

LAS VEGAS

Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 44

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

March 2, 2000

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Businessman blames loss of contract on racism

Al Triche
Sentinel-Voice

Jim Chaney, founder and chief executive officer of Smart Start, Inc., a local daycare center, claims a state agency used predatory methods to place itself in direct competition with him and, driven largely by racism, destroy him in the marketplace.

"They used other programs to try to put us out of business," said Chaney, who is convinced there's far more than competition motivating the state. "No question about it!" he exclaimed, "It's race."

As part of a federal lunch program, he had operated multiple sites in West Las Vegas where Smart Start served free meals to children of low-income families. He said the state began opening sites of its own, in some cases practically next-door to his.

Expanding in 1993 by serving cold meals to students during vacation, Smart Start's new service was given the misnomer "Summer Food Program." It actually operated year-round by feeding students on district-scheduled "track breaks." But the state regulated the business as if it operated only

in summer, greatly restricting Chaney's plans for the program's growth.

And things got worse. Last September the state canceled its contract with Smart Start to serve meals, effectively causing the food service to close the next month. The Department of Education indicated unallowable expenses and poor management of accounting and production records as reasons for the cancellation.

But Chaney said his large operation could easily justify its expenses, calling the charges fabricated and grossly misleading. Three

weeks ago he filed suit in district court against the state, and charged it with denying payment for legitimate expenses and with breach of contract.

Describing an intricate web that involved federal departments of agriculture and health, and state education department offices both in Carson City and in Las Vegas, he then accused the state of industrial espionage and sabotage. According to Chaney, the state conspired to disable his food program through unfair practices, and attributes much of his trouble to a pair of state

employees, one at the capital and one here.

He says they are Pat Cook in Carson City, who monitors nutrition programs as part of the state's "Health Team," and Diane Hogan, her counterpart in Las Vegas.

When contacted by the *Sentinel-Voice*, Cook, speaking through her office, declined to take the call. Hogan, speaking by phone and referring to Smart Start, said: "I'm not going to talk about that."

"I filed a discrimination charge against them," said Chaney, who insists the cancellation of his contract

was, in part, retaliation for taking that action. The complaint was made in 1997 to the Nevada Equal Rights Commission and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Chaney said he filed the charge in response to threats which, themselves, were retaliation. He said they came from state officials in reprisal for his friendship with another black food service provider who, like Chaney, had fallen into disfavor with the state.

Continuing to speak of his food service in the present tense, Chaney said: "I think

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Diallo cops not out of woods yet

NEW YORK (AP) — With a cascade of 24 "not guilty," the Amadou Diallo murder trial ended in an upstate New York courtroom. But the highly publicized case, with its overtones of racism and police brutality, promises to linger long past the verdict.

The shooting joined Howard Beach, Bensonhurst and Abner Louima as shorthand for racial problems in the nation's largest city. Protests began almost immediately after Diallo died Feb. 4, 1999, with movie stars, politicians and protesters lining up to get arrested outside Police Headquarters.

The shooting of Diallo, an unarmed West African immigrant, by four white police officers will echo in the way that the New York Police Department identifies possible suspects. And the firing of 41 shots in Diallo's cramped apartment house vestibule will likely be relived in a civil lawsuit. A federal investigation is already underway, and departmental charges against the officers, who remain on the job, are also possible.

The case looms as a likely issue in this year's U.S. Senate race between Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who made a misstep by calling the Diallo case a "tragic murder" before the trial began.

Nationally, most of the major party presidential candidates and others felt compelled to issue statements after Friday's verdict.

"This news reopens the wounds of distrust," the Rev. Jesse Jackson said. "And the healing process that had begun turns to mourning once again."

Other New York City communities have drawn national attention for racial strife, including Bensonhurst, where a black youth was killed by a white mob in 1989, and Howard Beach, where a gang of whites attacked a black man in 1986, chasing him onto a highway where he was killed by a car.

In the summer of 1997, Haitian immigrant Abner Louima was sodomized with a broomstick in a Brooklyn police station.

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DUO TRIO

UCCSN Regent David Phillips shares a moment with Durango High student Jarrett Varnado during National Trio Day.

Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy
Omar Marshall receives some computer tips from Seed Tech advisor Mildred Walker.

West pupils wired into high tech center

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

Charles I. West Middle School pupils last week celebrated the grand opening of one of three computer labs stationed in technologically depressed areas of Las Vegas.

SeedTech is a computer training lab initiative sponsored by the Department of Justice, Weed & Seed, City of Las Vegas, Neighborhood Services and Parks and Leisures divisions, the Urban Technology Center, Inc. and the Clark County School District.

"They need this," said Clark County School Board Trustee Shirley Barber said of the center as 30 children

eagerly awaited use of the new computers and software. "It'll make the difference and help our children."

There are three labs in the valley — the Stupak Community Center Lab, 300 W. Boston Ave., at Booker Elementary Lab at 2277 N Martin Luther King Blvd., and finally West Community Center Lab at 2050 Sapphire Stone. They feature state of the art computers, courseware, curriculum and community training, and internet.

"Kids will be introduced to wordprocessing, e-mail, and the Internet," Weed & Seed Executive Director

(See Computers, Page 6)