

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Record fine against Brown completely incongruous

The state Ethics Commission on Friday levied a record fine against North Las Vegas Constable Herb Brown for statements about his opponent in the race for constable's post claim misled voters.

Brown, who garnered nearly 60 percent of the vote for the 4-year position in which the officers serves a wide variety of civil documents, was hit with a \$10,000 fine, twice the prior record but a third of maximum fine of \$30,000. He has 30 days to appeal the decision to District Court. He would have to post at least a portion of the fine.

And while the commission dismissed an ethics complaint Bergstrom filed against Brown's campaign manager, Mark Kincaid, citing a lack of evidence, the damage had already been done.

The gist of Bergstrom's argument is that Brown misled voters in an October 1998 campaign ad that touted him as "The only qualified candidate for North Las Vegas constable."

The mailing claims Bergstrom had neither the qualifications, education or training for the post.

What type of precedent is the commission setting and why did it choose Brown to set it?

Brown's attorney, Frank Cremen, said the claims are protected political speech. Commissioners disagreed, saying the ads were sent out without any clarification that they were opinions.

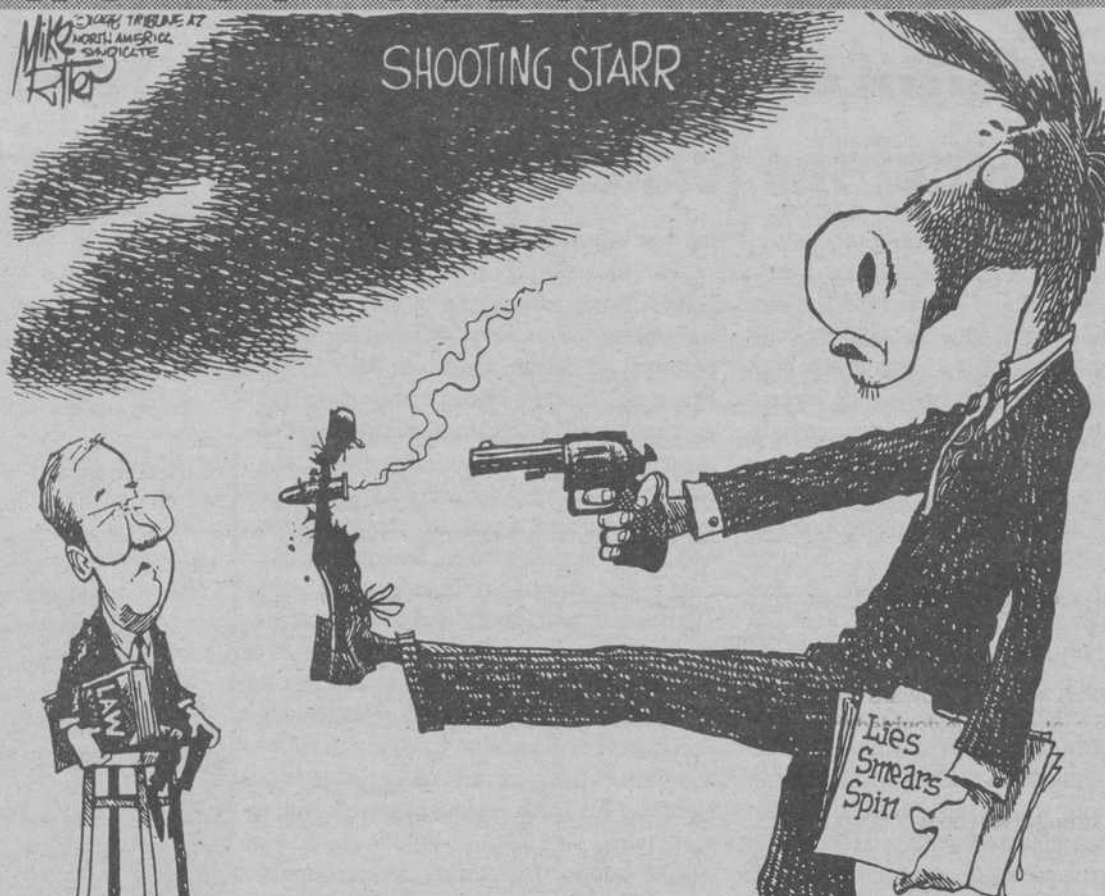
Surely there have been worse affronts in the realm of political mudslinging—Aaron Russo's Kenny Guinn bashing, televised warfare between Harry Reid and John Ensign, Sheldon Adelson's vitriol aimed at local Democrats, Jan Jones' bloody mayor contest against Steve Miller. All participants escaped fines.

