



# Ground broken on Westside housing development

**Catisha Marsh  
Sentinel-Voice**

"Can I get a job, though?", an Old Westside resident asked during the Nov. 18 groundbreaking ceremony for a new housing development slated for Van Buren Avenue and "G" Street.

"Actually, these projects will create more than just jobs," said Thomas Warnke, director of Local Communications Strategies for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. "Of course, there will be opportunities with construction, but beyond that, this will create a market for people to do business. It will

create an infrastructure for a local economy."

Some residents were concerned whether or not neighborhood folks will be able to help build the development.

Those concerns aside, it was a good day for the not-for-profit Westside New Pioneers. The 3-year-old group's mission has been fighting to revitalize their neighborhood with new development and transform drug-infested properties into affordable housing.

"With this project, we see an idea becoming a reality ... Our intention is to help develop our community in any way we can," said Shea



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Shea Jackson (center), President of the Westside New Pioneers, introduces fellow members, Ruben Bilbrew (left) and Robert McClemore (right).

Jackson, president of the not-for-profit Pioneers, which is a community development

corporation. LISC, a nationwide community development

support organization, sponsored the creation of the Pioneers.

Thirteen three-bedroom homes will go up between Van Buren Avenue and Harrison Avenues and "E" and "G" streets. The homes, which will also have two bathrooms and a two car garage, are for sale to first-time homebuyers who earn 50 percent or less of the Las Vegas median income, \$24,750.

All parties hope the new housing development can erode the area's problems with drugs, crime and vagrants and lift property values.

Warnke described the economic effect as "geometric," saying that he (See *Groundbreaking*, Pg 20)



## LACED WITH FOOD

L.A.C.E. director Joyce Eatman Jones (left) presents a holiday basket of food to a needy family.

See related story Page 20. Photo by Isadore Washington

# Group opens hospitality industry to Blacks

**Catisha Marsh  
Sentinel-Voice**

Prior to a taking part in a hospitality-related group's enterprising workshop Monday, LaKeisha Robinson never knew there was a planning industry.

Not the type of planning that determines the outline of cities, but the type of planning that determines

"I never knew anything about this business," said Robinson, a junior at Western High School, said after taking part in a National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners-

sponsored workshop.

The 15-year-old group completed its fall conference Tuesday. The four-day event featured workshops and meetings on planning everything from family reunions to conventions and a trade show with 170 suppliers.

This is the second the coalition have met in Las Vegas.

"They (NCBMP) met here 11 years ago, and we're the only city that they've been back to. That says a lot about Vegas," said Roosevelt

Toston, sales executive for the Las Vegas Convention/Visitors Authority and one of the hosts of the event.

John Crump, executive director of the National Bar Association and 12-year affiliate of the black planner, said the group seeks to open the doors of the hospitality industry to blacks.

"We're trying to keep the African-American community on the cutting-edge of this business so that we can earn our share of it," said Crump, who also chairs the coalition, adding that the

meeting provides networking and educational opportunities aimed at helping blacks get a piece of the hospitality industry which rings in \$4 billion annually, (Checking: How much blacks spend or how much total is spent).

Industry professionals, association executives, CEOs and students attended the conference whose theme was "Collaborative Partnering: Building Bridges for Successful Meetings." Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., George Wallace, Patricia (See *Hospitality*, Page 20)

# Simpson lawyer busier than ever

**Catisha Marsh  
Sentinel-Voice**

Years after his famous "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit" mantra during the O.J. Simpson murder trial cemented itself in legal lore, Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. is still a headliner.

This time it was at the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners Fall Conference over the weekend at the MGM Grand Hotel. The Sentinel-Voice caught up with Cochran, who was among several notable speakers at the conference, and spoke about the need for African-Americans to form an independent economic

foundation.

He suggested blacks boycott the movie industry.

"If we are going to spend \$599 billion at the movies, we should take a stand," said Cochran, 61. "We've got to start saying (to ourselves), 'Hollywood makes these movies portraying us in a negative light so we won't go to the movies.'"

The Louisiana-born Cochran has experienced racial injustice and become a vocal advocate for racial harmony.

"(W.E.B.) Dubois was right when he said that the problem of the 20th century would be the color line. It'll

also be the problem of the 21st century, if we don't get it right."

Cochran moved with his family to California in 1943, first settling in San Francisco, then San Diego and finally anchoring in Los Angeles, where he has remained.

After graduating from Los Angeles High School, he entered University of California at Los Angeles, graduating in 1959 with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He received his juris doctorate from the Loyola University School of Law in 1962 and joined the California Bar in 1963. He (See *Cochran*, Page 6)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Johnnie Cochran and Sen. Joe Neal of District 4 sit back while the speeches commenced at the National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners Fall Conference.