

Hispanics mount launching pad to political power

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A veritable "Who's Who" in Nevada's Latino community was on hand this past weekend at the Community College of Southern Nevada's Cheyenne campus for the 3rd Annual Hispanic Leadership Summit.

The theme was "Reshaping Hispanic America in the 21st Century."

Also in the crowd were non-Spanish speaking dignitaries, including Nevada's senators and one of its members of the House, as well as the White House Deputy Chief of Staff, a latina.

Conventioneers met in some 30 workshops, seminars and training sessions and discussed issues critical to Latinos, including immigration and the upcoming census, voter registration and getting people to actually vote, community policing, and access to media and its shaping of minority images.

Over two days Hispanic leaders outlined strategies to forge a formidable political presence in Nevada politics.

County Commissioner Dario Herrera, a rapidly rising star among Latinos in elective office, gave an overview of his community's growing clout in remarks on "The Role of Hispanics in Politics," noting the prodigious voting bloc Latinos represent.

This was manifest in the razor-thin margin of victory last year for incumbent Sen.

Harry Reid, D-Nev., who paid homage to Hispanic voters as having been indispensable in his successful effort to retain his seat, and was described by Herrera as "the second most powerful Democrat in the entire United States, the highest ranking a senator for Nevada has ever achieved, and we made a difference in him being there."

Following remarks by Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman, Herrera reflected on the controversial maneuvering at City Hall to appoint a councilperson from the newly-created Ward 6.

Commenting on how Latinos have been criticized for producing more than one candidate, he called the criticism unjust and "kind of ironic because the Hispanic community isn't the only one offering more than one candidate. The majority community offers a whole bunch of candidates and no one criticizes that. They celebrate that there's more than one qualified individual, and yet the Hispanic community gets criticized for that."

He asked listeners "have we been given all that we deserve? No. But the more important question is are we making real progress. We're in the best position ever to affect the dreams of our children ... to reach out and lift the spirit of our beautiful community ... to make a real impact."

Exhorting the crowd, he said, "It's not only my job to



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Hundreds attended the third annual Hispanic Leadership Summit at the Community College of Southern Nevada.

make sure the Hispanic community is taken care of, it's all of our jobs ... but I think there's no time like the present. Let's not wait for somebody else to do it, (or) become the justification for the criticism that's aimed at us. Stand up and proudly proclaim that I, as a Hispanic-American, can accomplish anything, (and) can and will make a difference. The bottom line is the only thing holding us back is ourselves."

A seminar, "The Future of Hispanic/Latino Power," featured Dr. Raymond Sandoval, a political analyst, and civic activist Fernando Romero, a Nevada Power Services executive who, although not one of the apparent favorites among city council members, is nevertheless a popular aspirant for the Ward 6 seat.

Romero, an alumnus of UNLV, is a co-founder of its chapter of the African-American fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi.

His experience with the black and Latino struggle for political empowerment was evident in his call for activism among his people — now, not later.

"Mañana is never here, tomorrow never comes. Tomorrow is today and we have to start thinking along those lines," he said.

Nineteen years of Latino political involvement in Clark County has produced "only 5 elected officials who are Hispanic in a city of 1.2 million," he said. "That is embarrassing, it is something that should wake us up and forget about mañana, and wake us up right now."

(See Hispanics, Page 6)

Unmasked KKK greeted by thousands of protesters

NEW YORK (AP) — After days of legal maneuvering about their rights to rally, Ku Klux Klan members stood silently inside a pen fashioned from police barricades on Saturday and literally faced the jeers of thousands of protesters.

New York City succeeded in unmasking the Klan when a federal appeals court ruled Friday that the city could refuse to permit the event if participants insisted on wearing their traditional masks. The Klan contingent wore their traditional pointed hats, minus the usual face cover.

Police reported seven arrests, all counter-demonstrators, on a variety of charges — including one man who allegedly assaulted a Klansman just prior to the rally by 16 Klan members outside a courthouse in lower Manhattan. He and two other men posed as Klan members to infiltrate the group.

