

POINT OF VIEW

Our View
Celebrating 20 years of progress

With the creation of The North Star, the abolitionist paper started by Frederick Douglass that became the most influential black antislavery publication during the antebellum era, the Black Press was born.

Much as The North Star was used to denounce slavery, fight for the emancipation of women and other oppressed groups and tell the story of the lives of colored folk - Its motto was "Right is of no Sex - Truth is of no Color - God is the Father of us all, and we are all brethren" - the Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice, which is celebrating its 20th year is fighting ... fighting to write black history, fighting to record black history and fighting to make black history.

Robert S. Abbott founded The Chicago Defender on May 5, 1905. The paper once heralded itself as "The World's Greatest Weekly" and was the nation's most influential black weekly newspaper by the advent of World War I, with more than two thirds of its readership base located outside of Chicago.

Ed and Betty Brown started the Sentinel-Voice under similar pretense - to make the paper the most vital source of information about the black community. They envisioned a black media outlet nonpareil. We are constantly working to fulfill that dream.

The Pittsburgh Courier was once the country's most widely circulated black newspaper with a national circulation of almost 200,000. Established in 1907 by Edwin Harleston, a security guard and aspiring writer, the newspaper gained national prominence after attorney Robert Lee Vann took over as the newspaper's editor-publisher, treasurer, and legal counsel in 1910. By the 1930's it was one of the top selling black newspapers in the country.

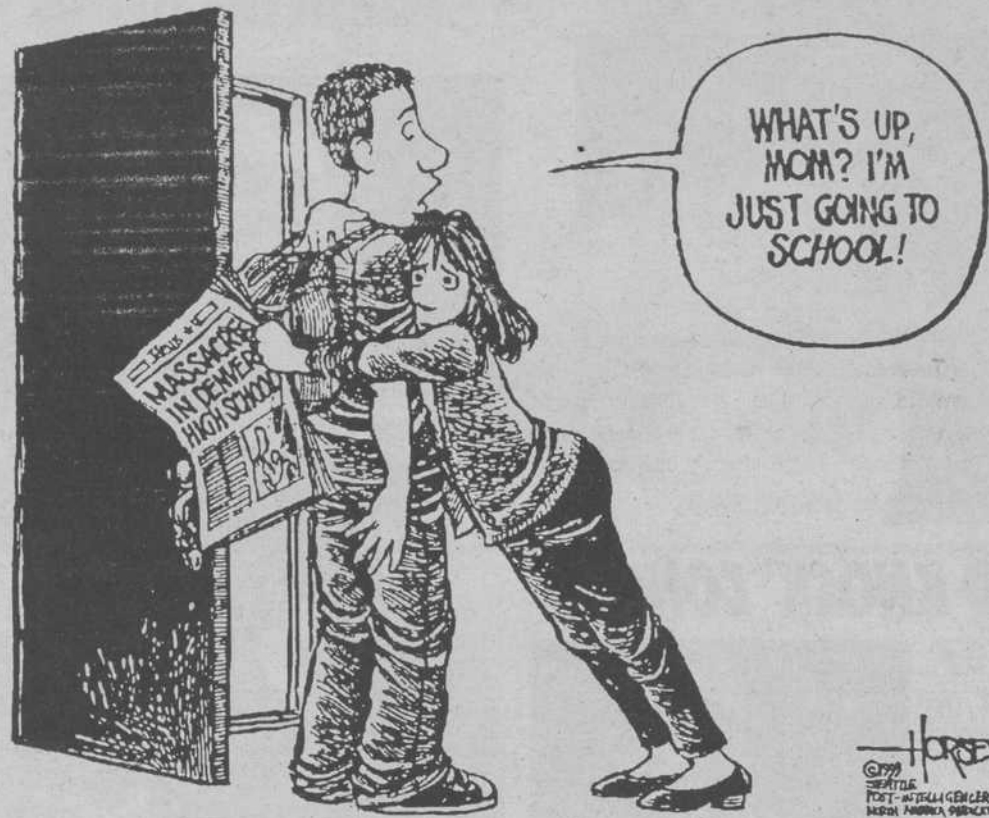
Similarly, the Sentinel-Voice has undergone management changes during its existence, each with the express purpose of making a valuable product even more invaluable. As is expected, the caliber of writing, picture taking, headline writing, design and content improved as the staff aged. The paper expanded readership by writing the stories the mainstream papers and dailies missed: The young beauty queen, the black cowboy, homosexuality in the black community, among others. The paper cemented a good enough reputation that it was fed "juicy" stories first, leaving the major papers and the dailies to pick up the pieces.

