

## POINT OF VIEW

## Our View

## Sharpton coming

Only two weeks removed from a 90-day stint in federal prison, the Rev. Al Sharpton is Sin City-bound. Sharpton's weekend visit to Las Vegas is meant to set the newly formed local chapter of his National Action Network on a course for effective public advocacy.

The controversial civil rights leader, who recently announced the formation of an exploratory committee to gauge his prospects for a 2004 presidential bid, plans to meet with ministers and attend an outdoor rally 6 p.m. Sunday at Doolittle Community Center.

Only time will tell if Sharpton can navigate the tempestuous waters of this apathetic town as adroitly as he has in New York.

One thing's for sure: it will be interesting. For starters, there remains the question of whether there's an appetite for Sharpton's brand of vocal moralism. Las Vegas is a hard nut to crack and its leaders—the former mob lawyer turned mayor, in general, and casino barons, specifically—aren't used to kowtowing. Battling Big Gaming has been a losing proposition for most who've tried.

Then there's the off-again, on-again redevelopment of West Las Vegas. Can Sharpton do what no other leader has been able to—create meaningful revitalization as opposed to piecemeal development that brings few jobs?

And another question: Will Blacks rally behind him? Will Blacks commit to his cause once they see who's behind him, namely the old guard from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Under their watch, the NAACP soared, then crashed. Is Sharpton sure his group won't meet a similar fate? We'll have to wait and see.

## Whose turf is it?

Turf. The word enjoys extensive use in American culture. Football coaches use it, urging their players to not let opposing teams come in and romp their turf. Political pundits employ it, describing areas as Democratic or Republican turf. Even journalists bandy the term about, mainly when writing about ethnic conflicts rooted in decades or centuries of hatred—most notable is its use in the ongoing battle between Palestinians and Israelis over Jerusalem; both groups claim the holy city as ancestral turf.

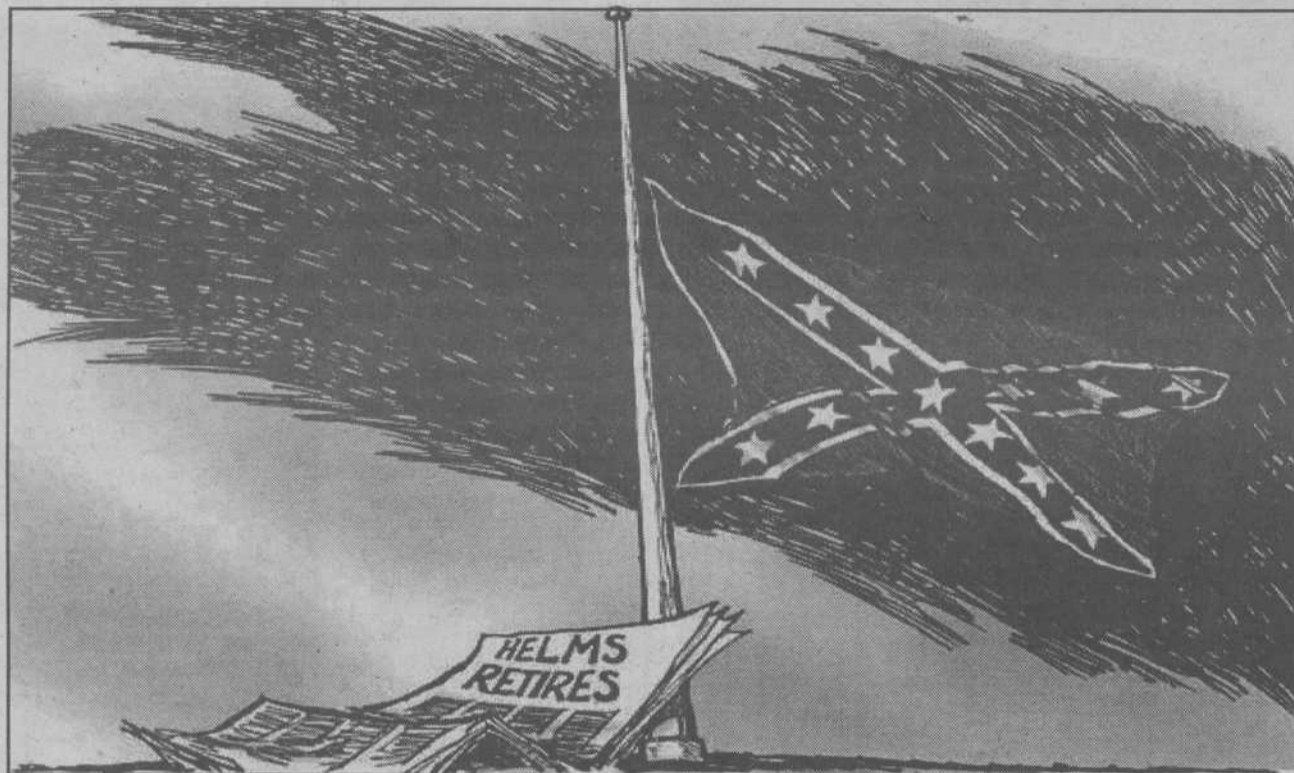
In each instance, turf implies possession or control. Football teams have home stadiums; certain political parties historically dominate particular locales; and warring ethnic factions can usually trace portions of their lineage, or least the origin of their faith, to the disputed territory.

