



# Battle brewing over NAACP revamp

Former branch president plans to oppose national's reorganization

Determined to create a new branch in Las Vegas, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has appointed an administrator to manage the process. The former head of the now-defunct local chapter plans to fight the organization's recent suspension of its charter, but an NAACP executive says the ousted local official will be "shadow boxing."

The association announced last week that its board of directors had voted to suspend the charter and officers of Branch 1111 for mismanagement of the Las Vegas chapter and violations of the organization's bylaws for branches. The NAACP calls the action irrevocable, nevertheless, some of its members here are challenging the decision.

Calls to the branch late last week were answered with a recorded message that said: "Unfortunately, our charter has been suspended. We no longer operate as a branch." It directed calls regarding complaints to the NAACP national office.

**"We need to be clear, there is no NAACP in Las Vegas. No one has the authority to act except myself and the administrator."**

—Nelson Rivers III, NAACP Director of National Field Operations

Two days after the announcement, Gene Collins - who until last week was president of the branch - defiantly conducted an open, public meeting at the branch offices to plan a response to the suspension. "We think that due process has been ignored," he said on Friday.

But a spokesman for the NAACP Branch and Field Services Department says that has been the precise objective of the suspension proceedings. "It took so long because of the due process, and because this was an extraordinary step," said Nelson Rivers III, Director of National Field Operations.

Collins says a news release issued by the NAACP announcing the suspension, which he received, was not the proper, "official" letter he says is required according to the association's rules. Rivers countered, saying communication between headquarters and the branch has been an ongoing problem.

"We faxed him the letter immediately and sent it to him by registered mail. We notify the officers, the branch president and secretary. We can't, quite frankly, determine who the secretary is. We've had registered mail that hasn't been picked up in the past and faxes that have gone unacknowledged," said

Rivers.

The NAACP's top troubleshooter was in Las Vegas last Friday, saying he came "to look into this matter, talk with members and examine property. I've talked with banking officials, some of the members and the media," Rivers said.

Shortly after the public meeting, Collins appeared on a local TV news program and accused the NAACP, President Kweisi Mfume and Board Chairman Julian Bond of "selling out." He claims the national body has been undermining its Las Vegas branch in order to take from it what he feels is considerable influence with the gambling industry, and cited examples of what he considers NAACP subterfuge.

National officials, according to Collins, want to supplant the branch in deals with the MGM Grand Hotel that Collins says involve \$100 million. "One was diversity and we think the other was the job fair, the same thing

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## Ministers organize to stop violence

John T Stephens III  
Sentinel-Voice

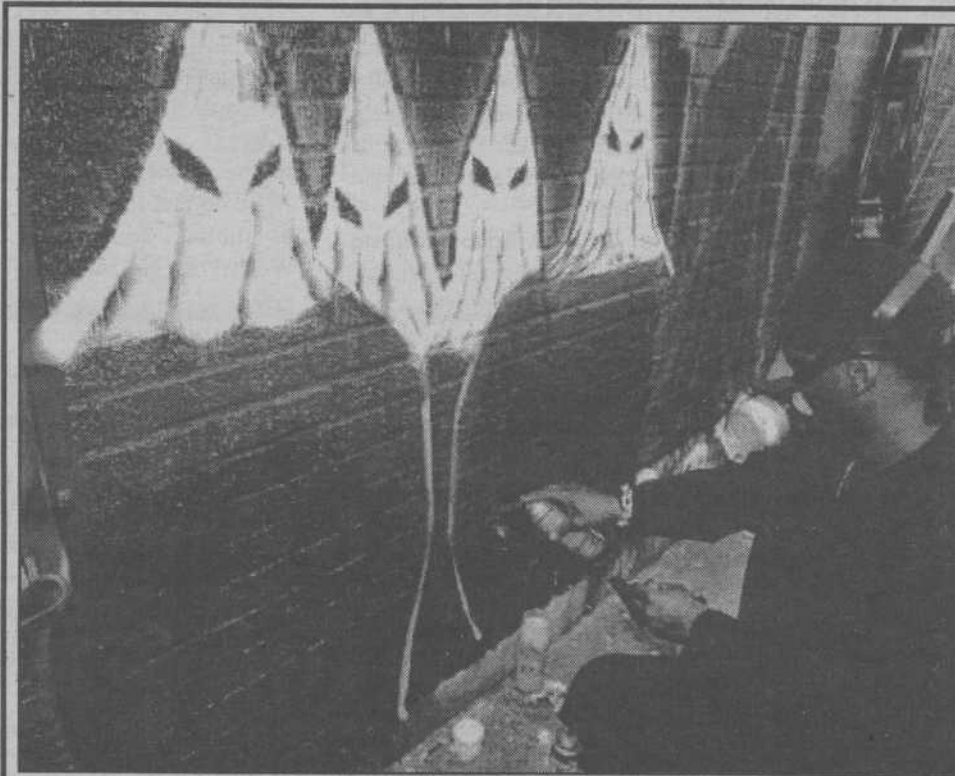
The Ministers Alliance Association of Southern Nevada (MAASN) will conduct a march and community rally this weekend to stop violence in the African-American community. Education, vocational training, job placement and referral, amnesty for bench warrants and misdemeanors pending in court top the list of "things to do" to make a difference in the community.

