

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Ethnic media: Our past is not our potential

Black media is being left out of the advertising bonanza. Representative of this locally are figures coming from University Medical Center, the county-run hospital on Charleston Boulevard.

According to UMC records, the hospital spent over \$800,000 in direct advertising in 1998. Hispanic media received a scant portion— \$4,500. The African-American bounty was less pronounced — black media were dissed altogether.

UMC President Bill Hale said the hospital's television marketing campaign targeted African-Americans. There's no way to independently verify his claim since Nielsen ratings don't track racial data on commercials.

Citing Arbitron ratings, Hale said 76.4 of African-Americans were reached via radio advertising, but he failed to specify how he deduced that number.

In an interview with the *Sentinel-Voice*, Hale said UMC target markets to ethnic groups "deemed appropriate" and recalled using African-American actors in several commercials. First things first.

Aren't all ethnic groups deserving of education on the resources available at a county-run hospital? Given the predisposition to certain types of disease inherent in the various ethnic groups, wouldn't it behoove UMC to at least inform members of these groups about the services they provide?

Secondly, the use of African-American actors in commercials isn't the end-all. Thirdly, saturation is important — both in terms of the use of minority actors, but also in the reach and frequency of the advertising.

Though several commissioners took the high road and criticized the egregious disparities, others took the morsels given to minority media as evidence that UMC is progressive in its community outreach. Hogwash.

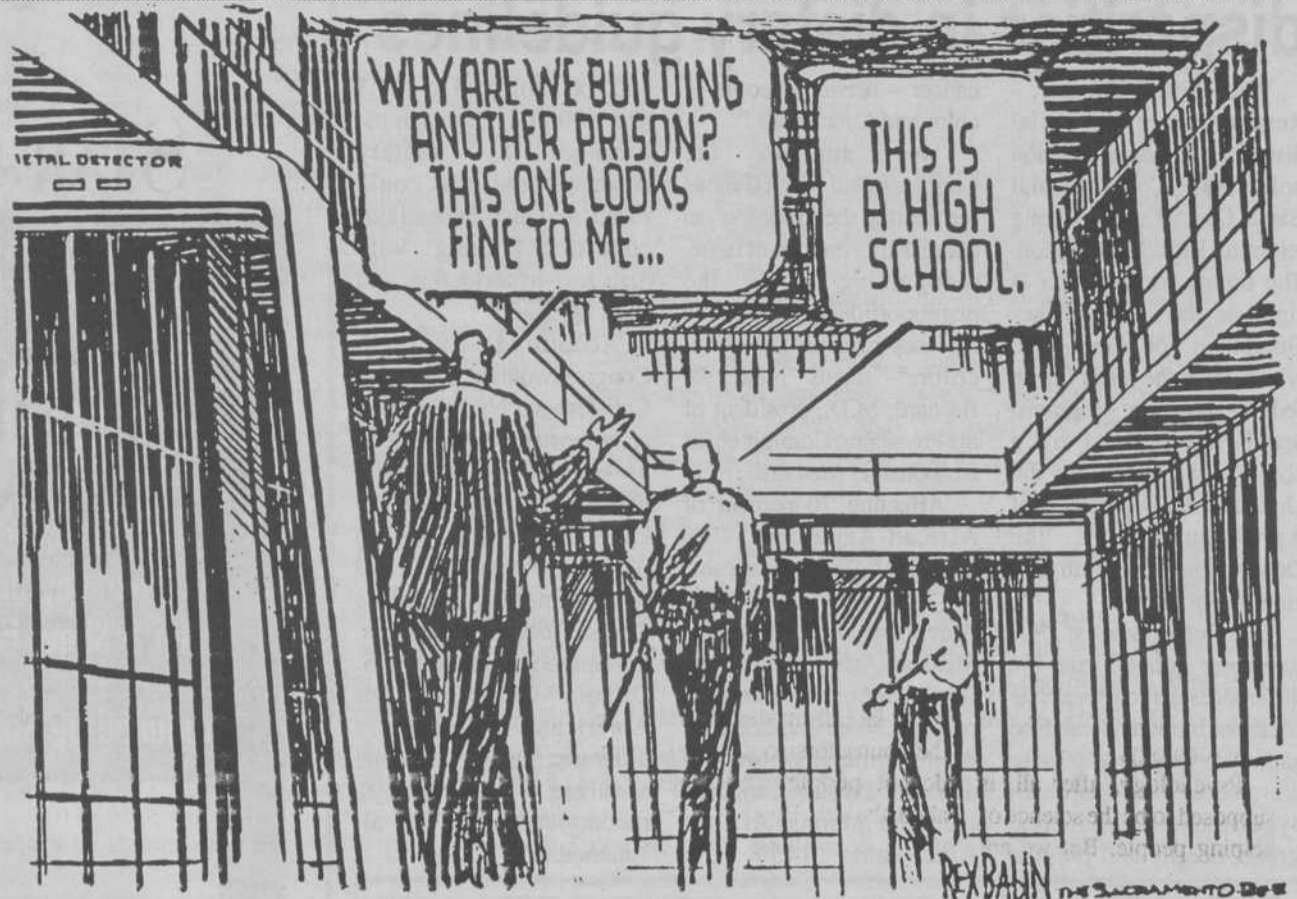
Nationally, ethnic media isn't faring much better. Proctor and Gamble operates a \$3 billion-a-year advertising budget, but nary a dime is spent with minority media. The American Advertising Federation shells out \$53 billion of its \$176 billion-a-year advertising budget on the nation's 1,700 white daily and weekly newspapers. The U.S. Postal Service, Armed Services and U.S. Census Bureau all spend miniscule amounts of money targeting minorities or in minority-owned media outlets.

