

LAS VEGAS

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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

## Choirs bless Vegas again

By Brenda Kirkpatrick  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Beautiful voices filled Las Vegas during the 1998 Vocal Extravaganza in Black March 23-25. Choirs and soloists from some of the nation's historically black universities competed in the second annual event which gives vocal talent at black colleges a professional forum for expression and critique.

Co-sponsored by the Economic Opportunity Board and the Las Vegas Convention Authority as a fund raiser for KCEP FM 88.1, the three-day event featured classical, gospel, spiritual, opera, jazz, Broadway show tunes, folk, blues and rock music. There was something for everybody, but everybody didn't show up. Attendance, though sufficient, was, at times, sparse.

On Monday, March 23, several choirs competed for honors in the gospel music category at Second Baptist Church. Then, the show shifted to Cashman Field where choirs and soloists wooed the audience.

The first group to perform was Tuskegee's 50-member choir. University in Alabama. The Alabama university's ensemble did stirring rendition of "Hold Fast to Your Dreams" and along with two other beautiful offerings, earned them second place; a feat all the more impressive considering the university doesn't have a music department.

Choir member Carlissa Johnson, a freshman and



Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard  
Kentucky State vocalists, Tasha Wilson, top, and Vincent Davis, bottom, took first place in the soloist competition during the recent Vocal Extravaganza in Black performance at Cashman Field Theatre; while the Spelman College Choir performed several selections during the March 25 show.

mathematics major from Oakland, California mused about participating in the school's volunteer choir.

"I feel great about being in the choir," she said. "They (fellow members) make you feel like you're in a family — (It's like) a home away from home and we all sing from our hearts."

Jackson State University took the stage next, singing soul-stirring versions of

"Precious Lord" and "The Battle of Jerico."

Prairie View, a university just outside Houston, brought the audience to its feet with "Wade in the Water," "How I Adore Thee," and "Ain't Misbehavin'"; the last song was accompanied by choreography.

The 35 women from

of their chorale. And the numbers didn't matter. This group excelled on "Walk Through the Streets of Jordan," "Wilbe Kataris," and "The Feet of Jesus."

The first-place Kentucky State concert choir sang "Ride on King Jesus," the aria by Tasha Wilson from the opera, "La Traviata," and two



selections from the opera, "Carmen Jones." Theatrics and audience interaction accompanied the songs.

Kentucky State's choir director Dr. Carl H. Smith (See Choir, Page 8)

Atlanta's Spelman College who performed "Ostia," "Codella Fuante," and "Everytime I Feel the Spirit" impressed judges enough to place third. Like most of the choirs, Spelman's choir performed without sheet music, singing only from memory. Some of the music was in Swahili, Latin and Italian.

Lincoln University in Missouri sent eight members

## GM controversy raises questions about Rev. Jackson

By Linn Washington, Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A controversial March 2 telephone call is casting a cloud over the involvement of civil rights leader Jesse Jackson in efforts to correct allegedly discriminatory practices within the Minority Dealer Development Program operated by General Motors.



JESSE JACKSON

A top aide to the reverend plus a prominent attorney hired by Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH allegedly engaged in questionable conduct by urging a Black former Alabama GM dealer to fire his attorneys and accept a \$1 million settlement from GM during this conference call.

Jackson's aide resigned, the attorney vigorously denied misconduct charges leveled by the ex-dealer's lawyers, and key members of the network campaigning for changes in GM's Minority Dealer Program are questioning Jackson's leadership.

"We think this latest controversy over the telephone call is an example of the need of Rev. Jackson to personally address problems in GM's Program," said Richard Wallace, spokesman for the network. "Those comments during that telephone conversation either happened or didn't happen. Somebody is lying."

Neither Jackson nor Rainbow/PUSH spokespersons responded to repeated requests for comment.

Participants in the call included ex-dealer Charles Bell, Jackson aide Doris Davenport and attorney Weldon Latham.

Bell is awaiting an Alabama State Supreme Court ruling regarding GM's appeal of his \$17 million jury verdict against the auto giant for fraudulent business practices that forced the closing of his once successful dealership in 1993.

Davenport served as director of Jackson's campaign to increase minority participation in the auto industry.

Latham is a respected Washington, D.C., civil rights attorney hired jointly by Rainbow/PUSH and GM last summer to conduct an audit of GM's Minority Dealer Program.

GM is paying for the audit. GM also retains Latham to mediate disputes between the manufacturer and Black dealers.

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## Widow upset over the justifiable homicide ruling

By John T. Stephens III  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

A jury ruled last week that an officer was justified in fatally shooting a man he grappled with during a domestic violence call.

The jury ruled officer Jeffrey Tabor, 35, was justified in shooting 40-year-old Eric Payton Feb. 27. Tabor and officer Mark Dwiggins, 29, returned to the Paytons' residence in the 6900 block of E. Lake Mead after Tammie Payton called police on her husband a second time.

According to Las Vegas police, Eric Payton tried to wrest control of Dwiggins' gun away from him and fired at least one round before Tabor returned fatal fire.

"How do they sleep at night knowing they murdered my husband," Payton said after March

27 hearing. "Eric had screamed for help and all the witnesses said they heard him."

Tammie Payton said she was standing less than two feet away from her husband when the officers started beating her husband. "The police beat him several times in the head with a blunt object," she said.

Witnesses who testified at the inquest said they heard Eric Payton screaming for help, a claim the officers denied.

It took the jury of four white females, three white males and a black female eight hours to reach a decision. They based their decision partly on a doctor's report that stated Eric Payton had a considerable amount of cocaine in his system before the fight and partly a police-produced video re-dramatization.

"To believe this video you would have to believe in the tooth fairy and the Easter bunny," Tammie Payton said.

Fifteen witnesses offered testimony counter to that of the officers.

Dwiggins and Tabor both testified that Eric Payton attacked them, making several attempts to gain control of a gun and shunning blasts of pepper spray and baton blows.

After Eric Payton let off a shot with Dwiggins' gun, they said, Tabor drew his weapon and fired. According to the coroner's report, Payton was shot once in the back of the head, twice in the back and once in the finger.

"I don't understand why officer Tabor had to kill him," said Linda Howard, first vice president of the Las Vegas branch of the NAACP. "It was

not necessary. We are very disappointed at the outcome, but was not surprised."

The NAACP executive committee will rule this week on what action, if any, they will take.

Tammie Payton is leery of the ruling, citing apparent cracks in the coroner's report. Professional researchers at the inquest said that they couldn't find any of Payton's fingerprints on Dwiggins' gun. And Tammie Payton's Venice, Calif.-based attorney, Wilmer Harris, had asked police if they had performed a pepper spray or gun powder test on Payton's body. They had not.

Though the coroner's report said Eric Payton was shot once in the back of the head, the officers said the damage to the head was caused by the baton.