

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Stop athlete violence

If you take a problem child out of a problem environment, you've only solved half the problem.

The sports pages of Anypaper USA bear this out. Here's a brief recount: Carolina Panthers receiver Ray Carruth arrested for murder; Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis acquitted of murder; Green Bay Packers tight end Mark Chmura accused of rape; former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Jim Drunkmiller accused of rape; Tony Martin tied to a cocaine distribution ring in Miami; former Kansas City Chiefs kick returner Tamerick Vanover fingered in a Missouri-Texas drug-peddling operation. Let's not forget the numerous legal travails of former NFLers Bam Morris and Lawrence Phillips.

The list goes on and even stretches to college: UCLA women's player arraigned; former Florida State wide receivers shoplifting; North Carolina hoopsters involved in brawl. Everyday, or so it seems, some collegiate athlete is getting arrested, be it for burglary or assault.

High school athletes are starting to get into the act. One nationally-prized recruit was arrested for breaking curfew, this after he was previously arrested on marijuana possession charges.

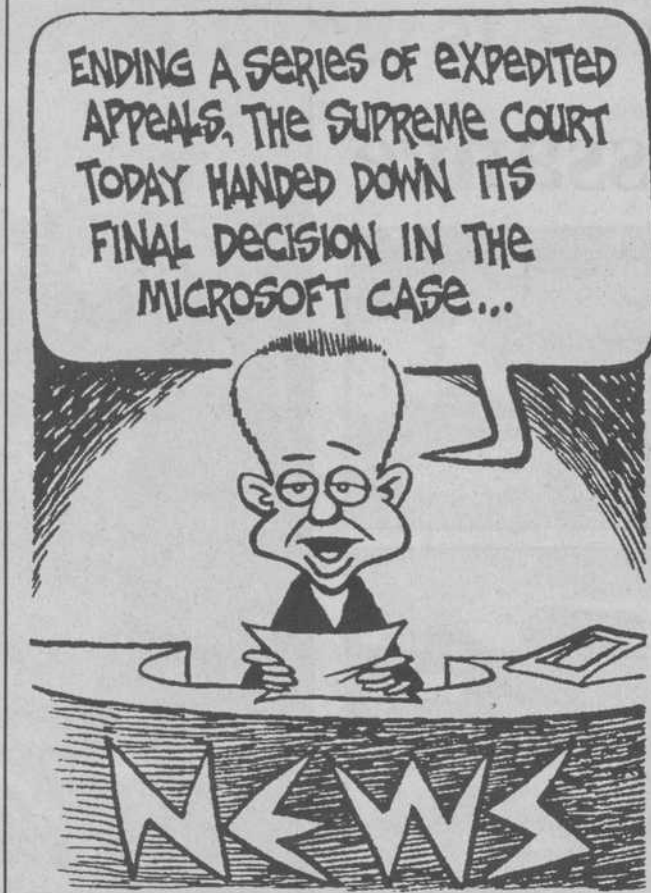
Major sports are making people fabulously rich, but what's being done to address the athletes' foibles?

Nike addresses the trend of athlete-involved violence in a commercial narrated by Marion Jones, the world's fastest woman. She asks, for all of us, the reasons behind the violence and encourages athletes — and parents and society — to rally and address the issue. In the commercial, Jones refers to a comment former NBA star Charles Barkley said years ago about athletes not being role models. The comment sparked a firestorm of criticism, with many in the press vilifying Sir Charles. They berated his oft-humorous, sometimes-violent antics and chided him as a hypocrite. Jones rightly points out that Barkley wasn't shirking the responsibility accompanying the limelight, instead he was calling for more parental involvement in the lives of young athletes and young people in general.

Many of today's newly rich athletes come from rough environments. Most are coddled through college — if they even go. College coaches treat minor infractions as mere blips on the moral radar screen and many of the more serious problems never crack public conscious. It's only when a sin is so egregious — and undeniable, i.e., the media knows about it — that university administrators stand at attention. Then the spin-doctoring begins. Coaches retreat to soundbites and avoid denigrating the star player. The university assures that the matter will be addressed. Given this, it's no wonder why some athletes think they're untouchable.

