

# Group provides women with sisterly company

*In the Company of My Sisters provides black women an outlet for sisterhood*

By Sonya Douglass  
Sentinel-Voice



Sentinel-Voice photos by Ramon Savoy

(Above) Co-founder Michelle Jackson leads the group in a recent discussion. (Right) Faye Duncan-Daniels chimes in with her opinion during a meeting earlier this month.



While the West Las Vegas Arts Center bustled with activity last Wednesday — children sped about and marching bands synchronized their harmonies — a group of women convened to harness positive energy and promote self-love.

"If I had put half the energy into loving myself as I did with some of the men in my life, I would have been much better off," said Michelle Jackson, co-founder *In the Company of My Sisters*, last Wednesday.

*In the Company of My Sisters* is a local group dedicated to encouraging women of African descent to praise their minds, bodies and souls.

A flick of the light switch starts the weekly meetings. The smell of incense wafted through the darkness. The women closed their eyes, relaxed their bodies and freed their minds as they engaged in symbolic journey to find the spiritual light that would lead them to solace. Meditation, reading and prayer follow.

Last week's topic: self-esteem and self-love.

The women then gathered in a circle behind tables covered with handouts and fliers full of information on spirituality, self-esteem and affirmation.

Jackson and her roommate,

Nyla Pickett, started *In the Company of My Sisters* this summer. Its mission, Jackson said, is to give black women the chance to "take the first step toward learning how to love ourselves and each other as women."

The group has already planned to create rites of passage programs for black women and girls and to attend the African-American Woman on Tour Conference in April in Los Angeles.

Jackson and Pickett got the idea Aug. 20 while sitting in their living room. "We got the name from Julia Boyd's book, 'In the Company of My Sisters,'" Jackson said.

Boyd's book addresses issues concerning black women and self-esteem and includes information on "the positive self-esteem support equation" and how to create "positive self-images for myself and my sisters."

"It's about learning how to trust women and respect each other," Jackson said. "It's about loving me so I can love you."

Boosting self-esteem is one of the many reasons women attend.

"I wanted to share what I have to share and absorb what there is to absorb," Titilayo Bonner said.

A newcomer to Las Vegas, Alexei Kieta, a holistic health

practitioner, said she came after hearing Pickett on the radio. She wanted to be around "like sisters" who share her concerns.

Lillian Graham, who is originally from the island of Belize noticed the difference between blacks in America and those in her native country. After being raised in a society that doesn't suffer the same racist realities resultant of America's history of slavery, Graham wanted "to find out what had happened years back and know what's really going on now."

Reasons for participation aside, the 10 to 15 women who dedicate one hour a week to empowering themselves do so with a collective vision.

"We are black women in self-recovery," Pickett said. She said sharing positive and negative experiences about being African-American women spurs healing. The exchange of information and knowledge also helps recovery.

But most importantly, the group's founders say, is that the organization celebrates sisterhood and stresses the importance of black women having inner peace and love.

Said Jackson: "Self-love is the greatest love of all."

*In the Company of My Sisters* meets Wednesdays at 7:45 pm in the West Las Vegas Arts Center.

## Racism

(Continued from Page 1)

rejected by Montgomery GMAC officials who approved identically ranked applicants at nearby white dealers.

Bell's verdict is now being appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court. It is unclear whether the discrimination found by the EEOC is related to testimony at Bell's trial.

GM spokespersons dispute the federal EEOC's investigative findings, contending in a written statement that its own internal corporate investigation into the charges made by the four GMAC employees "revealed no evidence of discrimination."

The auto giant is mired in a nationwide controversy about serious problems in its Minority Dealer Development Program.

This is a program devised to increase the number of non-white GM dealers. Yet, after 25 years of operation only 1.3 percent of GM's 8,234 dealerships are black-owned, the smallest percentage of any American auto manufacturer.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow-PUSH Coalition are closely examining charges leveled against GM's minority dealer program by ex-participants and current dealers.

Numerous problems within GM's program were detailed in a recent Gannett newspaper investigative article that described top GM executives liberally using the "N-word" and treating many black GM dealers in a discriminatory manner that includes "an uneven level of financial support."

GM spokespersons say "there are no records" of how many minorities have participated in the Minority Dealer Development Program or records on how many program participants who were placed in dealerships are still in business.

The Gannett article states that the program is "littered with financial failures."

Ugly details about misdeeds by top GM executives in Alabama and Detroit are contained in court documents from Bell's case and in a separate lawsuit now pending against the auto giant filed by a Mobile, Ala., businessman named Douglas Hill.

Hill successfully graduated from GM's Minority Dealer Development Program in 1990 but his lawsuit alleges GM officials failed to fulfill their repeated pledges to place him in a dealership.

GM officials that required Hill to sell two successful gas

stations/convenience stores he owned in Mobile as a condition for admission into the program and obtaining the promised dealership, he said.

After graduating from the program's year-long training, GM executives covertly involved Hill in their scheme to destroy Bell's business, Hill's lawsuit alleges. Hill testified during Bell's trial.

GM spokespersons contend neither Bell nor Hill were discriminated against. For example, GM states its "extensive efforts" to locate Hill in a dealership continued until Hill "withdrew his application to be a dealer and instead pursued his lawsuit against GM" in December 1993.

Evidence produced in Bell's case and allegations contained in Hill's lawsuit mirror complaints being voiced nationwide about the serious problems in GM's Minority Dealer Development Program.

### IT'S HOLIDAY TIME

**Refinance Now While Rates Are At Their Lowest!!**

- Purchase with No Money Down
- Borrow up to 150% on Your Home
- Purchase with No Down and No Closing Costs

Call Crystal Cole  
Senior Loan Officer



1640 Alta Drive., Ste 12  
Las Vegas, NV 89106  
Office:  
(702) 385-4133  
Pager:  
(702) 391-7474



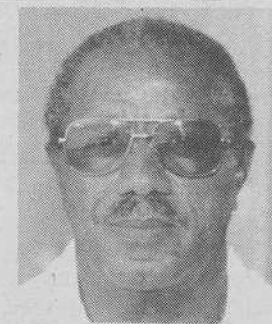
CALL FOR 24-HOUR PRE-APPROVAL APPLICATION. I WILL FAX IT

Mention This Ad and Receive \$200 OFF CLOSING COSTS!  
(Offer Expires December 31, 1997)

But Lee McDaniel, the top Black GM executive who heads the minority program says the corporation is "proud of" its minority dealership efforts although he noted that this "is not a perfect world."

Linn Washington, Jr., a graduate of the Yale Law Journalism Fellowship Program.

**Get A Car Today!  
I can help you!**



Doc Jackson

**Call me personally 288-4048  
457-4161**

**Bring Me Your Trade!  
I'll Make A Way!!**

**2 YR. WARRANTY AVAILABLE ON MOST VEHICLES  
Desert Chrysler-Plymouth  
(on Fremont / Mojave near Showboat Casino)**