

## POINT OF VIEW

## Our View

## Election tactics par for troubled NAACP

The NAACP is on the cusp of a rebirth, but judging by some of the flyers distributed about one of the candidates for presidency, the civil rights group's future might be as bleak as its quagmire-bloated past.

Flyers have been circulated attributing derogatory quotes about former assemblyman Gene Collins to people like former Louisiana gubernatorial candidate and avowed racist David Duke and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. This latest salvo is in response to flyers — likely from Collins' backers — circulating for weeks harpooning former presidential candidate Louis Overstreet and his opponent in Saturday's election, former Las Vegas NAACP president Jesse Scott.

How low must this go?

It's scary to think that such pre-pubescent puke can invade an election campaign for the presidency of a group that, through its own mismanagement and disorganization, has rendered itself inept and inconsequential.

It's scarier to think that the pudders-that-be who captained this goofy assault on Collins character are likely dues-paying members of the NAACP.

This is another sad chapter in the poorly written book that is the Las Vegas NAACP. But lest you think that the local group isn't the only one that can't get out of its own way, other chapters around the nation are mired in controversy. Chapters in Asheville, Md., and Dallas and in several other places have been suspended, most due to failing to submit year-end financial reports or submitting 50 percent of the money made via fund-raisers to national headquarters. In case of the Dallas branch suspension, NAACP president and CEO Kweisi Mfume said the Jan. 5 installation of newly elected officers violated the group's constitution and bylaws for election procedures.

Even the national office hasn't escaped the chicanery. This week, the Sentinel-Voice attempted to get a list of candidates that can run for local offices, only to be rebuffed by national field secretary Mark Clack. Clack said it's against policy to release internal affairs information. Since when are rolls listing candidates for any office off limits? Imagine voting for president of the United States without knowing who's running.

The attack flyers are a sorrowful reflection on the local NAACP, which doesn't need any more bad press. In the last several years, members have been accused of office mismanagement, misuse of money, sexual harassment and unauthorized use of stationary and the group's name. Last year, the NAACP was kicked out of its 601 W. Owens Ave. office when a \$5,000 sewer bill to its landlord, Operation Life, went unpaid. Months ago, the branch was suspended for not filing a 1996 year-end financial report, a claim local officers deny.

Now this shmuck. Who would want to run for the presidency of the local group if they're subject to public haranguing. Is this post that important? Whoever leads the group has a daunting task ahead. First, he must restore public confidence — a daunting task to say the least. Second, he must restore fear — fear in individuals and groups who trample on civil rights. That's a Herculean task.

As supporters of the NAACP, the Sentinel-Voice hopes the new leader can right the rudderless ship.

Those eligible to vote on Saturday, do so. Vote with your head and your heart.

IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE, YOU SHOWED COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR THE TRUTH AND MISLED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ...



REXBABIN TIMES UNION



## Vouchers boon not bust for minority children

By Lee Hubbard

Special to Sentinel-Voice

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — In the historic Brown vs. Board of Education battle that desegregated schools, Thurgood Marshall fought for equal opportunity for Black children. Today, the public school system that Marshall truly believed in is failing those he valiantly defended.

In Oakland, which has a public school system that is over 50 percent Black, the grade point average for Black students is 1.87, a C-. Their test scores lag behind every other racial group in the district. While it might be convenient to blame these poor results on racism, Blacks have run the Oakland public school system for the past 20 years.

In San Francisco, the cumulative grade point average for Black middle school students in public schools is 2.12, a C. In the high schools, it is 1.81, a C-. These are the lowest grades of any racial group, despite the millions of extra dollars the San Francisco district receives to better educate Black students. (The funds result from a 1983 NAACP lawsuit against the district.)

With the district's dismal record in mind, Adarius Banks decided she wasn't going to take a chance with her 6-year-old daughter's education. "In order to be successful, or even have a chance, you have to have a good education. I wanted to provide this for my daughter," she said.

Vouchers would allow children trapped in low-performing schools to get a shot at a good education.

Bank decided that private school was her daughter's best option. But the cost was a reach for her, a single mother and a full-time college student. Then she came across the Basic Fund, a privately funded voucher program started by Jim and June McCarthy, a retired San Francisco couple concerned about the quality of education in the city.

Banks took the fund's \$1,000 scholarship and scraped up another \$1,000 to put her child in a San Francisco parochial school. Banks is happy with her choice. Unfortunately, this option is only available to the 500 San Francisco students who have benefited from the Basic Fund. It needs to be available to many more, here and across the country.

A taxpayer voucher program would enable low-income parents to have a real choice. Vouchers would allow children trapped in low-performing schools to get a shot at a good education.

A recent Harvard University study found that low-income students in private schools performed substantially better than their peers in public schools. Vouchers would force the public schools to improve if they wanted to compete for students. School districts would have to get rid of teachers who patronize

students instead of educating them.

According to a poll by the Joint Center For Political and Economic Studies, a Black Think Tank, many Black parents support school vouchers. The approval rate is 86 percent among Blacks between ages 26 and 35.

Voucher programs are legal. The U.S. Supreme Court recently upheld a Wisconsin program that provides up to \$5,000 a year per child for low-income parents.

They would also save the taxpayers' money. In states like California, spending per public school student approaches \$6,000 a year, while tuition at private Catholic schools ranges from \$1,700 to \$3,000 and in private secular schools from \$3,000.

But, vouchers face fierce opposition. During the days

of segregation, George Wallace stood in the doorway of the University of Alabama to block desegregation. Today, education bureaucrats and teachers' unions stand in the way of vouchers.

They say that instead of vouchers the focus should be on reforming public schools. They've said this for years, and things haven't changed.

Public schools are failing Black students. In our technology-driven society, lack of education equates with unemployment, crime, and imprisonment. Vouchers are a better way.

There will be heated resistance to the voucher movement, but it will win in the end. Especially if the president, on his public salary, can send his daughter to a private high school that costs over \$10,000 a year. I don't see why a single mother or any other person shouldn't be able to as well.

Lee Hubbard is a San Francisco based journalist who writes on national and international issues.

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