

# Ruling helps in fighting housing discrimination

LAS VEGAS (AP) - A southern Nevada real estate official downplayed the effect of a federal appeals court ruling that business owners can be held responsible for subordinates' discriminatory conduct.

Real estate agents are taught to describe the property, not the buyer, said Deirdre McGraw-Felgar, president of the 6,500-member Greater Las Vegas Association of Realtors.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled Tuesday that officers and owners of businesses can be held personally liable for racist, sexist and other discriminatory acts committed by subordinates, even if the officers and owners didn't know the acts occurred.

Circuit Judge Procter Hug Jr. wrote that the court recognized holding a corporation and its officers responsible for subordinates' acts that were neither directed nor authorized was harsh punishment.

But, "we agree with our sister circuits in finding that preferable to leaving the burden on the innocent victim who felt the direct harm of the discrimination," he said.

The case, Holley v. Meyer, stemmed from Emma and David Holley's attempt in October 1996

to buy a home in Twentynine Palms, Calif.

After Triad Realty agent Grove Crank showed them four homes outside their stated price range, the Holleys went out on their own and found a home for \$145,000.

The home was listed by Triad agent Terry Stump. Stump agreed to the Holleys' offer on the property and accepted a \$5,000 escrow payment.

Crank overruled Stump, allegedly calling the Holleys a "salt and pepper team." Emma Holley is black. David Holley is Caucasian.

Although the decision involved a California case, the circuit covers Nevada.

"If someone can qualify for a loan and has their down payment money, they're a wonderful buyer no matter if they're from outer space or the bottom of the ocean," McGraw-Felgar said.

"Saying a property is a five-bedroom home is OK. Saying a property is a 'five-bedroom family home' is not, because that discriminates against single people."

Similarly, "You can't say 'starter home,' because that discriminates against retirees, or 'retirement home,' because that discriminates against single people," she said.

# Black Catholics set to open new sanctuary in December

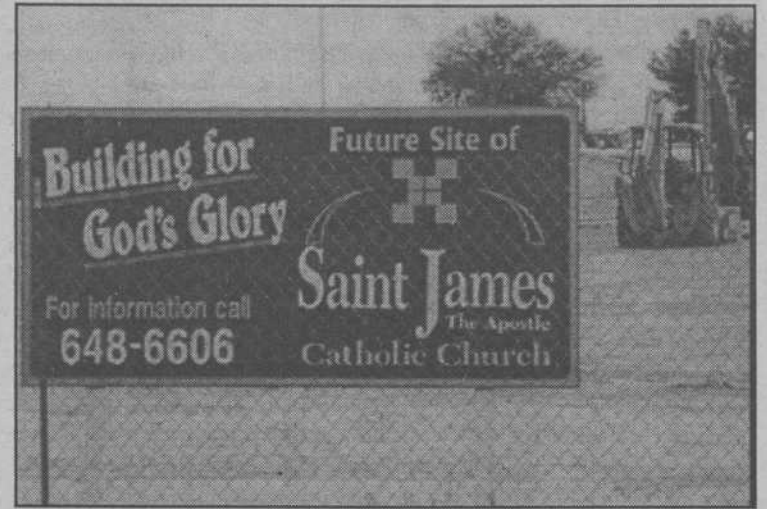
By Al Triche  
Sentinel-Voice

Saint James the Apostle Catholic Church, the only African-American parish in Nevada, will open a new page in its history in about five months. The community expects to move from its present location, at 820 N. H Street, to a new building by December. Groundbreaking at the new site, on the southeast corner of Lake Mead and Martin Luther King Boulevards, was held in January and construction began last month.

Established in the 1940s as a mission church serving West Las Vegas, St. James officially became a parish in 1952. By the mid-1960s, the community had changed from mostly Latino to predominately black.

Rev. Michael Blackburn, O.F.M., who, next month, marks ten years as St. James' pastor, says today the parish has about 300 registered families and is expected to grow after the transition. He says the new building will be a multipurpose facility with offices, classrooms and a meeting hall in addition to the church.

