

Community activists everywhere making black history daily

Special to Sentinel-Voice

For some February is the month of sweethearts, but for many of us February is special because it's Black History Month.

Started by black educator Carter G. Woodson and others who were concerned that even black children did not know of the many contributions of black America to this nation, it's been a tradition for decades now.

Tragically, too many Americans still know nothing about African-American history.

There have been African-American inventors, scientists, architects, engineers, teachers and physicians, among many other vocations. Journalist Ida Wells Barnett focused the nation's attention to the hundreds of lynchings of black men every year in the early part of the century.

Malcolm X focused on saving black men by re-capturing their sense of self-esteem and by confronting American racism. Here are the stories of two groups making Black History today by focusing on saving young black men.

The Simba Circle

The Simba Circle, now in its fifth year, is a program sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and is headed by Gaylord Thomas of Chicago. This program has reached dozens of young African-American males through a two-week summer camping experience.

Using volunteer counselors known as Nation Builders, the Simba Circle's purpose is to reclaim young black men who are at risk. The Nation Builders guide, direct, teach, soothe, discipline and help with character-building. The Nation

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



Builders include men analysts, authors, business owners, clergy, artists, doctors, teachers and pharmacists, among others.

The young men, called Simbas, are encouraged to begin to confront their problems head on, be it crack-addicted parents, abusive or absent fathers or poverty. At a campfire the Simbas talk about their problems and consequences of the wrong actions.

They symbolically throw their problems into the fire. The adults log their problems and help them address them.

During the program, the Simbas are also challenged physically, artistically, intellectually and emotionally.

The Simba Circle is hoping to expand to Southern California and New York. It's only a beginning for the young men, but it's an important first step for them and our community.

Michigan Association for Leadership Development

The Michigan Association for Leadership Development (MALD) is headed by Hugh Jackson. Since 1980 their sole

mission has been to develop young black males as leaders by giving them a spiritual foundation. They've helped more than 500 young black men, many of whom have gone on to college and to be leaders in their own communities.

MALD holds events such as the Super Saturday for Black Manhood and other role modeling and mentoring programs. Father's Month is designed to celebrate black fathers.

The group plans to fill the Pontiac Silverdome with 80,000 of Michigan's black men and boys for a millennial event. The event will be used to raise the awareness of the problems facing young black males and find solutions to those problems.

It was "seeing black males fall through society's cracks at an alarming rate" that inspired Hugh Jackson to found MALD. Nearly 20 years later, he is still seeing too many young black males being lost despite progress in the form of black mayors, school superintendents, police chiefs and corporate vice presidents. Thus, he is spearheading this new campaign to cross organizational and turf lines to save lives.

Gaylord Thomas and Hugh Jackson and the men and women working with them to save young black males are making black history. They follow in the tradition of Ida Wells Barnett and Malcolm X and all those who tried to ensure the survival of the black male.

Thanks be to God for them all.

For more information on the Simba Circle, write the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. For more information on 80,000 Men and Boys/2000 or MALD, write to 77 Bagley, Pontiac, MI 48341.

Africa

(Continued from page 12) trade and investment regimes and protection of foreign investment and intellectual property rights.

NGOs here and in Africa have previously objected to such criteria, saying they favored the interests of multinational companies and foreign investors at the expense of the vast number of poor Africans. Even South African President Mandela last year denounced some of these conditions as "unacceptable," although Pretoria's ambassador here eventually endorsed the legislation.

Indeed, those "conditionalities" were at the heart of Jackson's critique of AGOA and the impetus for his Hope for Africa Act which he said was the product of six months of consultations among U.S. and African NGOs.

His bill calls for a new approach to Africa based on unconditional cancellation of the region's \$230 billion external debt, an increase in U.S. aid to 1994 levels, the limitation of tariff preferences for products made by African-owned companies which respect international labor and environmental standards.

In written testimony, Jackson, the son of one of Clinton's top Africa advisors, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, charged that the "economic neo-colonialism" behind AGOA would make it "better for Africa to have no bill at all than to have this bill pass" — an assertion that drew a scathing reply from the ranking member of the Ways and Means Committee and dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, Charles Rangel.

"Do you believe that you would know better than the

(40 African ambassadors) who have worked for this bill?" asked Rangel. He said while he was sympathetic to some of the policies contained in Jackson's bill, it had no chance of gaining the bipartisan support needed for passage.

That represented the view of many U.S. NGOs who were divided last year over whether to support the AGOA but now believe that their efforts to amend it during the legislative process would be undermined by Jackson's bill.

"Our voice is going to be drowned out by his," said one lobbyist for a prominent Africa human-rights lobby, who asked not to be identified.

The bill appeared certain to run into resistance in the Senate where textile interests were stronger. They succeeded last year in amending provisions that

would give duty- and quota-free access to textiles and apparel imported from eligible countries to require that all such products be made by U.S.-produced fabrics and materials.

Calling such an

amendment "totally unjustified," Republican Sen. Phil Gramm, who agreed to sponsor the AGOA in the Senate, said, "if you don't drop that provision, you kill the bill."

Gramm noted that a study

by the Commerce Department's International Trade Commission found that unrestricted imports of African-made textiles and apparel would have a "minuscule" impact on jobs in the United States.

Elections

(Continued from Page 1) galvanizing the resources and support of schools and the hotel and gaming industries, building community relationships

and streamlining the NAACP membership process.

As far as long-term strategy, Collins said the NAACP under his leadership will focus on bringing jobs and businesses into the community.

Recently elected as president of the city's Neighborhood Advisory Board, Collins said his role addressing community development as part of that body will "tie right into" his role as NAACP president.



JESSE SCOTT

See Me for All Your Insurance Needs

AUTO LIFE HOME HEALTH

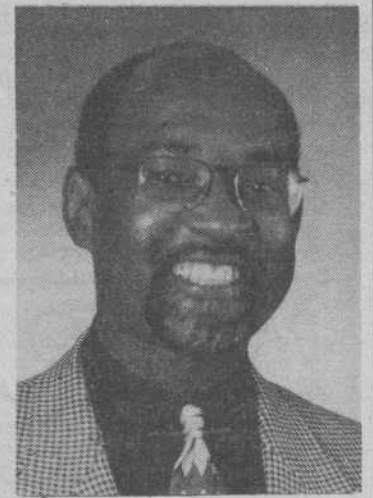
COUNTRY COMPANIES INSURANCE GROUP



MELVIN L. WALKER
2575 South Cimarron
Suite 201
702-243-7770
Las Vegas, NV 89117

Put a Dodge in your Garage!

Zero Cash Down up to \$2000 cash rebates



Lawrence Ennis

98's MUST GO \$3,000 Push, Pull or Drag Your Trade*

*On selected full retail price

Fresh Start Program 99% Approvals We'll Find a Way!



CHAPMAN DODGE

3470 Boulder Highway • 457-1061