"We need the community to know that the churches and pastors are for positive change in the community," said Dr. McTheron Jones, consultant director to the Ministers Alliance. "It would be bad for the churches not to come forward."

The new ministers' organization was founded in 1996 and consists of 52 affiliated pastors and churches.

The alliance considers employment to be the significant factor and key to stopping the killings in West Las Vegas and North Las Vegas. "We see the need to give people jobs as a way to curb the violence," Jones said. "Unemployment,

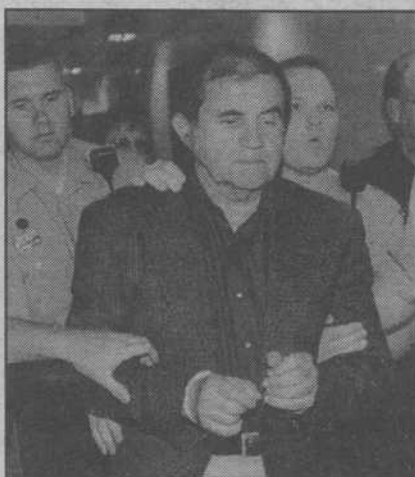
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### WILL OF THE PEOPLE

Harlem artist Hulbert Waldroup repaints the figures depicting police in Klan hoods Friday, in the Bronx borough of New York, just hours after the mural was vandalized. The store owner store who commissioned the mural said he asked the artist to repaint the figures because they represented "the will of the people." The 20-by-35-foot mural, painted on an exterior wall of a store a half block from the vestibule where Diallo was shot, was unveiled Tuesday.

Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputies lead Thomas Blanton Jr., out of the courtroom in handcuffs after a jury convicted him of murder in Birmingham, Ala., on Tuesday.



## Ala. jury convicts ex-Klansman

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) - A former Ku Klux Klansman was convicted of murder Tuesday for the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls, the deadliest single attack during the civil rights movement.

Thomas Blanton Jr., 62, was sentenced to life in prison by the same jury that found him guilty after 21 1/2 hours of

deliberations. Before he was led out of the courtroom in handcuffs, the judge asked him if he had any comment.

"I guess the good Lord will settle it on judgment day," Blanton said.

Blanton is the second former Klansman to be convicted of planting the bomb that went off at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Sept.

15, 1963, a Sunday morning.

The bomb ripped through an exterior wall of the brick church. The bodies of Denise McNair, 11, and Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson, all 14, were found in the downstairs lounge.

Denise's parents, Chris and Maxine McNair, did not comment as they left the

courthouse. Chris McNair was hugged by U.S. Attorney Doug Jones, who fought back tears as he told reporters: "We're happy for the families. We're happy for the girls."

The Rev. Abraham Woods, a black minister instrumental in getting the FBI to reopen the case in 1993, (See Klansman, Page 8)