the washroom of the 70th precinct on August 9th.

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