This said, it defies reason that street gangs are battling over drug-selling "turf." While it is true that a certain gang may dominate the populace of a particular local, that area no more belongs to the gang than it does the cops patrolling it.

This diatribe is not meant to minimize the role territorialism and neighborhood pride play in fomenting street violence, rather it's goal is highlighting the inanity of reducing gang warfare to a battle over turf.

No amount of carnage will change this universal fact: Gang members don't own the streets they roam. Should utility companies decide to shut off power and gas, what recourse would gun-toting thugs have? None.

More than wars are at play with regard to gang violence. Poverty, unemployment, scant recreational outlets, poor parenting, civic and political apathy and machismo all factor in. A real assessment of the problem can help end the carnage, but gang members must first realize they're fighting for a street they don't own.



## Rutledge firing: Crabs in barrel

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Given what I have come to understand about human behavior, I stopped, a long time ago, counting how many times I heard our people use the phrase: "the white man is holding us back."

While there is no doubt that racism remains a part of life in America, I am equally sure that we inflict a significant amount of needless misery upon ourselves.

Hell, if we stopped doing to ourselves what we accuse the allegorical white man of doing to us, we would immediately experience light years of progress.

If we stopped "messaging over" each other, there would be no possible way for others to oppress us.

The oppression heaped on us by some elements within the majority culture, who do not subscribe to the basic concepts on which this country was built, would become a mere irritant.

It certainly could not hold us back, collectively, from doing anything we wanted to do.

Unfortunately, I am not hopeful of such a change occurring in our behavior here in Las Vegas.

After living here for four years, there is one thing that I have come to believe with absolute certainty.

We, unfortunately, are the embodiment of what I would characterize as "pettiness personified."

For cross-references of what is meant by this phrase, look up the definitions of "crabs in a barrel" and "our



LOUIE OVERSTREET

people ain't ready" syndromes. I will cite two recent examples of what I am talking about.

1. The "chicken waste" manner in which senior administrative staff at the Economic Opportunity Board of Clark County, and I assume with concurrence from some selected board members, fired Sherman Rutledge, Jr., General Manager of KCEP-FM, "Power 88."

2. The use of atrocious grammar in a performance to attack school trustee Shirley Barber.

Sherman Rutledge's tenure with KCEP predates my arrival in Las Vegas.

In just the time that I have been here, I have observed his singular pursuit to make KCEP one of the best public radio stations in the nation.

Guess what? He made it happen!

He has increased the number of persons that listen to the station to the point where it has the largest and most diverse audience of any public radio station in the country.

He has implemented programs to serve the youth of our community.

An untold number of young people have benefited

from the Intern, A-Team and College Day programs he has initiated.

Now, at a time when three new commercial stations have come on the scene, some petty people have orchestrated what I know will only be his temporary demise.

I know my man, "Sherman the Phoenix," will rise again.

Further, given the tenacity that I know he possesses, when this wrongful and stupid discharge case goes to trial, it will come out in the deposition process who was actually behind this whole mess.

Here in Las Vegas, we are cursed with this inability to assign value to issues of vastly different importance.

Given what Sherman has been able to accomplish at the station, to use the excuse that some people do like him as the basis for firing him is ridiculous.

It is akin to saying the reason that a company is letting go the person who found a cure for cancer is that she picks her nose in public.

Boy, what she engages in must be considered a crime against humanity. Well,

maybe not, if you have ever pulled up to any stop light in Las Vegas and looked over at the car next to you. It is better than even money that the person has his "booger hook" finger working overtime.

Sherman, stay strong and hang tough. "Pettiness personified" behavior will not triumph.

Now, back to talking about the white man.

He is the one you notice rolling around on the floor doubled over with laughter, after listening to a former opponent of Shirley Barber butcher the English language during the public comment period of school board meetings.

Anyone who knows me understands that I totally support everyone's right to protest.

However, if using proper grammar in public forums is not your strong suit, then you may need to consider having someone capture your thoughts in writing, and you can read your comments into the record.

The language this lady uses in public makes

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