

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Failure to spend 'black' begs question why

By now, most Blacks have heard the much-ballyhooed idea that by spending money in our own communities more often, we can begin to change our plight in America, demand and get a bigger piece of the pie, command more respect on critical government issues and build a solid infrastructure within Black America.

We at the Sentinel-Voice agree.

Given that, it baffles us to see that of the 12 African-Americans running for office in Southern Nevada, none purchased an ad in the Sentinel-Voice, the state's largest African-American newspaper. We're left wondering why.

Those who bought ads were: Michael Verrill, who ran for Las Vegas Constable, Laura Fitzpatrick, who ran for County Treasurer, District Judge candidate Michael Cherry, Chuck Lee, a candidate for Clark County Sheriff, Jennifer Togliatti, who ran for Justice of the Peace for Department 7, gubernatorial front-runner Kenny Guinn, Lorraine Hunt, who left her County Commission seat to run for lieutenant governor and Family Court Judge, Department E candidate Fran Fine. All are white. None received press in our paper.

Each of the 12 black politicians were given press. But it appears none viewed advertising with the Sentinel-Voice as important, though it could only heighten awareness — newspaper readers are increasingly fickle; they may not read an entire story, but find ads more digestible.

But the buck doesn't stop there. How many of the black politicians employed the services of black-owned businesses — catering and advertising companies — or black professionals to coordinated publicity, schedule press conference or serve as flaks? It's probably a safe bet that if these politicians didn't use the services of any black business or professional during election time, it's likely they don't "buy black" any other time of the year.

Back to the Sentinel-Voice. Advertising with this newspaper is affordable. So price shouldn't have been an issue. Readership tops 30,000, so lack of breadth shouldn't have been an issue. Everyone knew when the election was, so lack of preparedness shouldn't have been an issue. The Sentinel-Voice is a black-owned publication so there shouldn't have been worry about the facts being skewed or racism factoring in.



Every American should be counted

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Those Americans who have viewed that American institution, the census, as largely the quiet province of statisticians are about to discover how contentious counting - and not counting - numbers can be.

This week a special three-judge panel of the U.S. District Court in Washington ruled that the federal Census Bureau can't use a proposed new method of counting to conduct the decennial count of the American population in the year 2000.

The Clinton Administration wanted to use a method known as statistical sampling - an approach that combines the traditional house-to-house attempt to count every person in a neighborhood with a simultaneous sample of 10 percent of households in that neighborhood.

By comparing the two results, the Census Bureau claims it can estimate the characteristics and numbers of people who are missed and provide a more accurate total count.

But that proposed new approach generated bitter opposition from Congressional Republicans. They argued that the Constitution requires "an actual enumeration," or head count, of every U.S. resident. Their opposition led to the lawsuit and the court decision.

The three-judge panel sidestepped the constitutionality question, declaring instead that the Census Bureau had wrongly interpreted the federal law regarding taking the census.

For its part, the Clinton

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League

Administration reacted to the court decision by immediately filing notice to have the issue heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

No one should think the issues in this dispute are minor or hard to fathom. This battle is about power and money - and race and ethnicity.

In 1990, when the Census Bureau used the traditional method of trying to count every person in a neighborhood, some of the counts were significantly skewed: Census counters missed 8.4 million people. In addition, they counted another 4.4 million people either twice or in the wrong neighborhood of residence.

Since the Census count is used to, among many other things, apportion political districts and distribute federal monies, under-counting and over-counting people in particular areas can have a significant impact on political-party fortunes in state legislatures and the Congress itself. And it can also determine how much federal aid a locality does - or does not - get.

However, the issue of who was "under-counted" and who was "over-counted" when the traditional head-count method

was used for the 1990 census is even more sensitive.

Most of the 8.4 million people who were missed were African-Americans in inner cities and Hispanic Americans in California, Texas, and New Mexico. Most of the 4.4 million who were counted twice were college students and affluent whites who owned more than one home.

Statistical sampling, in other words, would increase the number of blacks and Hispanics counted, which would help the Democrats and could shift money and political clout away from wealthier, mostly white districts.

That's part of the political calculus at work in the debate.

But there's a larger issue here also, one which is the foundation of our support for the use of the statistical sampling approach: It is that every American citizen ought to count - and therefore ought to be counted.

The Census predicts that if it uses the traditional way of trying to count every individual head - an estimated 275 million in 2000 - it will miss about 5 million people.

If that comes to pass, there's no reason to think blacks and Hispanics and the poor won't make up the disproportionate share again.

Their being made visible is the very foundation of democracy.

The concept of "actual enumeration" cannot be used to glibly rationalize the current process - which by guaranteeing an undercount of America's African-American and Hispanic-American citizens effectively robs blacks and Hispanics as groups of their rightful place in the American nation.

That's disenfranchisement, no matter how you describe it.

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