Sooner or later, professional riches beckon and these coddled athletes carry their baggage to the pros. But now the game changes. Pro leagues are image-conscious. There is less spin-doctoring, fewer second changes, little protective cover. Mess up and expect to pay, money. Mess up bad and pay with your career, if not your freedom.

The NFL tacitly acknowledges the need to ingratiate the young rich into the moors of a professional athlete. But neither it, nor any pro league can follow these athletes home, back to the projects or the hood. They can't be the voice of reason when lifelong friends are encouraging them into crime. They can't force them to disassociate with the neighborhoods, nor forget turf rivalries. Sure, these athletes can move far away, but the problem remains, in their neighborhoods, inside them.



Education issue could determine sway of black vote

•Lee Hubbard  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore and Republican candidate George W. Bush patrol empty hallways, extolling their educational plans on television ads, many parents of school-age children — especially African Americans — are scrutinizing each man's credentials as "the education candidate."

Education has emerged as a key campaign issue, especially for low and moderate-income parents in the inner cities—people who have historically been forced to send their children to public schools. Now, many are opting out of the educational mainstream, seeking answers in charter, Catholic, Afrocentric, Christian and secular private schools.

"I am doing a lot of praying and hard working," says Monique Chancellor, a 34-year-old single mother who has four children in a Christian private school in Oakland. While it would be financially easier for her to send her children to an Oakland public school, she doesn't, making sacrifices and using scholarship help to educate her kids. "Unless you are right there on the teacher," she says there are "so many interruptions it is hard for the students to learn in the public schools."

She's not alone in her opinion. "I thought the environment was a lot better at the private school [than the public school]," says

Rosalind Alzheimer, another mother who has her daughter in an Oakland private school. "There is more discipline. And in a public school, you are labeled as a number rather than as an individual."

Education has clearly become the number one issue in this country, and especially in the current presidential campaign. Gore has touted his American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association teachers' union endorsements, his support for charter schools, and his plans to connect every classroom and library to the Internet during his first presidential term.

Bush, on the other hand, points to his record in Texas, where test scores are up in all areas, especially among Black and Hispanic students. Bush has made "accountability" and "local control" the two main themes of his educational stump speech, and he has called failing schools a "national emergency."

According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, it's a tight race: 44 percent of the American people think that Bush would "do the best job on education," as opposed to 41 percent who pick Gore. While the polling data reflect American opinions regarding national education policy, it is at the local level that the rubber meets the road.

In Black communities, education has long been a primary concern. While the public school system is working for some, it is failing oth-

ers, a gap that is evident in the disparities of opinions surrounding public education in suburban versus urban settings.

According to a 1999 poll for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Black think tank, 60 percent of whites had a favorable opinion of their public schools, while only 40 percent of Blacks had a favorable opinion of theirs. And another Joint Center survey found that 60 percent of Blacks supported school vouchers, with the percentage rising to 70 for Blacks between the ages of 26 and 35.

"Everything stems from education," said Mikel Holt, the author of "Not Yet Free At Last," a new book that focuses on inner city education in Milwaukee. "If you look at unemployment, the criminal justice system, and dysfunctional families, you can trace this back to a lack of a cultural foundation and a miseducation."

Bush has called for a federally funded voucher program for children trapped in failing schools. Gore, calling the Bush plan a risky scheme, reiterated the need for enforced teacher standards as the key to solving the shortcomings of urban schools.

But these long-term policy proposals don't address the more immediate needs felt by many in African American communities. Private scholarship programs like the one run by the Independent Institute, an Oakland-based non-partisan think tank, help fill the gap by providing funds to help children grades K-12 attend the schools of their family's choice.

"People who have children are getting into our program and taking their children out of the public schools," said Robert Latham, an Institute spokesman. "They feel that private schools are offering them a quality education, a safer environment and better oppor- (See Education, Page 15)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

**LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice**

GRUOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102

Contributing Writers:  
Lee Brown  
Tammy McMahan  
Rainier Spencer  
John T. Stephens III  
Fred T. Snyder  
Al Triche

Photographers:  
John Broussard  
Kimberly Edwards  
Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief  
Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor  
Don Snook, Graphics  
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association