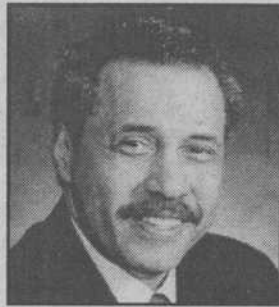


COMMENTARY

# Growth brings problems

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Nevada has been one of America's fastest growing states for a number of years. Thus, one could reasonably conclude there must be a causal relationship between rapid growth and the quality of life persons can expect to enjoy by living in Nevada.



LOUIE OVERSTREET

In a study recently conducted and released by the United Way of America, Nevada's quality of life ranked 46th out of the 50 states. The only states ranking below Nevada were Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi and New York. How could this be, you ask?

The study points to one possible explanation being the rapid growth the state continues to experience. A closer examination of the state of the social issues measured by the study could lead one to draw a different conclusion rather than to suggest rapid growth is the basis for our low ranking.

Some of the social conditions studied included high school dropout rate, teen pregnancy, air pollution, unemployment rate, persons without health insurance, and percentage of the population that volunteers time to community activities. In all of the foregoing six categories, Nevada ranked dead last or near the bottom.

Why is this the case, and will it continue

to be the case in the future?

First, rapid growth in itself is not the culprit. An analysis of what is fueling the growth will reveal why we were ranked so low in the study. The population groups that are fueling growth are undereducated youth and persons of retirement age.

The younger group provides the workforce and the older group supports a retired lifestyle. In other words, as long as Nevada's economy is solely dependent on one industry, which is gaming, there is little chance of our escaping "the bottom of the barrel."

To successfully run gaming enterprises you only need a few educated people at the top and "a whole bunch" of dedicated, if not properly compensated service workers at the bottom to support the demands of maintaining and servicing the daily operations of these multi-billion dollar businesses.

This reality creates the climate where the Clark County School District can spend over \$2 billion a year in operating funds to produce the highest dropout rate in the nation, with no one raising the question, much less raising hell about why this is the case. This amount of money equates to spending \$8,300 a year for each one of the 240,000 students in the district.

(See Overstreet, Page 14)

# Now wrong time for police to ignore hate-based crimes

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Within days after the Sept. 11 terror massacre at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, White supremacists blanketed Chicago suburbs with fliers that showed a picture of the burning trade center. The fliers fingered Arabs, immigrants, and Jews as the culprits, and urged Whites to rally to the banner of God, country, the flag, and, course, White supremacy.

The obscene effort to turn the Sept. 11 tragedy into a rallying cry for hate didn't totally fall on deaf ears. According to the Center for New Community, a Midwest faith-based group that tracks hate groups, dozens of new White nationalist groups have sprung up in 10 Midwestern states in the past year. They have vastly stepped up their recruitment efforts, particularly among young people.

Their hate campaign is paying deadly dividends. In its annual report on hate crimes, the FBI noted there were more hate attacks

against minorities and gays than the year before. More than half of the attacks were racially motivated. And, as has been the pattern, since the FBI began compiling hate crime figures a decade ago, Blacks again were the prime victims of hate attacks. Nearly 40 percent of the attacks were against them. But even the sharp increase in hate crimes doesn't tell the true story of hate violence in America.

Many victims do not report attacks out of fear or because they feel police and local officials will do little or nothing about them. Arab-American and Muslim leaders still bitterly complain that while the high-profile burning of a mosque in Seattle and the murder of a Sikh shopkeeper in Arizona got massive national and media attention, scores of Muslims privately tell them of taunts, and ethnic slurs hurled at them and of rocks and bottles being tossed at mosques and community centers. Few of these attacks are reported to

police.

But what if they report the attacks? There are still hundreds of police agencies that refuse to report hate crimes, or to label racially motivated hate crimes as hate crimes. If federal officials hadn't publicly pledged to crack-down on hate attacks against Muslims, police officials in the cities where Muslims and Sikhs were murdered, assaulted and their mosques burned would may not have automatically labeled them as hate crimes, and FBI officials may not have directed their local agents to vigorously pursue them as hate crimes.