The commission said the flier was misleading because it did not mention that Bergstrom was a former police officer, nor that he completed a 400-hour course on the basics of law enforcement and that it wrongfully implied certification was a requirement of the constable's position.

Brown said all the "errors" weren't intentional. Clearly, Brown, a former U.S. marshal and 22-year veteran of the North Las Vegas Police Department who's received extensive instruction from state and federal authorities, was the more qualified candidate. Too bad the commission couldn't see that.

Local NAACP still unsettled after recent branch elections

It seems the never-ending saga that is the Las Vegas NAACP has taken yet another twist. The elected officers can't do their jobs until they get the go-ahead from national headquarters. This is par for the course for a group that has consistently succeeded in one thing the past couple of years: failing.



Black America in the 21st century: Compete or perish

By Ron Daniels
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It could be said that Blacks in America are entering the 21st century confronting some of the same crises we faced on the eve of the 20th century. There is no question that W.E.B. Dubois' prophesy that the problem of the 20th century would be the colorline has proven to be valid. Though Blacks in America have unquestionably made significant progress over the past 100 years, racism is still alive and well in this country. After a period of major gains in shattering the walls of apartheid in the U.S., a venomous "white backlash" has relegated the plight of Africans in America to the back burner.

Indeed, there is now a concerted effort in virtually every branch of government at all levels to turn the clocks back on Black progress. Within much of white America there is the perception that Black gains have come at the expense of white people.

In addition, the demographics of the United States have changed drastically in the last fifty years with a significant number of other peoples of color, particularly Asians and Latinos, migrating to these shores in large numbers. In fact, Latinos have now surpassed Blacks as the largest minority in this country. Though other people of color also face discrimination, Blacks remain the least preferred

minority in America and even among other people of color one senses a sentiment that the concerns of Black people are receiving too much attention. Finally, Blacks in America are affected by the new global economy where competition for survival and development is often fierce and unforgiving. As we enter a new century, the question is will Blacks in America be ready to compete, progress and prosper.

In my view the answer to that question is very simple. Blacks in America must decide to compete or perish. The hard, cold reality is that while we are well aware that the source of our oppression is white supremacy, simply citing that fact with repetition will not be sufficient to promote racial progress. As we stand on the dawn of the 21st century, Blacks in America must consciously and calculatedly plan to prepare our people to compete to realize our aspirations.

The first step in this process is to cultivate a cultural, spiritual and mental toughness and tenacity that will not countenance failure. We must be deeply rooted in an understanding of who we are as a people, our history, culture and potential for greatness. And while we should not inherently be antagonistic to any group of people, it is imperative that African people cultivate their consciousness to be "of the race and for the race." We must also have faith that our ancestors and the creator are on our side as long as that

which we aspire and undertake is righteous and just.

Black people cannot depend on Euro-centric white institutions to impart the kind of consciousness required to equip our people to compete and succeed in the 21st century. In the first instance it is the responsibility of Black people to cultivate that consciousness in our families, the community, our churches and civic associations. The Black church can be particularly useful in this regard by operating after-school and Saturday school programs where Black young people can learn about our history and heritage while also acquiring some of the skills needed to compete effectively in public schools and institutions of higher learning. Indeed, Black people need a pattern of self supporting institutions that can continually prepare significant numbers of young people to devote their lives to developing the Black community.

Blacks in America must

also be prepared to engage in the struggle for economic empowerment with a focus and passion unprecedented in our recent history. Economic development must become a priority that is a part of our consciousness at all times. Black America must create as many avenues as possible to train as many Black people as possible in the principles, art and science of business development, management, maintenance, etc. Black colleges and universities, Black churches, community based organizations and civic associations should all be involved in teaching Black people how to harness Black dollars to engage in and master economic development.

Into the 21st century, no one will listen sympathetically to our complaints about the lack of Black control over the Black community. The challenge is for Blacks in America to make up our minds that we are going to control our economic destiny and take
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