"It's like a new beginning,"



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

The sign marks the spot of the new Saint James Catholic Church.

Father Blackburn said on Monday. "There's a lot of history in this building," he acknowledged, while adding that the parish is "welcoming whatever the future holds."

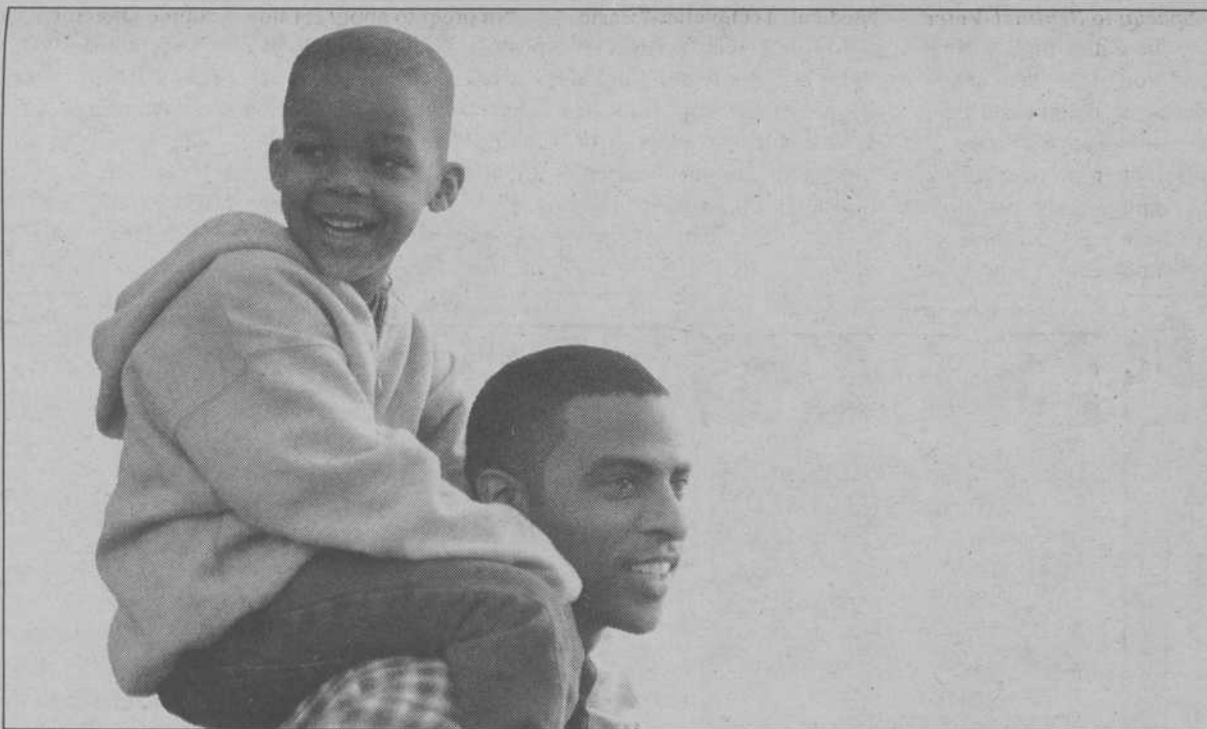
The church presently can accommodate about 200 people. The new building will have a primary seating capacity of 350, and a removable wall will allow that to be increased when necessary. Construction is expected to be finished by December 7.

During the 1980s the parish began two initiatives that Blackburn proudly notes have continued to

this day. One of them is a monthly food distribution service and the other is a tutorial program that assists neighborhood children with their homework.

Said Blackburn, a Franciscan priest who in 1991 became St. James' eleventh pastor, "We try to help the neighborhood, the people, as best we can."

Although the state has a northern Catholic diocese in Reno as well as the southern diocese in Las Vegas, St. James is the only parish in Nevada established in a mostly black neighborhood.



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