



**FUTURE CHAMP?**

*Jervon Slack, 14, won Nevada Partners boxer of the month award for March. Former world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson presented Slack his award during a recent ceremony at the Sugar Ray Leonard Gym.*

*Sentinel-Voice photo by John Broussard*

**NAACP**

(Continued from Page 2) Partnership." The fake document included what were to be taken as comments from Mfume, Bond and J. Terrence Lanni, Chairman of the MGM-Mirage Board of Directors.

Central to Collins' allegations is his charge that NAACP executives undercut and replaced the Las Vegas branch in negotiations with the MGM. "We think all of our problems started when we addressed the one hundred million dollars," he said.

"It's ludicrous and absurd," Rivers responded. "There have been no negotiations." Commenting on the bogus news release, he said, simply, "We know nothing about this." Denying the alleged deal with MGM, Rivers said, "we haven't even had a meeting with them."

Tony Gladney, MGM's vice president of corporate diversity, said on Monday: "We fully support whatever steps are necessary to ensure a thriving and healthy NAACP chapter in Las Vegas."

Regarding "participation of minority business enterprises in our contract efforts," Gladney said, "MGM-Mirage has been very public that Gene Collins raised these issues. We've been forthright in addressing these concerns through our diversity initiative."

The other controversial item was a flyer bearing pictures of Bond and Mfume, with a heading that asks: "Did these men sell out the local Las Vegas NAACP Chapter?"

"That's outrageous," Rivers exclaimed. "I hope no member of the NAACP is

responsible for this." Although he had been in town for most the day on Friday, Rivers said he had been unaware of the items until they were shown to him by the *Sentinel-Voice*.

"Both of these men have paid their dues," Rivers continued. "When Mr. Mfume came in we were at our lowest point. To even suggest that these folks would sell out is beneath the dignity of an NAACP member."

Rivers said the NAACP has met with MGM officials but indicated it did so at MGM's request, saying representatives of the resort "wanted to talk about their diversity effort, while the NAACP wanted to talk about other matters." But he said the local branch's involvement with the MGM never had the blessing of the national office.

"Las Vegas is not a stranger to the board of directors, like other branches where there've been problems," said Rivers. "We've dealt with this branch closely for four years," he explained, recalling that in 1998- when Collins' predecessor, James Rogers, was branch president- "some of the officers were suspended as were some of the members. The Las Vegas branch has been on my desk for three years," he said.

Of plans to request an injunction to stop the NAACP's reorganization in Las Vegas, Collins said: "We're going to file that the earliest we possibly can," indicating he hoped to do so by Monday of this week. Failing that, he says, he and his supporters will "march in front of Mr. (Kirk) Kerkorian's flagship prop-

erty, the MGM." Calls to Collins this week were not returned.

Meanwhile, NAACP officials look ahead to reorganization and- in what seems like the distant future- creating a new branch and holding new elections in Las Vegas.

"The NAACP is not going to sue itself," Rivers asserted. Comparing the former branch president's bellicosity to "shadow boxing," Rivers characterized Collins and his supporters as a group intent on "fighting people who are not fighting you."

For now, national officials will ignore the insurrection, although Collins said another meeting is scheduled for tonight...same time, and, interestingly, same place.

**Klansman**

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said he was delighted with the verdict. "It makes a statement on how far we've come," said Woods, the local president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

"We're mindful that this verdict will not bring back the lives of the four little girls," added Kweisi Mfume, head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in a statement. "(But) justice has finally been served."

Defense attorney John Robbins said the swift verdict showed the jury was caught up in the emotion surrounding the notorious case. He said he would seek a new trial, arguing the case should have been moved out of Birmingham and Blanton's right to a speedy trial had been violated.

He also said the lack of white men on the jury - eight white women, three black women and one black man returned the verdict - "absolutely hurt Blanton." The jurors, who were publicly identified only by number, left without comment.

The case is the latest from the turbulent civil rights era to be revived by prosecutors. Byron De La Beckwith was convicted in 1994 of assassinating civil rights leader Medgar Evers in 1963 and former Klan imperial wizard Sam Bowers was convicted three years ago of the 1966 firebomb-killing of an NAACP leader.

But the church bombing was a galvanizing moment of the civil rights movement. Moderates could no longer remain silent and the fight to topple segregation laws gained new momentum.

During closing arguments, Jones told the jury that it was "never too late for justice."

He said Blanton acted in response to months of civil rights demonstrations. The church had become a rallying point for protesters.

"Tom Blanton saw change and didn't like it," Jones said as black-and-white images of the church and the girls dressed in Sunday clothing flashed on video screens in the courtroom.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Posey added: "The defendant didn't care who he

killed as long as he killed someone and as long as that person was black."

"These children must not have died in vain," he said. "Don't let the deafening blast of his bomb be what's left ringing in our ears."

Robbins argued that the government had proved only that Blanton was once a foul-mouthed segregationist, not a bomber. He said murky tapes of his client secretly recorded by the FBI were illegally obtained and should not have been admitted as evidence.

The surveillance began after Blanton and other Klansman were identified as suspects within weeks of the bombing.

The FBI planted a hidden microphone in Blanton's apartment in 1964 and taped his conversations with Mitchell Burns, a fellow Klansman-turned-informant.

Posey went over the tapes for jurors, putting transcript excerpts on the video screens. He read from one transcript in which Blanton described himself to Burns as a clean-cut guy: "I like to go shooting, I like to go fishing, I like to go bombing."

Posey also quoted Blanton as saying he was through with women. "I am going to stick to bombing churches," Blanton said, according to Posey.

On one tape, Blanton was heard telling Burns that he would not be caught "when I bomb my next church." On another made in his kitchen, he is heard talking with his wife about a meeting where "we planned the bomb."

"That is a confession out of this man's mouth," said Jones, pointing to Blanton.

The defense argued that the tape made in Blanton's kitchen meant nothing because prosecutors failed to play 26 minutes of previous conversation. "You can't judge a conversation in a vacuum," Robbins said.

Robbins also said Blanton's conversations with Burns were nothing but boasting between "two drunk rednecks." He dismissed Burns and other prosecution witnesses as liars.

Another former Klan member, Robert "Dynamite Bob" Chambliss, was convicted of murder in 1977 and died in prison in 1985.

**JOHN RHODES**  
for  
**CITY COUNCIL**

**8 YEARS - 8 REASONS**

- ✓ 1) Fiscal Accountability
- ✓ 2) Created District Representatives
- ✓ 3) Led Redevelopment Efforts
- ✓ 4) Fought for Minority Business
- ✓ 5) Renovated Old Parks
- ✓ 6) Created Economic Opportunities
- ✓ 7) 7,500 Acre Project
- ✓ 8) The Civis Bus

**VOTE FOR JOHN RHODES ON JUNE 5.**