The Black Press is 172-years-old. Combined, the more than 200 black newspapers do generate \$100 million in advertising revenue annually.

So-called studies of the Black Press by mainstream companies should be examined carefully for skewering of the facts. Several years ago, Sears took money from its Black advertising budget to study the Black Press and then used a Black advertising agency to reduce the number of papers being used.

A growing practice among some advertisers is running smaller, less pricey ads in minority newspapers or refusing to run certain ads at all. Pacific Bell ran 2/3 page ads in the *San Diego Union Tribune* about phone companies changing service without permission, but skipped over ethnic media. Another San Diego newspaper ran an "open letter" to its customers but failed to run the same open letter in the Black-owned *San Diego Voice & Viewpoint*.

All of which brings us full circle to UMC. Any attempt to justify the paltry sums this hospital — which does have minority patients — spends on ethnic media is a slap in the face. Commissioners take heed. When election time comes, minorities might do some slapping at the polls.



Louima gets measure of justice

Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

With the plea bargaining agreement of Justin Volpe and now the conviction of Charles Schwarz in the beating and sodomizing of Abner Louima, one more chapter of the tragic, frightening and on-going tale of New York City police brutality against people of color comes to a close. It's not all over yet since officer Schwarz' lawyer has indicated that they will appeal his conviction and since Mr. Louima has filed a civil suit against New York City for the injury done to him that night. Moreover, not all of the officers who were tried were convicted, but at least some justice has been achieved in one of the most horrible cases of police brutality in this nation.

After the jury's decisions were announced in New York, Mr. Louima indicated his disappointment with the acquittal of those officers whom he claimed had beaten him in the police car on the way to the precinct. Incredibly, it was the police precinct bathroom where he was sodomized with a broken broom handle by Officer Volpe while Officer Schwartz held him down. But, Mr. Louima said that he was gratified to know that finally those who terrorized him that night were being forced to pay for their crimes.

All too often in the few police brutality cases that do reach trial, the jury dismisses the testimony of the victim, choosing to believe the police

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



officers instead. In many cases prosecutors do not even file charges against police or the grand jury refuses to indict them because most Americans still find it difficult to believe that some police officers do harass and sometimes beat people of color. Indeed, it is only because of cases like those of Rodney King, where a bystander videotaped the beating by police or in cases as unsettling as that of Mr. Louima that large numbers of Americans have begun to question the reliability of the blue wall of silence and disavowals. In the Louima case several things happened which changed the usual dynamics of police brutality cases. First of all, there was the horrendous nature of the sexual attack on Mr. Louima, which immediately drew the headlines in the press and a public outcry. Indeed, Zachary Carter, the U.S. Attorney in this case, called it "the most depraved act that's ever been reported or committed by a police officer or police officers against another human being."

And perhaps it was the nature of the attack which brought about the second

break in the "blue wall of silence." That code of silence of police officers, thus called the blue wall, has in the past been almost impossible to break and thus it has been hard to get police officers convicted in cases of police brutality. In the Louima case it was only after four other police officers testified against him, and despite months of denying the allegations, that officer Volpe admitted his guilt in a plea bargain agreement.

But while some justice has been achieved in this case, there still can be no reconciliation in this terrible case. That is because after pleading guilty, Officer Volpe apologized to his

family but refused to apologize to Mr. Louima. Without apology and a request for forgiveness there can be no reconciliation. Without admitting guilt to the injured party, there can be no healing. That is true for Officer Volpe and that is true for the New York City police department.

It's time for an apology, it's time for an admission of guilt and it's time for a request for forgiveness. It's time for all of those from Officer Volpe and from Police Commissioner Saffir. It's time for all of those to Mr. Louima, to the communities of color in New York and the great people of the city of New York as well. The New York City police department has already paid out millions of dollars in settlements to victims of police brutality, but without those admissions of guilt and requests for forgiveness there will be no reconciliation and healing and there will be no true justice. And the brutality will just continue.

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

GRUPO COMUNICACIONES GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 380-8100
Fax (702) 380-8102

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