

Barber: Officials blocking shop

Al Triche

Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice

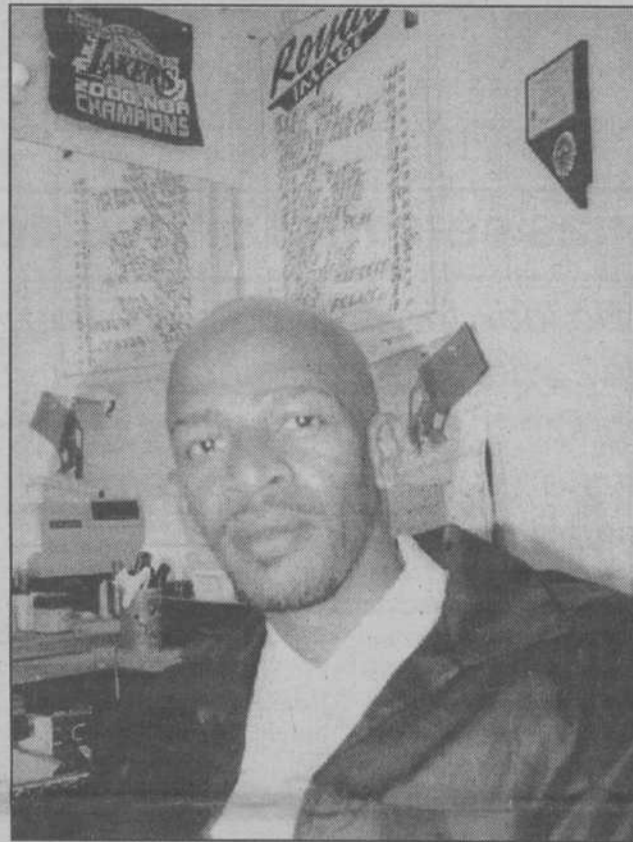
On the wall of the Royal Image Hip Hop Barber Shop, 2401 W. Bonanza Road, the owner displays a plaque he received just six months ago from the State of Nevada. "Congratulations," it reads, "Nevada's First Barber Instructor."

But Royal H. Byron III—a 33-year-old Las Vegas native and licensed barber here since 1993, proprietor of the shop near Rancho and Bonanza just behind Popeye's since '95, practitioner of an art increasingly the purview of African-Americans, and a man with a vision—says public officials who should promote the ambitions of people like him are, instead, creating obstacles.

He is trying to continue a legacy, and wants to do it in his hometown. There exists no school for barbers in Nevada, so anyone with a license here had to be trained somewhere else. Byron wants to change that and has taken the first step.

"Eighty-five percent of the barbers in the state are African-American," says Byron. The roots of this phenomenon, he says, reach back to 19th century plantations where slaves cut their masters' hair, and are manifest today in the art of barbering, which he says is dominated by black practitioners in the U.S.

"I'm a licensed instructor now," he continued, "so I'm



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Waiting to hear some good news from Carson City, Royal Byron remains a puzzled barber instructor with dreams.

qualified to train the next licensed instructor to take the examination." He wants to open a school here to train barbers, which would be another first for Nevada, and has investigated relevant state law. Finding Nevada Revised Statute 643 amenable in 1995, Byron said, "I pursued this goal because the law permitted me to pursue it."

Since then, he says, officials here and in Carson City have conspired to prevent him from opening.

The Nevada State Bar-

bers' Health and Sanitation Board, a four-member panel appointed by the governor and paid to oversee the practice of barbering in the state, is where Byron says his troubles began.

By law, three of the four members must be barbers, and two on the current board operate shops in Las Vegas. One of them is the board's vice president as well as its secretary-treasurer, also a paid position. The other is board president.

The panel administers the

examination used to license barber instructors. Byron, the first licensed barber to try taking his credentials to the next level, became first to take the test.

Failing initially, he took the exam again, and again. Each time, according to Byron, it became less objective and those evaluating his performance became more subjective. He describes a frustrating labyrinth of retesting that took years to traverse, and holds the board responsible for the experience.

"The board members also own shops, so it's easy for them to solicit a barber," or, he says, to compromise an exam. "Are they fair, or are they not?" he asks, "how can we trust them?"

But board president Nathaniel LaShore says Byron was simply not ready to pass the exam, and that it had not been used to retard his progress toward starting the school.

"We get those exams, it's a standardized test," LaShore responded, saying Byron had been "unprepared."

"Totally unprepared," he repeated, "He knew each time he left there that he was unprepared."

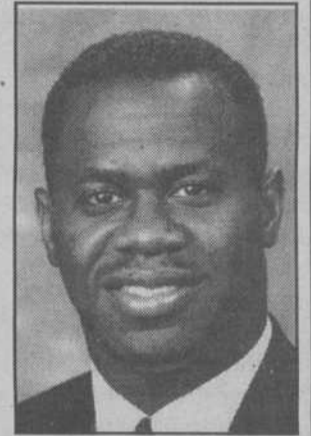
Although Byron says the process was corrupt, he believes it proved his commitment to his dream and to his community. Consider, he says, "that I've taken this examination for over six years and nine times, and I

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Council race nears finish

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

With mere days left in the contest for a North Las Vegas city council seat, the race is heating up as one candidate's legal woes have been brought into play. Allegations about illegal and unconstitutional actions of the local police have been followed by a surprise endorsement by a longtime former city councilman. Meanwhile, John Rhodes, current councilman for Ward 1, faces the only municipal election on the June 5 ballot.



JOHN RHODES

"We're doing real well... very positive support," Rhodes said. "People are supporting my candidacy."

Economic development, represented by such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot and a host of other businesses and services, Rhodes credits to his eight years in office. The incumbent has also raised the notion of improprieties by the NLV police department and made a formidable foe of its union.

Allegations of a slush fund and of ticket quotas—which, according to Rhodes, is illegal and unconstitutional—has put him in the hot seat on another legal front.

"The police department is overcharging the city and the police on their health insurance," said Rhodes, who indicated the city premium for health insurance is \$270 per month per officer. But the police department, according to him, charges the city \$350 per month, in addition to charging each officer \$140 monthly.

"They are overcharging the city... what are they using the dollars for?" Rhodes asked. If re-elected, he promised to push strong policies and actions to retrieve lost monies for the city.

Rhodes also questions a requirement for one moving and one parking citation per day per NLV peace officer. "Why would you require that?" he asked, pointing to the potential for abuse by overzealous police officers.

The April 3 primary election proved victorious for

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Powell: Africa is U.S. priority

BAMAKO, Mali (AP) - Colin Powell promised U.S. help to Africa in combating disease and nurturing democracy and said he felt an "emotional twinge" Wednesday as the first black secretary of state to visit the continent.

Powell also voiced support for continued U.S. training of African peacekeepers, although he said the key is "to find the right balance between getting too committed and not getting committed enough."

He noted that some in the

administration, principally Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, favored a sharp reduction in overseas commitments.

Powell was warmly received on his first stop on a four-nation African tour. He said he picked this West African nation, one of the world's poorest, because it was "firmly committed to democracy" and "a model for the rest of the world."

Powell also was to visit South Africa, Kenya and Uganda.

He met with Mali's president, Alpha Oumar Konare, and then toured a research center, financed by a grant from the U.S. National Institutes for Health, where studies are under way to find a vaccine for malaria. The disease still kills more than a million people a year, mostly African children.

"We're going to see what we can do to stop this dread disease," Powell said. On other stops, he intended to emphasize Africa's epi-

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Colin Powell, (r), chats with Mali's Foreign Minister Modibo Sidibe during his recent visit.