

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Sentinel-Voice: 19-year family affair

Nineteen years ago this week, a legacy was born; a legacy sculpted from Black struggle to tell our story; a legacy fathered by Frederick Douglass' Northstar newspaper; a legacy passed on through the generation and inherited by today's Black-owned publications.

The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice was born 19 years ago, thanks to Ed and Betty Brown. Like many other Black-owned periodicals, it was family-owned and its birth went unheralded by most of mainstream America.

And like its cousins in the Black newspaper realm, it struggled in its formative years to turn a profit, to hire needed staff, to get advertising, to meet production schedules, to cover the stories the community wanted to see covered and to provide a voice to a people long silenced by the mainstream media.

Like some of its cousins, it skirted all the problems, using hard work and savvy, while it watched other family members fail to make it past infancy. Some newspapers pushed passed infancy and made it into pre-school, only to falter in their third or fourth years of existence.

The elementary years proved a learning experience as the paper grew in several different areas: coverage area, readership, respect. More and more cousins fell by the wayside.

In junior high, the Sentinel-Voice grew even stronger, welcoming community input from the city's most respected blacks. More and more cousins fell by the wayside.

The early teen years saw the paper fall on hard times. Though Las Vegans expected their paper every week, publishing became harder and harder. As profits dropped, so did morale. The Sentinel-Voice teetered on the brink of extinction.

All was not lost.

Rising phoenix-like from the ashes, the paper rebounded under new management (and a new family) and refocused on its mission to provide the Black community with news it could use.

Now in its collegiate years, the Sentinel-Voice faces a task as daunting as it first faced when it started in 1979: It must transcend the "little-brother" label tagged to many Black newspapers and prove itself the equal, or better, of the mainstream media. Criticism will follow the task. Indeed it already has. Cries bellow from different pockets of the community contending the paper has lost sight of its focus, is controlled by advertising and doesn't report all the news.

The criticism is fine. It's common for families to argue and fight. We, at the Sentinel-Voice, view the Black community as a family. We've tried to keep our family abreast of the news that affects them and report it as fair and objective journalists should. We have tried to be a resource. Sometimes we've failed. Other times we triumphed magnificently. But we've always kept it in the family.



Black youth learning that achievement is cool

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Achievement is cool.

That's one way of characterizing the goal of our Campaign for African-American Achievement, the national effort we and a broad-based coalition of black religious, professional, fraternal and civic organizations have launched to inspire more African-American youngsters to strive to do well in school.

Last Saturday, we held our inaugural induction ceremony for the Thurgood Marshall Achievers Society, our campaign's honor society, which, of course, is named after the late civil rights hero and United States Supreme Court Justice.

In twenty-seven cities across the country, local Urban League affiliates joined with our partners' local representatives to honor more than 2,200 elementary and high school-aged youth. Each youngster received a certificate for their induction in the Achievers Society and a jacket with the Society's logo designed by the talented young fashion designer Karl Kani.

We want our youth to believe that achievement is cool. As in "hip." As in desirable. As in good.


Millions of black youth are already achieving. They are flexing their intellects and developing the discipline and scholastic skills they need to prepare for their future.

We want to celebrate those youngsters and use their myriad examples to persuade more of their peers that they, too, can shape their own future by believing achievement is cool.

Our emphasis on

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
President  
National Urban League



educational achievement is hardly something new. But we want to point out that it must be even more ingrained in African-Americans if we are to prosper in the 21st century.

More of our youngsters must understand the meaning of the expression found in the 19th-century memoirs of many former slaves who educated themselves: "I studied because I found that knowledge is power."

Our coalition, which includes the eight denominations and 65,000 churches of the Congress of National Black Churches, has made a start in expanding the efforts many of us have carried on individually for years. The Campaign coalition also includes such organizations as the Pan Hellenic Council of black fraternities and sororities, the National Alliance of Black School Educators, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the National Bar Association and the National Black Child Development Institute.

The honors group is modeled on the McKnight Achievers Society established a decade ago by Dr. Israel Tribble, Jr., president of the Tampa-based Florida Education Fund and an Urban

League trustee. That program has inducted a total of 14,000 black youngsters throughout the state.

I was in Washington, D.C. last weekend, along with General Colin L. Powell, retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Thurgood Marshall, Jr., Thurgood Marshall's son, at the ceremonies at Metropolitan Baptist Church, a pillar of strength for its inner-city neighborhood. We saw the excitement on the faces of the 24 students we inducted and witnessed their acceptance of the responsibility Powell charged them with.

"We didn't work this hard," he said, holding the students'

rapt gaze. "We didn't come this far. We didn't pile generation upon generation of achievement to fail now. Achievement is what I want you to get. It's yours for the asking. It's yours for the dreaming. But it will only come if you're willing to work for it."

Our inductees, from schools in and around the District of Columbia, told us they got the message.

Melody Shaw, a ninth-grader at Washington's Patricia Roberts Harris Education Center, said, "I think we are setting a good example for students who come behind us. We're showing them that if they want to excel in school, they really can."

Heavenly Hicks, a junior at Central High School in Prince George's County, Maryland, called the ceremony "a very moving experience for me. The (Achievers) Society is a good place for young African-Americans to be able to excel."

The responsibility of adults — parents, educators, and religious, civic and political

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Fax (702) 380-8102

**Contributing Writers:**  
Loretta Arrington  
Kim Bailey  
Lee Bloom  
Lee Brown  
Sonya Douglas  
Sandra Dee Fleming  
Sharon Savage  
John Stephens III  
Fred T. Snyder  
Yvette Zmaila

**Photographers:**  
John Broussard  
Randy Merritt

**Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor**  
**Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager**  
**Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor**  
**Deborah Kohen, Staff Writer**  
**Don Snook, Graphics**  
**Ed & Betty Brown, Founders**

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