



Billboard outrages Westside

**Catisha Marsh
Sentinel-Voice**

"Westside, We've finally been put on the map! One of the highest HIV infection rates in the nation," state billboards put up in the Westside.

The signs have caused an uproar. Several citizens chastized the City Council -- the signs have a city number -- and the group behind the signs.

Donrey Media Group donated the billboards to Fighting Aids in our Community, or F.A.C.T., an organization of 14 or so members who want to address AIDS in the African-American community.

According to F.A.C.T., Clark County has the ninth highest rate of new HIV cases in the nation. Twenty percent of those cases lie within the 89106 zip code region.

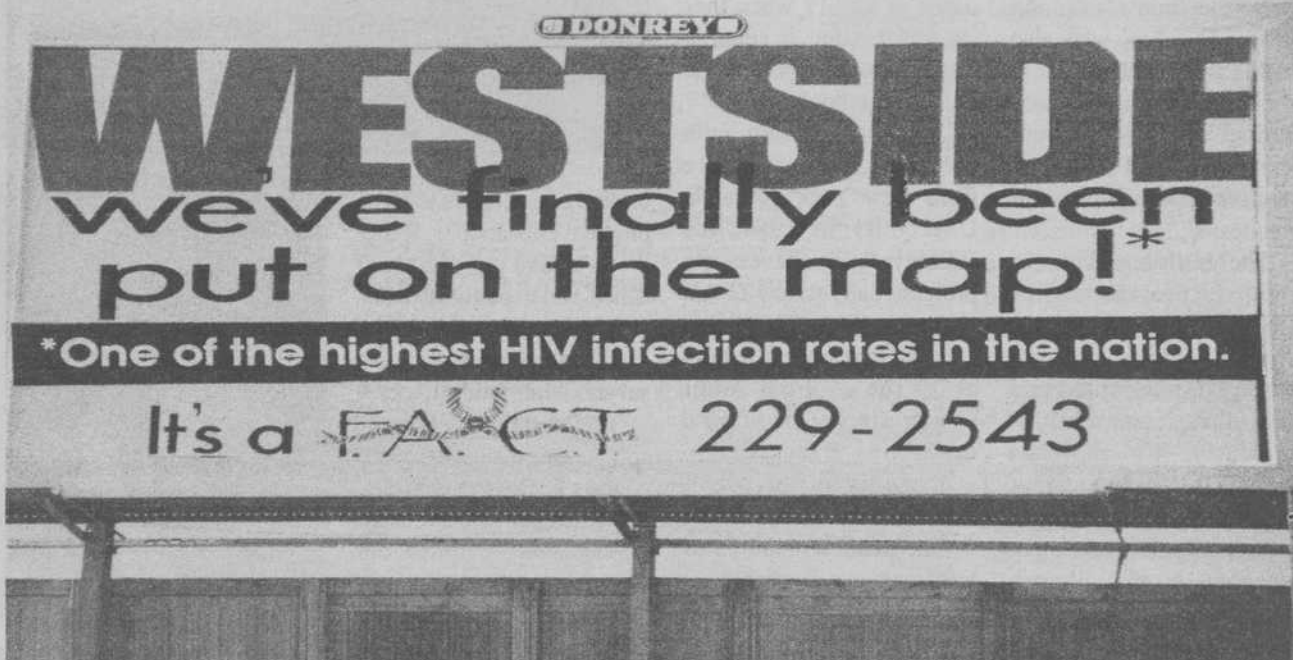
Sixty percent of all new HIV/AIDS infections in

Clark County are African-American. AIDS is also the fastest growing disease and No. 1 killer of black women aged 25 through 44.

Clark County Health District reported 682 cases of AIDS amongst blacks, only 22 percent of total reported cases. District records also indicate that of 2,131 reported HIV infections, 550, or 26 percent are African-American.

Jocelyn Nixon, president of Magic Eye Marketing and Productions and a F.A.C.T. committee member thought of the idea.

"A group of concerned community members came together thinking that the statistics were so horrible that we needed to get people's attention," Nixon said. "I wanted to let the community know what's going on so that they would be as astounded as we were and get ready to do something about it to



LV Sentinel-Voice photo by Isadore Washington

Billboards donated by Donrey Media and put up in the predominantly African-American Westside tout the community as one of the nation's 10 worst regarding HIV/AIDS infection rates. The signs have stirred the ire of West Las Vegas.

reduce the numbers." Nixon said the group originally planned to use

actual statistics, but the city health department disputed the numbers.

"I thought we were avoiding controversy by not using numbers," she said.

"I was devastated when I saw that," said Anthony (See Fact, Page 4)

Minority programs cut

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Minority programs, including "Community Matters" and the annual "African-American History Challenge," are among the 13 shows to be sacrificed in cost-cutting moves at KLVX-TV Channel 10.

The moves are being made to stunt the effects of \$550,000 in budget cuts. The 1999 Legislature didn't renew the one-shot funds allocated in the previous biennial session.

The 1995 and 1997 Legislatures allocated nearly \$5 million to the state university system for distance education courses. The universities hired Channel 10 to produce and transmit TV programs.

Expected budget shortfalls prompted legislators not to renew the monies and the university system did not allocate the same funds.

"The easy thing to do would be to cancel those programs (for the university system) and fire the people

associated with them," station general manager Tom Axtell said.

"Instead, we decided to look at our priorities as a public television station. We asked ourselves questions like: 'What programs helped children get through school? What programs failed to achieve corporate sponsorship? ... We decided to eliminate programs with low viewership and low levels of support.'"

Thirteen shows are being cut with nine full-time and two part-time employees getting the boot. Eight full-time and nine part-time time positions that had a hiring freeze placed on them last year will be completely eliminated. Twenty-three part-time businesses who contract with the station will also get cut off.

"I'm sad....," said Barbara Robinson, host of "Community Matters." "They have a \$5 million budget. How come only ethnic produced shows in Las Vegas get cut? They don't

feel like they have a responsibility. They don't feel any commitment. I've never gotten any support from the station ... The station is also owned and operated by taxpayer's money. Why should the station just represent white folks? All of us pay taxes."

"I didn't even know the show had been cut," said Dr. Linda Penton Dougan, who ran the "African-American History Challenge." "I'm very upset. It was only on once a year and the show was done in conjunction with other organizations. Someone needs to be held accountable."

Axtell said deciding what shows were cancelled was difficult, but ultimately based on those with low viewership and revenue -- could the show cover most of the operating costs.

"There were zero viewers for 'Community Matters,'" Axtell said, adding that at one time the show had 2,000 viewers, but nary any viewers (See Robinson, Page 16)



HER HONOR

The Las Vegas City Council at a recent council meeting swore in its first female councilwoman during its July 12 meeting. Lynette Boggs McDonald is also the council's first African-American female. She was sworn in by Mayor Oscar Goodman. McDonald is the director of marketing and community relations at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. From 1994 to 1997, she was assistant city manager for the city.

Photo special to LV Sentinel-Voice