The Afro-American has crusaded for racial equality and economic advancement for Black Americans for a century. In existence since August 13, 1892, John Henry Murphy Sr., a former slave who gained freedom following the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, started the paper when he merged his church publication, The Sunday School Helper with two other church publications, The Ledger (owned by George F. Bragg of Baltimore's St. James Episcopal Church) and The Afro-American (published by Reverend William M. Alexander, pastor of Baltimore's Sharon Baptist Church).

By 1922, Murphy had turned the newspaper from a one-page weekly church publication into the most widely circulated black paper along the coastal Atlantic, and used it to challenge Jim Crow practices in Maryland.

Likewise, the Sentinel-Voice has been a vocal opponent of discrimination, police brutality, profiling and a host of other race-related and nonracial problems.

Thank you for giving us 20 years to tell our story. We look forward to the new millenium.




We can transform the politics of victimhood

Special to Sentinel-Voice

When Emma Jihad Jones called and asked me to speak at the anniversary memorial tribute to her son Malik who was fatally shot by a East Haven police officer two years ago, I was torn about whether to go. Not because I didn't feel that the commemoration was a critical event — I very much wanted to honor Malik Jones. Every time Emma and I have spoken, the pain, the triumph and tragedy of being the black mother of a black male child in America, is right on the surface. I wanted to be there for her and for all of the black mothers in America. I also wanted to express my support for the legal action and the legislative action being taken by supporters of the family and the community to stop racial profiling by police.

I was conflicted because I knew that if I went, I would be introduced and acknowledged and interviewed by the media as a black leader who has been in the streets and on the frontlines of many battles against police brutality and other forms of racial violence. This is true. I have. But here is the problem. For me, it is not an honor to be thus identified. It is, rather, a source of shame. Because it means that we, black leadership on whom our community relies, have thus far failed to stop the brutality, to stop the injustice and to lead us — as a community and as a country — to a new place. We have to take a hard look at that failure. We can't cover it over.

This Way For Black Empowerment
By Dr. Lenora Fulani



One of the issues in the city of New Haven's ongoing investigation into Malik Jones' murder and subsequently in the wrongful death suit brought by his mother, is the question of whether Officer Robert Flodquist used excessive force on April 14, 1997 and whether the use of excessive force was racially motivated. In other words, was racism a factor in the shooting?

Of course, we all recognize that it was. The city's investigation said, in effect, it wasn't and Officer Flodquist was found to have committed no criminal wrongdoing. The wrongful death suit recently filed in District Court will be a new forum in which to re-examine that issue. But whatever the particulars of the legal process might be, and however the process plays out, according to whatever legal threshold must be established, you know and I know that racism was involved.

Is there racism on the East Haven police force? Of course there is. But the issue is not whether there is racism in the police department, in city government or state government or any

government. The issue is not whether there is racism at all. There is. The serious issue is what are we going to do about racism?

Certainly, the legislative effort underway to outlaw racial profiling by police is critical, and I support it wholeheartedly. But outlawing racial profiling is simply a way of protecting us against the effects — the practical implications of racism. We must go further. And going further, means going to the issue of power — of where and how and under what circumstances do we, as a community, operate and relate politically.

As black people, as people of color, as poor people — we deal with terrible tragedy

on a routine basis. Malik Jones lost his life for no good reason. There are millions upon millions of stories of this kind. We are the victims of a bitter violence and race hatred. There is no question of that. But, we are also, too often, victims of something else. We are the victims of victimhood. Our lives, our vision, our social capacities and our power are over determined by the politics of victimhood.

So much of what has become black politics in America today is this kind of politic. This politic says, "We are oppressed, so give us something. We are angry, so give us something. We are black, so give us something." In the Democratic Party, where 90% of us vote — those of us who do vote — that is how we are seen. That is how we are mobilized. That is what we do. And, most importantly, that is how we are marginalized.

We must do something to change that marginalization. Our message, our statement, our politic mustn't be, "We

(See *Murder*, Page 17)

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