

Hayes not angry, has options for the future

Cat Marsh
Sentinel Voice

Reginald Hayes is overwhelmed by all the attention he's getting 14 years after he was freed from prison for a crime he didn't commit. He's taken up the cause of speaking for wrongly convicted people worldwide.

The Sentinel-Voice caught up with Hayes this week. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

SV: What did you do while you were incarcerated?

RH: I did a lot of reading. I researched and studied my history. That information helped me get spiritually grounded as a Muslim.

SV: What was it like growing up in jail?

RH: It was very difficult. It was lonely. Things became so intense, I wanted to give up.

SV: Why didn't you?

RH: My faith and my family. My faith gave me an inner peace. With God and my family in my life, I was determined to be productive.

SV: How much contact did you have with your family?

RH: I talked to someone everyday at least once a day. They inspired me. I knew I couldn't give up or give in. There were lots of guys around me who lost hope. I saw what their lives turned into, filled with turmoil and depression — the stress factor in prison is so high. I never imagined myself being a person who gave in to obstacles, though. Jail is a totally unpredictable environment. You're dealing with so many different mentalities, the majority of them negative. The administration has no compassion or understanding.

SV: Are you angry?

RH: Initially, I was angry when I was 14, being convicted unjustly. I carried the anger for the first few years. I experienced a lot of conflict with authority figures. Ultimately, I found I could use the anger in a positive manner to help people.

SV: Are you working?

RH: No, right now, I'm enjoying the relaxation. I have been offered three jobs so far. I'm weighing my options.

NAACP

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will charge them with reaching out to younger children.

Collins says that his history of securing funds for economic development while serving as assemblyman and his role in getting the West Las Vegas Library built give him the confidence and experience to inject new life into the NAACP.

Edward Lewis said he will set up a group of committees inside of the Tri-State Conference to ensure the NAACP is functioning correctly. He's enlisted Sherman Rutledge, general manager of KCEP Power 88 FM, to head the communications committee. He also said new executive officers will undergo mandatory training for their positions.

Elections will be held from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 9 at Matt Kelly Elementary, 1900 North "J."

Rights

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Those who arrive on its shores seeking asylum are immediately imprisoned until their hearing and many of their hearing rights have been lost over the past decade.

This seeming double standard will be one of the things which Amnesty International will look at over the next year.

So, as we commemorate Human Rights Day here in the U.S., may we be mindful of the human violations right here in our own backyard. And then let's do something about ending them.

Hayes

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160 years.

"My mother had actually brought me to Phillip Minor's house that day to put a stop to me hanging out late with older teenagers," he said later in an interview the Sentinel-Voice.

He said Minor was bringing him home when "things got out of control" and that he felt he couldn't leave while Brown was being beaten, robbed and shot.

After years of appeals, the district attorney's office in October allowed Hayes to plead to kidnapping and to drop all other charges. He entered the type of guilty plea that required him to admit only that prosecutors could prove their case against him.

District Judge Kathy Hardcastle disregarded the plea agreement and sentenced him to time already served on November 19.

Elgin Simpson, executive director of the Nevada Supreme Court Task Force which is studying racial and economic bias in Nevada's judicial system, said Hayes was victim of a criminal justice system that treats blacks as "fodder for the system."

He said most lawyers assigned to the thousands of black youth in the justice system rarely visit their clients to learn of their circumstances.

"A lot of times, those of us imprisoned don't have the support and encouragement from our families and communities that we need," Hayes said. "I did and I just want to thank everybody."

Dr. James Tate, executive director of the alliance, said he would have been as "magnanimous" and even-tempered as Hayes had he been wrongly accused and



LV Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Elgin Simpson, left, Janice Arber Johnson and Dr. James Tate, seated, want to see complete justice for Reginald Hayes by being granted an unconditional pardon.

convicted of a crime and spent 14 years behind bars. He called Hayes "remarkable."

"They frameth mischief with the law," said Minister Duke Muhammad of Nation of Islam Mosque No. 75 as he quoted from the Bible. "Our brother did not fall or stumble into prison. They knew our brother was innocent."

Muhammad said society uses the justice system to "heap injustices on our people" and cited the disparate cocaine sentencing laws which penalize people caught with crack cocaine, most of whom are minorities, harsher than those found with powder cocaine, most of whom are white.

Tate urged resident to voice their displeasure with District Attorney Stewart Bell and to vote out politicians whose actions hurt minorities.

"If he couldn't convict David Cash, who sat and watched the rape and murder of a 7-year-old girl, and he couldn't convict Christopher Brady, who drove the getaway car, he shouldn't be able to punish an innocent young boy," Tate said to

applause.

Bell said in an interview that he said that he's been mischaracterized, that he and his administration have put forth a "Herculean effort" to ensure that the Hayes case was dealt with fairly though he wasn't in office when Hayes was charged and sentenced.

"Mr. Hayes was charged and convicted by a jury of 12 of his peers. Five supreme court justices found the evidence against him to be sufficient and the trial to be fair," Bell said. "The other cases are different. There is no evidence that either Cash or Brady participated or knew of any intent to commit a crime." The evidence against Hayes was a witness' testimony, he said, adding that he wished Hayes well and hoped he "takes advantage of this opportunity and succeeds as a productive citizen."

After Hayes' parents Helen and Adolph addressed the crowd, Tate opened the floor. Several audience members offered stories including Andrea Jones who

husband Terry Jones died in police custody and Lorraine Anderson who said her son, Mizelle Wright, was being unjustly convicted for allegedly holding up seven Mexicans while riding a bike past a nightclub.

Archie Harris of the National Association of Black Psychologists offered to organize a group of medical professionals in Las Vegas to help the community deal with the pain and trauma. Reginald's cousin, Markael Green, said that if Hayes didn't go through what he went through, there wouldn't have been a community forum to address these issues.

The alliance has mounted letter-writing and petitions campaigns to the Nevada pardon board on Hayes' behalf.

Those interested in joining the efforts or wanting more information can call Dr. James Tate at 382-5344. Tate send letters requesting a full pardon for Hayes should be sent to Gov. Bob Miller, 555 E. Washington Ave., Suite 5100, Las Vegas, Nev., 89101.

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