

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

The future is watching

It seems that every time we douse a flame, we stoke the embers of another burgeoning fire. Just when all seemed well, a "community rally" was held to determine whether or not the general manager of Las Vegas' only urban radio station should lose his job.

Let's put the controversy to the side for a moment and answer an important question.

Why is it that whenever there is a perceived problem, perceived or not, big or small, civic or professional, involving racism — or any of a slew of isms — a rally is convened?

These aren't the protest-saturated times of the civil rights era, so why do we have to stage a rally or forum for everything? Many of us are rallied-out and march-weary. We put our feet to the pavement, fire missiles at the powers-that-be in catchy television sound bites or in newspaper quotes, but rarely follow up on what it was that sparked the gathering in the first place.

Next point. Rallies, forums, town hall meetings — whatever moniker you choose to attach to them — are for the most part, reactive. They are tepid gestures, which often lack the medicine to cure the problem. Too often, the participants have worked themselves up into a frenzy and convince themselves that their opinions are the right opinions. They make charges based on the heart and not the head, on hearsay rather than fact; this boils tempers even more.

Another point. Solutions rarely filter out of these meetings, mainly because the meetings have little purpose, except to show that said community organization has its fingers on the pulse of what's going on and is an ardent fighter for "yours and my" civil and human rights. With the exception of a scant few, most of the groups have never clashed with the real decision makers, the ones who truly run corporate America. They haven't done their homework on the situation, they would rather publicly denounce than privately repair or reinvent and they usually never have solutions.

Back to the controversy. If you have a problem with the way Sherman Rutledge runs KCEP-FM 88.1. Go to his boss. If the boss is the problem. Go to the funding source. You'll eventually find the accountable person. Be prepared. Present evidence. Corroborate it. Establish goals and plans to achieve them. Offer solutions. Stay focused. And think with facts. This is the message we should be teaching our youth. Not that whenever something doesn't go right, we attribute it to any of the -isms.



LETTER TO EDITOR

Stop letting the tail wag the dog

By Harvey Phelps
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Again, as shamefully displayed through leafletting and loud talk, a few uninformed individuals have taken their misguided, almost weekly walk down the road to embarrassment.

This week, these self-proclaimed "politically correct" Las Vegas residents want KCEP FM 88.1 General Manager Sherman Rutledge's head for doing his job.

Simply put, Mr. Rutledge made a business decision, a scheduling change which involved five KCEP radio programs. All he did was exercise his authority as general manager of one of the most successful radio stations in Las Vegas. For this, the group demands that the Economic Opportunity Board fire Mr. Rutledge.

Their behavior has become a pattern of weekly crises, a pattern based on the whims of a few individuals in one local chapter of

a national organization. They are notorious for having verbally attacked everyone from their own president to the only female African-American elected official in Clark County.

This group would do well to try and prevail against the racism and sexism that allegedly are occurring in the Las Vegas Detention and Enforcement Department. Other injustices beg for their attention, yet, they expend precious time and energy trying to sway public opinion against Mr. Rutledge.

For goodness sakes! This is not 1960, 1970, 1980 or even 1990. We are nearly to the year 2000. There are more than 105,000 Blacks living in Las Vegas. Of that number, between 10,000 and 12,000 live in the area termed "West Las Vegas." Throw in the black population of North Las Vegas and the number of residents in traditionally "black" areas of town jumps to around 30,000.

That leaves 75,000 Blacks who, for the most part, have no contact — and I'm guessing do not desire to have contact — with some of the craziness that has taken place on the West side. Other than attending church on Sunday, they do not even visit the area. (Note: Henderson boasts the largest concentration of Blacks — 30,000).

Obviously, the tail is wagging the dog when such a small number of Blacks anoint themselves policy maker and experts regarding issues affecting 105,000 African-Americans. It is time for reason to prevail.

We must issue a "cease and desist" order to that organization and to those people who have made a habit out of embarrassing all Blacks in the Las Vegas valley. We must demand that this kind of foolishness stop, once and for all.

Harvey Phelps is president of the Urban Chamber of Commerce.

TO BE EQUAL

Rediscovering black history important

By M. Gasby Greenly
(Guest Columnist)

Special to Sentinel-Voice

"I want to expand the place in which we see black people in history and how they functioned," actor Danny Glover said recently, explaining his involvement in front of and behind the cameras in the made-for-television film, "Buffalo Soldiers."

Apt words indeed. That sentiment guided the literary, journalistic and scholarly endeavors of the National Urban League's magazine, *Opportunity Journal*, during its first publishing era, from 1923 to 1949, and it guides our efforts now that we have revived it after a hiatus of nearly a half century. We think we've made a good effort with our issue, just out for Black History Month.

"We were everywhere doing everything," a colleague shouted recently when I mentioned to her some of the topics of some of the articles contained in the magazine. Her enthusiasm underscored how much there yet is of African-American history to be, as she put it, rediscovered.

By that she meant: How much of the facts and circumstances of our long existence in this land remains to be hidden? How much there is to be weaned from libraries, courthouses, and state and federal archives? How much there is to be gleaned from the oral and written recollections of individuals, and the genealogies of black (and white, and Native American) families? How much there is to be interpreted and perhaps traced from photographs and

daguerreotypes?

The roots of African-Americans go very deep. Although nearly all the Africans who came here during the 17th and 18th centuries were brought as slaves, they — because they were human beings — immediately became

full-fledged participants in the great struggle for freedom, for the United States, and for themselves.

W. Jeffrey Bolster's essay, drawn from his fascinating 1997 book, *Black Jacks: African-American Seamen in* (See History, Page 16)

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