

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Siller impressive in anthrax melee

Once again, the eyes of the world were recently locked on Las Vegas. It had nothing to do with a multi-million dollar boxing match or a world-record motorcycle stunt or an enormous trade show or the demolition of a famous Strip landmark or the opening of the latest glitter gulch's neon megaresort.

It had to do with two men — William Job Leavitt Jr. and Larry Wayne Harris. Harris, a microbiologist, and Leavitt, a fringe scientist created a media-style El Niño once news hit they were arrested in Henderson last week, accused of possessing the deadly toxin anthrax for use as a weapon, the flood was on.

CNN, CNBC, MSNBC and a host of other alphabet media organizations stormed Las Vegas. Stories tornadoed out of top newspapers nationwide — The Washington Post, the New York Times, among others — about how Harris' 1995 conviction for possessing bubonic plague, his connection with White supremacist groups and his preoccupation with helping buffet America from a possible germ warfare attack by Iraq.

Twisters developed on all fronts. Columnists groused about home-grown terrorism being the greatest threat to national security, red-blooded Americans cringed at the thought the "mad scientists" had the power to "wipe out a city."

In the eye of the storm stood Las Vegas FBI Special Agent Bobby Siller; an African-American. Even though the charges against Leavitt and Harris were dropped — a Maryland science lab decreed the substance found in a Mercedes-Benz to be an anthrax vaccine — Siller was still the focal point of one of the biggest news stories in years.

Siller, poised and confident, weathered a media storm that could have melted the most seasoned of flaks. Reporters from across the globe chomping at the bit to get the latest, and most tasty, nugget of news for their hometown readers, hawked Siller. But he didn't flinch under the international scrutiny nor did he waver under criticism from some local law enforcement and Clark County Health District officials who felt slighted by not being privy to all the background investigation and testing.

In the eye of the storm, he stood firm, articulating the latest developments in the case in a manner which should make the FBI proud, and makes the black community, extremely proud.



FUTURE CAMPAIGN CONFESSIONS TO LOOK FORWARD TO

LETTER TO EDITOR

Reform hurting ex-aid recipients

By René Day
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I read a recent Sentinel-Voice editorial titled, "Welfare-to-Work Is Not Working" by Dr. Lenora Fulani. It raised two questions: What was done to make the individuals feel a part of AT&T and Sprint and did these individuals feel like ex-welfare recipients being given another government handout just so Welfare Reform could get a pat on the back?

(The Feb. 5 editorial is referring to seven workers at Sprint, one of who was fired after the first week and an AT&T employee fired two weeks after being hired.

All were ex-welfare recipients).

I think a discussion of the Welfare-to-Work program is incomplete without assessing the difficulty recipients may face in moving from sedate to active lifestyles.

The blame for Welfare-to-Work's ineffectiveness lies less with corporate America, who may have not been ready for it, and more with the people who administer the program. Unilaterally, they have failed to properly prepare ex-welfare recipients for the workworld. To successfully implement a plan this vital, preparation is key.

Lifestyle changes hit most people like a punch in the mouth, so ex-welfare recipients were bound to be flustered by their newfound responsibility: getting to work every day, on time, properly dressed and well-mannered. This is not easy. Thus, I wonder if policy-makers have lowballed the amount of money needed to make Welfare-to-Work successful.

Do they have a blanket plan — which will Band-Aid the problem — or a more detailed solution, one that takes into account that second and third-generation welfare recipients need more pre-work

(See Welfare, Page 11)

Poverty affects all, regardless of race

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Earlier this month I read a newspaper article about a part of Kentucky where hard-core poverty has settled over the landscape, and the people who live there, like a shroud.

This is an area where 46 percent of the residents live in poverty and at least 25 percent live below the federal government's baseline poverty marker — a rate almost double the national average; where nearly half the adults are unemployed, where two-thirds receive some kind of federal assistance, and where more than half the adults are so bereft of schooling that they are functionally illiterate.

This is an area where the residents are in such despair that a new program to help them accumulate savings — for every one dollar individuals put into their own savings account, the program will contribute six — has, astonishingly, largely been ignored.

The program's administrator explained the low participation by saying: "They don't think they have a future. If they did, they would think about it and delay instant

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League

gratification.

But they have no reason to. And they can't. They can only think about how they are going to feed the children this week and pay the rent this month."

If you think this place is an inner-city neighborhood, peopled by destitute African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, think again.

It's Owsley County, Kentucky, one of the poorest of the 399 counties in 13 states which make up Appalachia.

This is one of the places where hard-core white poverty lives.

I thought of the people in Owsley County, Kentucky, and throughout Appalachia when I watched, again, earlier this month, the "Frontline" program on PBS, "The Two



Nations of Black America," in which Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and other black scholars and civil rights figures discussed whether a wide divide has

opened up between the black and middle class and the black poor.

They concluded that it has, and that the black middle class must find a way to narrow it substantially, although, it was strongly implied, some middle-class blacks could care less about the black poor.

These two news media considerations of poverty and poor people in America starkly illustrate how, you'll pardon the expression, colored our thoughts, our language, our perspective and our public discussion are by our notions

(See Poverty, Page 14)

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Contributing Writers:
Kim Bailey
Angela Kristin Brown
Lee Brown
Loretta Arrington
Diamond Ross
Sharon Savage
John Stephens III
Fred T. Snyder
Yvette Zmaila

Photographers:
John Broussard
Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor
Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager
Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor
Willis Brown, Production Manager
Don Snook, Graphics
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

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