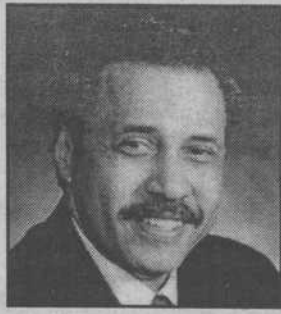


## COMMENTARY

## Good race relations: What if?

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

How many of you have noticed that when African-Americans stage an event, it is almost always attended by blacks and whites? What about when Hispanics host events? These events are usually attended by only brown and white people. What if



LOUIE OVERSTREET

black and brown people worked to improve relationships between their communities?

The "what if" question will be answered later in this column. However, in order to understand why relationships are not at the level they should be between persons of color, we must confront the perceptions held by too many of our leaders as well as many among the masses in both racial groups.

I feel these perceptions have had, and if not addressed will continue to have, far-reaching consequences. The attitudes that result from these perceptions range from benign concern or perplexity to open resentment. While, as documented by census data, there has been a black and brown presence here in Las Vegas since the city was founded during the first decade of the

last century, I am of the opinion that perceptions a number of people presently harbor have been formed within the last decade.

Blacks who have a benign concern seem to struggle with their emotions when they perceive Hispanics positioning themselves to become the

"chosen minority." Blacks whose community activism dates back to the civil rights struggle of the early 1950s have experiences that suggest to them the road to progress in this white-male dominated society is made easier by forming coalitions for advancement. The bigoted blacks among our people who harbor resentment perceive Hispanics to be direct beneficiaries of civil rights gains for minorities resulting from the struggle blacks waged without brown folks having to risk life or limb or, for that matter, active supporters.

Hispanics' perceptions seem to be that "we shall overcome," in time, by strength of numbers. Some benign brown people want to point to the fact that much of what is now the southwestern United States was

(See Relations, Page 15)

## Don't let 'Lil' Pimp' pimp us

By Richard Muhammad  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Rapper Jay Z had a mega-hit with his popular song 'Big Pimpin'', but Mark Brooks and Peter Gilstrap are proof the biggest pimps are those who can find ever increasing ways to insult Black people.

Since March, the duo and animators in Santa Monica, Calif. studios have been working on "Lil' Pimp," an animated feature film scheduled for release next year.

The film, based on their Internet series, features Lil' Pimp, a freckle-faced, White nine-year-old. He is accompanied by Black pimp daddy buddies Fruitjuice and Nagchampa, and his pet gerbil Weathers, which suffers from Tourette's Syndrome. Revolution Studios purchased it.

If you're thinking this is a sick joke, it isn't.

According to a Reuters/Variety report comedian Bernie Mac, actor William Shatner, and actress Carmen

Electra have signed their voices onto the project. Reuters/Variety also says raptress Lil' Kim is in final talks to join the cast as well. Comedian Eddie Griffin, to his credit, reportedly abandoned the project.

Caricatures and negative images are one thing, but when pimps and hoes—playing second fiddle to a suburban wannabe—are slated to hit the big screen in the 21st century—outrage should hit record levels and this movie should never make it off of the cutting room floor.

It's way past time for Black folks to be stereotyped, miscast and painted as soulless sexual predators and sexual objects. The sexual animal stereotype has been used to justify the lynching of Black men, the rape of Black women, and the dehumanization of Black people. It's not funny at all.

If producers market this thing and get away with it, the next steps should be shack-

les, burlap sacks and one-way tickets back to Southern cotton fields. If Black folks don't show some pride and abort Lil' Pimp's birth, we need to be "totin' dat barge and liftin' dat bale," because we will have betrayed our ancestors, our children and ourselves.

The movies creators may be counting on negative publicity to generate enough interest to laugh all the way to the bank. It doesn't have to be that way.

Television networks were taught a great lesson in 1999 when "The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer," a UPN series about a slave-era butler, was killed by Black opposition.

As Lil' Pimp is taught The Game by two Black mentors, Black America must teach his creators a lesson. A theater that tries to show this trash should be subjected to enough demonstrations and boycotts to put them out of

(See Pimp, Page 15)

## Violent TV programs drains society

By Armstrong Williams  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Over the last decade television's esprit de'cool has increasingly been defined by overt sexual situations and questionable language. That is to say: there is more flesh, more cursing, more fiery explosions, and generally speaking, more of an attempt to push the boundaries of good taste and simply shock viewers into paying attention.

The fact that bombarding the public with violent and overtly sexual images is a formulaic and reductive proposition only accounts for the popularity. Plainly, if television executives can reduce ratings to a single abiding calculus, they will.

