

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Dedicated servant empowered EOB

James W. Tyree came aboard the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County 30 years ago. In the decades since, the World War II, Korea and Vietnam veteran helped scores of residents capture a piece of their dreams via innovative programs. Now, he's calling it quits.

Tyree leaves a legacy of compassion and vision — a legacy that he never figured on in a city that he didn't like.

At first blush, Tyree wasn't very impressed with Las Vegas, having visited the city in 1946 on a honeymoon and getting a cold shoulder because of his race. A military man accustomed to moving, he found himself back in Las Vegas, stationed at Nellis Air Force Base.

He retired from the military in the late 1960s and in 1969 joined EOB as a volunteer management analyst, becoming deputy director the next year and executive director in 1983. Battle tested via civil rights activism and his war efforts — he was one of the first African-American men to enter the Marine Corps in World War II — Tyree eagerly took on the challenge of lifting the community-oriented organization to prominence. Under his leadership, the nonprofit group expanded its budget from \$1.5 million to \$32 million and increased the scope of programming to assist low-income residents. He piloted EOB through various storms, including a coup attempt by the Black Panthers.

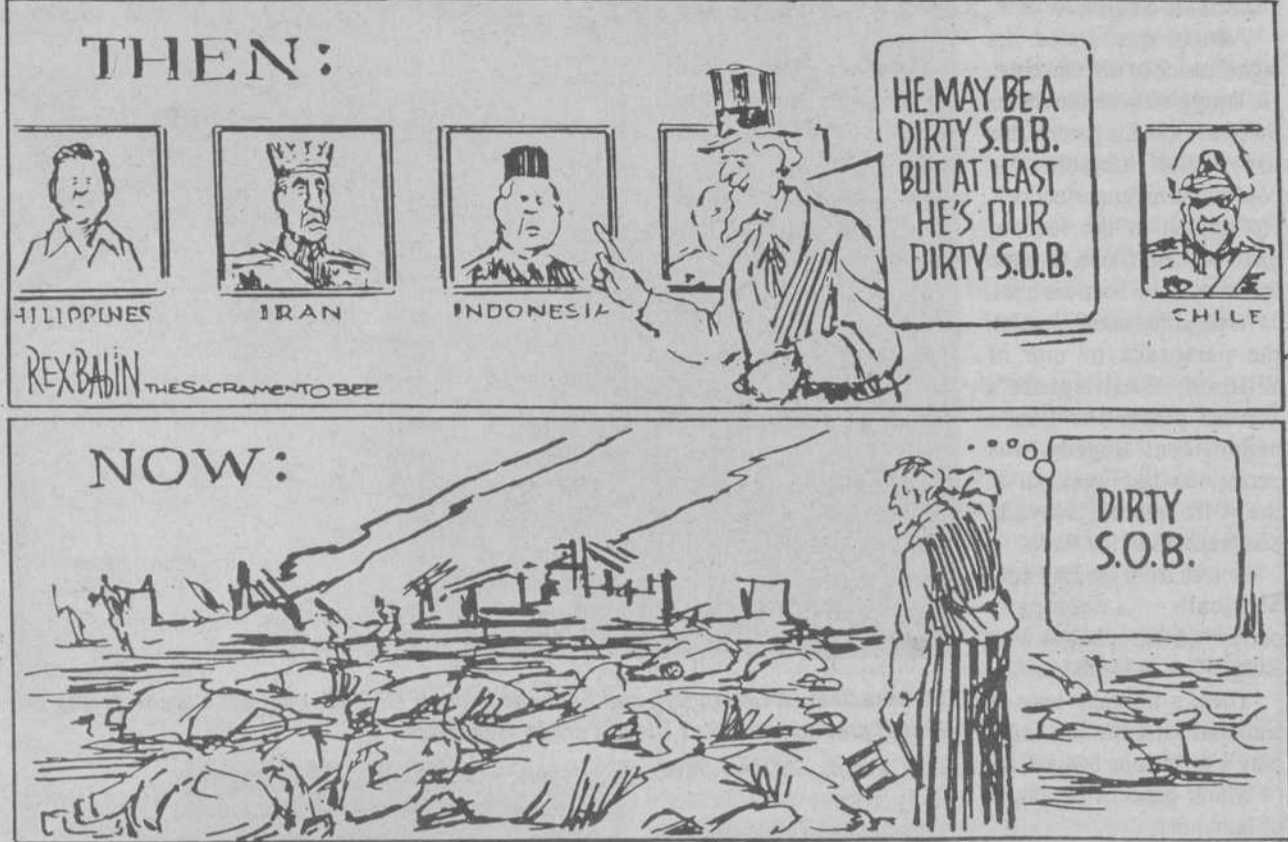
"Poverty can strip people of the opportunity to live in decency and dignity," he said. "Hard-working people in the U.S. (United States) shouldn't have to live in poverty. People have died for what this country has to offer. Still, battling poverty in Clark County has been a struggle. Although EOB serves all low-income people, regardless of their ethnic background, people have always associated the EOB with the black community. However, the black community has not always been in agreement with how to fight poverty and there has been a lot of opposition to EOB throughout the years."

