

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Hayes deserves best Christmas gift: pardoning

Gov. Bob Miller has the chance to give Reginald Hayes the best Christmas present of his life: a full pardon. Hayes, 28, was recently released from prison after serving 14 years on a charge of murder. He was an unwilling passenger in a car driven by teen-agers who shot at four people earlier in the day and beat, robbed and killed a white Nellis airmen.

Hayes, then 14, was not involved in either crime and even led police to the place where the slaying occurred. The District Attorney's office in October allowed Hayes to plea to kidnapping and dropped all other charges. Hayes entered the type of guilty plea that required him to admit only that prosecutors could prove their case against him and District Judge Kathy Hardcastle disregarded the plea agreement and sentenced him to time already served.

Hayes' slate deserves to be wiped clean. He shouldn't have to enter a plea that still implicates him in a crime. He didn't commit a crime. No logical reason exists to keep this black mark on his record. Former Metropolitan Police Department officer Christopher Brady wasn't implicated in the shooting of 21-year-old Daniel Mendoza last year though he drove the getaway car. District Attorney Stewart Bell defended his decision not to charge Brady as an accessory, saying that his testimony was critical in winning a conviction against Mortensen. Ditto for David Cash, who witnessed his friend Jeremy Strohmeyer rape and later discovered that he killed 7-year-old Sherrice Iverson.

Hayes told police everything he knew and led them to the spot of the slayings, yet he was not exonerated. Where's the fairness? Miller has the opportunity to right a wrong. He should do it.

Leadership, membership will put NAACP on solid ground

The date has passed for late-comers to the NAACP interested in the critical job of picking leaders for the civil rights group. This election, more so than any in the local history of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is more important than any. The group is coming off suspension for failure to file 1996 financial reports and has been plagued by ineffective leadership, scandal and mismanagement the past two years.

This new group of leaders will be looked to right the ship. While their burden is heavy, members too must shoulder the weight of restoring the group's once-proud name. That means working for the group. That means implementing visionary projects. That means stepping on toes. That means being proactive instead of reactive. That means doing, not just talking.



"WOW, THAT GUY WAS REALLY DESPERATE!... HE SAID HE HAD TO PAWN HIS WIFE'S BEANIE BABY COLLECTION TO BUY CIGARETTES..."

We are family; when will Americans acknowledge this?

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The most amusing result of the recent DNA proof that founding father Thomas Jefferson conducted a long liaison with his slave, Sally Hemings, and fathered several of her children has been the bobbing-and-weaving search for a fallback position by those who've clung to the claim that such a relationship was impossible.

But another consequence is far more serious-and positive. It has underscored that we-all Americans-are family.

Along and across the boundaries of race, ethnicity and national origin, America is a nation of distant as well as kissing cousins whose relationships have always undermined the crackpot theories of the racial supremacists, whether those theories were overt and vicious or genteel and larded with pseudo-scientific gobbledegook.


Of course, African-Americans aren't the only Americans who've had to declare that they were part of the American family, that Jefferson's self-evident truths about human beings applied to them as well.

That, too, is a history most Americans share along and across the boundaries of race, ethnicity and national origin.

But African-Americans have had to press their claims to membership in the American community in the most dramatic fashion because efforts to exclude

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
National Urban League



them have been the most extreme.

Today African-Americans continue to declare — because they have to — that we are family, too, and we have a right to help decide what goes on in the Big House.

Take that as one meaning of the surge in black voter turnout in strategically-significant electoral contests November 3.

For decades the black electorate has been dismissed as "blindly" loyal to the Democratic Party — as if they could not think politically and act pragmatically like other voters — by glib, unobservant pundits and racial propagandists.

Well, this election put a punctuation mark to the obvious: African-Americans are a "core group" of the Democrats, just as other groups, including labor unions, women, and Hispanic Americans, have been.

They recognize their interests and the larger communal interest.

They understand which candidates are sympathetic to their concerns, and which are

not, and they vote accordingly.

That means, as this election also made clear, the black electorate will vote for those Republican candidates who express interest and make pledges that are sincere. That's been evident for years in scattered local and statewide contests.

Now, perhaps the success some moderate Republicans like Governors Jeb and George W. Bush, in Florida and Texas, respectively, had in attracting respectable numbers of black and hispanic voters will lead more of their party brethren to recognize that, yes, African-

American voters are family, too.

Perhaps they'll take more interest now of that little-noted but potentially significant finding in the recent survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

The think tank's poll, the most comprehensive examination of black attitudes, found that 26 percent of blacks in the 26 to 35 age group, a group which is top-heavy with college graduates, chose the GOP as their party designation.

This is by far the largest group of self-designated Republicans among African-Americans.

Not surprisingly, that age group is quite happy with its economic status: 65 percent said they were better off financially than a year ago.

Only 7 percent said they were worse off.

The African-American electorate has more work to do as well. Now, its

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<p>Contributing Writers: Lee Brown Sandra Dee Fleming Tammy McMahan Sharon Savage John Stephens III Fred T. Snyder</p> <p>Photographers: John Broussard Jonathan Olsen</p>	<p>Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor Lynnette Sawyer, General Manager Dianna Saffold, Copy Editor Catisha Marsh, Staff Reporter Don Snook, Graphics Ed & Betty Brown, Founders</p> <p style="font-size: 0.7em;">Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association</p>
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