"Death to the Klan!" shouted one of the trio as

police led them off. The other two men were charged with disorderly conduct.

James Sheeley of the New York and New Jersey KKK suffered a scrape on his cheek when three men jumped the real Klan members as they walked into the pen.

Denied a city permit to use a sound system, the Klan stood silently inside the pen, surrounded by police officers in riot helmets. The Klan members — including two women — were joined by two skinheads, one sporting a "White Power" patch.

"We can't get our message out," complained Jeffrey Berry, the national Imperial Wizard of the American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. "We are silenced."

While the Klan had predicted that up to 80 of its members would turn out, barely more than a dozen appeared. Berry said it was the ban on masks, not the protesters, that kept attendance down.

The crowd of anti-Klan

protesters, estimated at about 6,000, jeered and shouted angrily at the Klan as it walked out. There were about 2,000 onlookers, police said. "We're fired up! No more talk! Klan crawl back under your rock!" they chanted.

Three police officers were injured trying to control the angry anti-Klan crowd, said Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Among those demonstrating against the

Klan were several people who had argued for their right to rally — including Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., and civil rights lawyer Ron Kuby.

"We protect the right of free speech even if it is stupid and hate speech," said Nadler.

The rally ended after 75 minutes, with the Klan members flashing a Nazi salute to the crowd and shouting, "White pride!" (See New York KKK, Pg 9)

Lawyer: Dragging defendant no racist

JASPER, Texas (AP) — A lawyer for the last man to stand trial for the dragging death of a black man tried to distance his client from the two white supremacists already sentenced to death for the slaying, declaring the defendant "is not a racist."

As Shawn Allen Berry's trial opened on Monday, attorney Joseph C. "Lum" Hawthorn told 132 potential jurors that his client "was not a racist, has no racist writings, is not a member of any white supremacist group, has no racial tattoos."

Both John William King and Lawrence Russell Brewer, convicted and sentenced to death for the 1998 murder of James Byrd Jr, were members of a white supremacist prison gang, the Confederate Knights of America, while jailed together.

By contrast, Berry "has no motive for committing a racial hate crime," Hawthorn said. "And he did not."

Berry, 24, is the youngest of the men accused of chaining Byrd, 49, to the back of a Berry's truck in the early morning hours of June 7, 1998, then dragging him nearly three miles over a bumpy country road just outside Jasper, about 125 miles northeast of Houston.

Byrd's shredded torso, minus his head, an arm and shoulder, was discovered after daylight, dumped at the end of a road directly between a black cemetery and church. The site, prosecutors said, was deliberate and meant to deliver a hate message.

If jurors convict Berry of capital murder, they must choose between a life prison term and a death sentence. A life term would keep Berry imprisoned for 40 years before he could become eligible for parole.

Texas has no hate crime law, and a jury need not decide Berry ever held racist beliefs before sentencing him to death.

Jasper County District Attorney Guy James Gray told jurors Berry has given differing versions of the crime to authorities and to reporters.

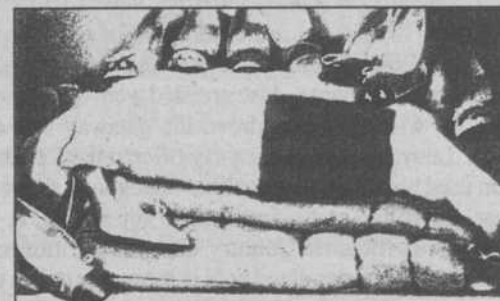
At issue, he said, is "Shawn Berry's credibility, what he has said compared to facts and the crime scene."

"You will measure those statements against each other to see if he's truthful ... and measure those statements against known proven forensic facts once they're established in this courtroom."

Of the 170 potential jurors who arrived in court Monday, 38 were excused quickly for medical or other reasons.

Individual questioning of the 132 remaining potential jurors — 19 of them black — is scheduled to begin today.

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