

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

McDonald appointed but Council must be watched

The Las Vegas City Council now has color. On Monday, the Council appointed UNLV marketing and community services director Lynette Boggs McDonald to serve the remaining two years of Arnie Adamsen's term. Adamsen resigned as Ward 2 councilman to run for mayor but was defeated by Oscar Goodman in the June 8 run-off election.

McDonald's appointment marks the first time in council history a woman and an African-American woman has served. The Sentinel-Voice applauds the Council for exercising good judgement in selecting McDonald for the post. She is eminently qualified, having served amiably in her UNLV post.

From Adamsen's announcement of his mayoral intention, McDonald put on a full-court press for the council seat. She drew some criticism for switching parties — from Democrat to Republican — and was figured only among the top candidates rather than the frontrunner. Failed mayoral candidate Mark Fine pulled himself out of the running as did a former county commissioner.

That said, the Council would be wise to not rest on its laurels. Boggs' appointment does little to buttress any claims the Council might have of being "visionary" or "progressive" in appointing Boggs. She was simply the best candidate.

That said, the Council would also be wise not to point to McDonald as the mouthpiece for African-Americans. Contrary to popular opinion, we are not a monolithic people so enamored with our elected and appointed officials that we will forgive corruption or complacency. McDonald represents Ward 2, a predominantly white district home to upscale residences and portions of Summerlin, the nation's top master-planned community.

Her district stretches from Torrey Pines to the east, Summerlin Parkway to the west, Desert Inn Road to the south and Cheyenne Avenue to north. As such, she doesn't represent the interests of West Las Vegas, per se. She does have a vote and can weigh in all matters affecting the city, thus extending her influence to the area, but she must keep her ear to Northwest constituents, and not West Las Vegas, lest she want to get re-elected.

McDonald has said that the additional two wards will help her better meet the needs of her constituents. The redrawn wards will contain between 75,000 and 77,000 residents as opposed to 112,000.

African-Americans and Hispanics should be wary of how the wards will be redrawn and whom the Council appoints to fill the additional seats. Should the two minorities be shuffled into different wards, the result could put us where we are now: with no representation that looks like us. It's not enough that a Black or Hispanic be appointed. They must stand a chance at getting re-elected for the reapportionment to really be effective.

We must also watch for a repeat of the last reapportionment when African-Americans and Hispanics were hoarded into one ward. With an African-American already on the Council, the Council might appoint a Hispanic to placate the community. That's good, provided they're not being set up as sacrificial lambs.



A new president, a new struggle for South Africa

Richard Muhammad
Special to Sentinel Voice

"Our nights cannot but be nights of nightmares while millions of our people live in conditions of degrading poverty."

—South African President Thabo Mbeki, inauguration speech, June 16, 1999

South Africa marked an important milestone with recent elections and the inauguration of Thabo Mbeki as the new president of the Republic of South Africa. With the ascension of Mbeki, Nelson Mandela, an icon of the liberation struggle, steps down and a new era begins.

Mandela, jailed for 27 years by the brutal apartheid regime, provided a symbol of personal and national reconciliation by forgiving and reaching out to the white minority that oppressed and plundered the country.

For the past five years, Mandela has been an example of Black willingness to forgive whites for centuries of a deadly domination.

Mandela's willingness to lead calls for reconciliation brought accolades from across the globe. Mbeki, however, faces the difficult task of bringing the masses of South Africans closer to the beloved freedom that men, women and children died for.

His job is more challenging given white intransigence and talk of fears of Black domination and protection of minority rights. Mbeki faces unemployment, a shortage of affordable

housing, an AIDS crisis, crime and other real issues. To meet those challenges, even with economic growth, there will have to be a greater willingness to share the wealth and land and to accept taxes necessary to help the poor.

Mbeki's administration has talked about the need to grow the economy from the ground up—but even the best economic times won't make up for a 300 year head start that whites have.

The euphoria of the first all-race elections in 1994 has been replaced with a desire for the masses to see a change in their lives.

ANC officials say with hundreds of thousands of new homes built, improved education and improvement in things like running water in rural areas, they have started that job. It's a big job and South Africa could use a hand to get the job done.

Those who applauded Mandela's conciliatory words and actions should be just as willing to support Mbeki.

True peace can only come with justice and equity, or as Mbeki said, "The full meaning of liberation will not be realized until our people are freed both from oppression and from the dehumanizing legacy of deprivation we inherited from our past."

If the African National Congress can take the position that South Africa belongs to all who live there—regardless of color—

than the white minority must understand that wanton criticism of the Mbeki government and trying to hold on to white privilege can't last.

Young whites must also understand that as Blacks paid a supreme price in the past, small things—hiring goals and affirmative action-type laws—are needed to heal the nation.

Help should also come from Blacks in America, who fought to end apartheid. The thing needed now is not so much protests as investments and paying attention to U.S. policy toward South Africa and all of the Motherland.

Just five years ago, South Africa had its first all-race elections and the African National Congress deserves a chance to make things work. The country still has a racial divide shown in videotaped incidents of white policemen beating Black and colored civilians and shootings of Blacks in rural areas by farmers.

The South African masses

sacrificed their lives and futures for the liberation struggle. They won't stand for being left behind and for having a class gulf replace the racial divide. It's not an easy problem to solve but clearly something has got to give, especially with whites and corporations still controlling the land and economy of the Rainbow Nation.

Sacrifices in South Africa have to be as evenly distributed as possible. The poor have suffered enough and white South Africans have to understand it's in their best interest to willingly share the wealth.

Otherwise a volatile mix of poverty, class differences and race could explode.

(Pan African Vision is written by Richard Muhammad, a Chicago-based author and photographer. Muhammad is the managing editor of *The Final Call* Newspaper, published by Min. Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam.)

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Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102

Contributing Writers:
Loretta Arrington
Lee Brown
Tammy McMahan
Sharon Savage
John T. Stephens III
Fred T. Snyder
Photographers:
John Broussard
Kimberly Edwards
Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor
Lynette Sawyer, General Manager
Dianna Saffold, Business Manager
Catisha Marsh, Associate Editor
Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor
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