

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Whose accountable?

The African-American Community had made it possible for the African-Americans today to enjoy some of the advances that were barred to our ancestors decades ago. When an African-American professional goes about his or her daily activities, they may or may not reflect on how the position they enjoy was made available. Nine times out of 10, it happened because of the courage, struggle and foresight of our deceased ancestors. However, some died too soon because they chose to stand up for what is right or because they knew that life in the Jim Crow world would not make the United States of America a global nation.

Now, in 1998, there is a measure of progress. Where, years ago, African-Americans held very few, if any elected positions; today, they hold several positions. How did they get there? Nine out of 10, it was the African-American voter that put them into office. What have they for their constituency since being elected to office? Who holds these politicians accountable? To whom are they accountable?

Now, African-American politicians are not the only ones who have benefited from the struggles of the 1960's. There are hundreds, yes even thousands, of African-American men and women who are part of the corporate world. In their unique positions, they have the latitude to help our people. To whom are these group of men and women accountable?

What are they doing for the Black community? Have they reached back to help someone the same way the brave men and women did during the dangerous Civil Rights Movement? What publications do they read?

One thing is for sure readers- African-Americans in unique positions are accountable. Their accountability is directed to the ones who helped them get where they are today. To overlook such ones is just as disrespectful as were the now defunct Jim Crow Laws in our southern states. To include, encourage and work with their fellow African-American in 1998 can only be a bonus for those who are elected politicians or corporate executives.

Are such people accountable? Of course they are! And to whom? You know the answer.



More evidence of things seen

Special to Sentinel-Voice

When you're in the business of racial justice in America today, you find yourself spending some time just proving that racism is still alive and well. It seems that whether you're talking about affirmative action or English-only initiatives or the President's initiative on race, much of our nation wants to believe that racism is a thing of the past. Well three news items in the past several weeks prove once again that racism is alive and well.

The first story was the story of the elementary school class on their class trip to Orlando. It seems 40 Baltimore students, plus their adult chaperones, decided to eat at Denny's Restaurant after visiting Disney World. They were not greeted or seated. After seating themselves, they waited 20 minutes before they got menus and an hour later, after still not being served, they left. Meanwhile white customers who had entered during that time had been seated and served.

Yes, this is the same Denny's chain which several years ago refused to serve African American secret service agents, those persons who protect the President of the United States. Yes, it is the same Denny's chain which had to settle several other law suits by African Americans who were refused service. Yes, it is the same Denny's chain which had a big press conference with the NAACP, announcing their intention to change.

It is even the same Denny's

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



chain which has made an effort to get African American owners for its franchises. But more than 30 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, more than 130 years after the end of slavery, and less than two years before the new millennium, Denny's still allows racism to be a part of its menu.

Then there is the case of Avis car rental company. On the same day that USA Today reported the Denny's incident, it also reported that the Avis franchise in Wilmington, NC will pay \$2.1 million to settle a lawsuit filed by African American customers who were denied rental cars because of their race. The settlement also included sensitivity training for all employees and an independent civil rights monitor for the next five years. Earlier this year Avis Rent-A-Car Systems agreed to pay \$3.3 million to settle its part of the same suit. We can only hope that Avis, unlike Denny's, will realize that its business cannot thrive as long as racism is a part of any of its offices. It's a case of the whole being only as strong as its weakest link.

Two days later the New York Times ran an article concerning housing loans

made by the Federal Home Administration loan program. A study, financed by the MacArthur Foundation, found that the F.H.A. loans, combined with racial steering of home buyers by real estate agents in Chicago have added to blight in neighborhoods of color. Because F.H.A. loans are especially profitable for lenders and the real estate agents more often send home buyers of color to F.H.A. loans, communities of color are full of foreclosed houses of buyers who should never have been approved for loans, the study found. It seems that buyers of color who qualify for conventional home mortgages are more apt to be steered to F.H.A. loans and

that too often those who should not be given loans at all are. The Department of Housing and Urban Development, of which the F.H.A. is a part, has been tightening its enforcement procedures, but it admits that it must work harder to get conventional lenders to make more dollars available for communities of color.

The steering by real estate agents, both into certain neighborhoods and into certain loan programs, is a big part of the problem. Yet, the housing industry and too many local government officials wink at this unlawful practice which continues to have devastating impact not only on communities of color, but on housing everywhere. The continued segregation of Americans by housing only insures that our schools, our churches and our community institutions also will not be integrated.

Racism. It's still as American as apple pie. The stories and the studies remind us that there is still work to do.

Las Vegas Sentinel Voice

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104

- 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

- Telephone (702) 380-8100
 Fax (702) 380-8102
 Ramon Savoy, *Publisher-Editor*
 Lynnette Sawyer, *General Manager*
 Marcello Sawyer, *Copy Editor*
 Deborah Kohen, *Staff Writer*
 Don Snook, *Graphics*
 Ed & Betty Brown, *Founders*

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association