No matter the challenge, Tyree met with resilience and compassion. His service is to be commended.

Northern Nevadan leaves rich civic legacy

Our neighbors to the north lost a legend last week. Bertha Woodard, architect of the Reno chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, died at 83. Among her many accomplishments, perhaps the most noted was a 1959 petition she pushed that lifted the ban on minorities in casinos and the successful drive to remove signs from Reno stores that read, "No Indians, Negroes or Dogs."

Woodard's death means university students that were scheduled to assist her with compiling a history of the Northern Nevada civil rights movement will have to progress without her voice. Woodard led sit-ins and organized pickets, including a picket line in front of the Overland Hotel and Harold's Club in Reno demanding equal access for Blacks. In the 1950s, she led the effort to change the policy at the El Capitan Casino which had the only restaurant in Hawthorne and refused service to Blacks. Woodard will definitely be missed.



Blacks like Bush, but does GOP like them

Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At first glance, the new poll from the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies that shows more than 40 percent of Black voters like Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush seems preposterous. The supreme article of faith in American politics is that Blacks are the ultimate Democratic party loyalists.

In recent presidential elections, the Democratic candidate has grabbed 80 to 85 percent of the Black vote. Since less than 50 percent of Whites vote for Democrats, this cinch Black vote is the cushion that the Democrat presidential contender must have to win the White House. Despite this idee fixe in American politics there are good reasons why Black leaders and Democrats should not ignore or ridicule the Center's poll.

The Joint Center is no fly-by-night outfit. It is one of the nation's oldest and most respected Black think tanks. Many elected officials and political analysts rely on its polls and surveys to gauge the mood of African Americans.

Another reason to take the poll seriously is that blacks are more prosperous than ever and more conservative than many think. Two recent polls by the Center confirm this. It found that for the first time ever more Blacks than Whites claimed they were better off financially in 1998 than the

year before.

It also found that the a majority of Blacks favor stiffer sentences for drug use, violent crime, and three-strike offenses, and generally support school vouchers.

Finally, Black leaders must know that many Blacks reflexively vote Democratic not because of any inherent belief that Democrats offer everything for them, but because they feel Republicans offer nothing for them. And, Republicans have no one but themselves to blame. They have blown every chance they've had to attract more Blacks to their ranks.

The Colin Powell debacle in the 1996 presidential election was a near textbook example of how Republicans have mastered the knack of turning black voters from potential political friends into enemies.

The general was universally liked by all voters, liberals, moderates and even many conservatives. But, he never got out of the Republican box. The major conservative groups ganged up on him and threatened to wage war against him if he actively sought the Republican nomination. The general didn't have the right stuff for many in the Republican party.

However, if the party had embraced Powell, and he had actively ran for the Republican presidential nominee, it would have

forced large numbers of Blacks to listen and ponder the party's political message. This would have posed deep political peril for the Democrats. Blacks make up a big part of the population in the states that control the majority of the nation's electoral votes.

But, Republicans mistreat Black voters for another reason. They, like most Americans, buy the myth that Blacks are doctrinaire Democrats. For nearly a half century following Reconstruction the Democratic Party was the party of segregation and Jim Crow. Blacks by necessity were staunch Republicans. The first dozen Black elected congressional officeholders were Republicans.

During the Depression, Blacks leaped at FDR's promise of jobs and relief by voting overwhelmingly Democratic. But, they did not totally abandon the Republicans. In 1956, Republican president Dwight

Eisenhower sent the first civil rights bill since Reconstruction to Congress. The same year, Ike grabbed 40 percent of the Black vote to win reelection. In 1960, Richard Nixon also received a sizable percentage of Black vote against John Kennedy.

The Democrats regained the Black vote in 1964 because Lyndon Johnson made good on his civil rights pledge and also because Blacks felt that Republican candidate Barry Goldwater's platform of "states' rights" sent a strong signal they were not wanted in the party. Blacks got the same negative signal from Nixon. Powell criticized his former bosses Ronald Reagan and George Bush for not showing more sensitivity on racial matters.

Despite the three decade-long cold shoulder from Republicans, many prominent Blacks such as Powell and Alan Keyes still vigorously support the party. And, in the few places where

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