As with all trends, there is an economic impetus.

The cable network explosion and the addition of a new major network, Fox, created an incredibly splintered television market throughout the 1990s. Amid this brutal competition, high mindedness became an afterthought. The question became how to grasp the attention of this fractured audience. The answer came from media mogul Rupert Murdoch, who used his Fox television station to belch out one enormous orgy of tawdry and titillating television morsels. His populist model proved wildly successful.

Soon others followed suit until gross self-parody and dark humor became the dominant currency for depicting popular culture on TV.

Along the way, the face of American programming changed. An industry grasping for the attention of its increasingly fractured audience abandoned its more tradition models for material that is designed, first and foremost, to illicit shock—and by extension, rapt attention, from an audience.

Of course, there is a theory justifying this sort of cultural gruel. Some say that excessively violent and salacious television programming acts as a release valve, not unlike the way that attending Roman gladiatorial contests once allowed citizens to vent their own mean and brutish instincts in a culturally acceptable manner.

Several centuries later, modern man is perhaps more deeply in need of a safety valve than ever. We live in a society of right angles where machines and computers dominate, influence and parcel out nearly every aspect of our existence. Life in the 21st century is antiseptic. Our thoughts are constantly edited by the dictates of political correctness. Our feelings are hemmed in by social decorum. This sort of Spartan denial creates a need for emo-

tional purging.

Perhaps this is the role that violent television plays in our society. We watch a sword fight and we forget, if only for a moment, that we spend a good portion of our waking lives enmeshed by the three walls of a cubicle. If self-consciously violent or tawdry television ascends in our culture, perhaps it is because such programming suggests an alternative to our daily drudgery.

If there is an appropriate sense of fantasy, then some violent television can serve a purpose.

However, there is a serious cultural quail when this is all that the network executives are producing. Such is, practically, the current state of television and movies, where the quest to breach permissible attitudes and make money has littered our cultural landscape with an endless line of simple, sloppy, pathologically violent spectacle.

Plot and character development increasingly fall by the wayside in the quest to break the new taste barrier.

In short, the evolution of television has been away from art and toward a form of terrorism. Worse than culturally destructive, it is boring.

Armstrong Williams is a nationally syndicated columnist and radio host.

## Segregated schools not a waste

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In past years, successful school integration has meant a healthy blend of White and minority students sitting in the same classroom. But those years are long gone. According to a study from Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, the nation's big-city school districts are more racially segregated than a decade ago. What the researchers don't, but could easily say, is that the students in these schools are poorer than students in predominantly, or exclusively White schools, and that the racial segregation is likely to get even worse. And it's not just Black and Latino students who suffer from galloping school resegregation. Harvard researchers note that the White students who attend majority White schools are vastly ill prepared to handle the pressures of social interaction required in an increasingly multi-ethnic America.

The Black and Latino students who attend racially isolated schools are not there because of Jim Crow segregationist laws, or failed school busing policies. In fact, two decades of pro-integration court decisions, limited busing programs, civil rights legislation, and the election and the appointment of soaring numbers of Blacks, and Latinos to boards of education is a familiar and accepted pattern. Black and Latino public school superintendents and top administrators are now fixtures in most urban school districts. And President Bush's education secretary, Rod Paige, is an African-American. This should have made public school segregation a grotesque, but historic curiosity.

But it hasn't. The deep persistence of housing discrimination, poverty, the near universal refusal of federal and state courts

to get involved in any more school desegregation cases, and the continuing flight of White, as well as Black and Latino middle-income persons, to the suburbs insure that even more poor Black and Latino students will be trapped in near-permanent isolation in these segregated schools. Some say school vouchers are the way out. Others say urban districts are big and unwieldy, so break-em' up. Others say dump the glut of incompetent teachers and bureaucrats in the schools.

Others simply shrug their shoulders in resignation, and say the problem defies a solution. This is educational defeatism at best, and racial denigration at worst. The Harvard study's answer was to expand magnet schools, increase teacher exchanges between suburbs and cities, and enlist foundation support for local school-integration programs. These are sensible proposals. But at best they will affect only a tiny fraction of Black and Latino students in segregated schools. What about those left behind? There are four things that can and should be done.

The first is to publicly acknowledge that failing public schools are also likely to be the most segregated schools. School officials and administrators should initiate an emergency crash program to upgrade the texts and facilities, purchase more computers, and to place the highest-caliber teachers, counselors, and administrators possible at these schools. This also requires teacher organizations to actively work to enforce strict professional standards that hold teachers at these schools accountable for the performance of their students.

The second is to bury the myth that students Black and Latino students can't or won't learn. Generations of Black and

(See Segregated, Page 15)