The ignoring or downplaying of hate crimes by many police agencies gets worse each year. More than four hundred fewer police agencies reported hate crimes to the FBI in 2000 than in 1999. And the number that reported them in 1999 dropped from those reporting in 1998. The official indifference by many police

(See Hate Crimes, Page 15)

# The enigma of allies, enemies

By Mumia Abu-Jamal  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

FROM A CELL IN WAYNESBURG, Pa.—What a difference a month makes!

As the United States continues to bombard the feudal state of Afghanistan, with the gleeful (yet anxious!) connivance of a bevy of assorted junior partners, the play list of who's who seems to get rewritten by the hour. Unperturbed by the Churchillian axiom that a nation has no permanent friends, nor permanent enemies, but only permanent interests, the U.S. has cast a wide, imperial net, to scoop up a bucket-full of buddies.

The resultant quasi-"coalition" is a reflection of the wide and deep contradictions that emerge, when one considers what the U.S. announces is its foreign policy, and what it is in "realpolitik." If the U.S. is the target of the "terrorists" because of its "wonderful democracy" (as non-majority-elected President Bush suggests) why is it bundled up with nations that see democracy as a bad word?

Pakistan and the Kingdom

of Saudi Arabia are many things, but democracies they ain't!

Only one person voted for Gen. P. Musharraf to become President of Pakistan-himself!

Because he was general, his was the only vote that counted. In clear, unalloyed terms, Pakistan is a military dictatorship. Worse, it is an unstable state where upwards of 80 percent of its population support the Taliban of Afghanistan—which exists, in part, because of the machinations of Pakistani military intelligence!

The Saudi Kingdom is, in essence, a theocracy, where the royal family rules with an iron hand, and where women aren't even allowed to drive!

The Bin-Laden clan is one of the First Families of the kingdom, builders of many of the structures in the Islamic holy places of Mecca.

The Wahabbi sect of Islam promoted by the Royal House is but a variant of that practiced by the Taliban.

The madrassas in Pakistan (of which there are more than 10,000) were, for the better part of two decades, training

schools for the Taliban, and, in fact, educated perhaps 75 percent of its leadership.

Pakistan, being a desperately poor, post-colonial nation, cannot afford public education for its teeming young population. The madrassas therefore, being the only free schools in the region, are plush with students, who learn a thorough Koranic education, with history from an Islamic perspective.

The backers of the madrassas? Saudi Arabia.

"OK, Jamal—What's the point?," thoughtful readers ask.

The point is that the two best buds of the U.S.—Ally No. 1, Pakistan; and Ally No. 2, Saudi Arabia—are the prime movers, backers, supporters and sustainers of the so-called "enemy": the Taliban.

If 80 percent of Pakistanis support the Taliban (in a region where one's ethnicity or tribal allegiances may go deeper than religion!) what can any government—even a military dictatorship—do to suppress that expression?

The American bombing (See Mumia, Page 14)

# Why Santa looks like Santa

By Emory Curtis  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"'Twas the night before Xmas when all through the house..." is the beginning of the 1822 Clement Clarke Moore poem written for his grandchildren that gave birth to our modern day Santa Claus. It also gave birth to the Christmas shopping season, a season where children and gift givers combine to loosen pockets to the glee of merchants.

Dutch immigrants were plentiful in the East during Clement Moore's time. His Santa Claus was drawn from the Dutch Sinter Klaas tradition which goes back to Saint Nicholas, a Catholic Bishop of Myra (now Demre, Turkey) who died on Dec. 6, 342. St. Nicholas's parents died when he was young and left him a healthy inheritance.

As a Catholic priest and as a bishop, he devoted his wealth to helping the poor and those in need. In the Catholic Church, someone who has lived such a life that, even after dying and going to heaven, he or she can help people on earth is eligible for sainthood.

The many good deeds St. Nicholas did while he was alive and the miraculous deeds attributed to him after death resulted in many churches in Asia Minor and Greece being named after him. Roman Catholics raised him to sainthood.

A businessman with three daughters in Nicholas's home city of Patara lost his money and the ability to care for three daughters; furthermore, they couldn't marry

because he was too poor to furnish a dowry. As a result, the father was going to have to sell them into prostitution.

Saint Nicholas, in the dark and unbeknownst to the father, threw a bag of gold through a window for the eldest daughter. With a dowry, she soon married. He repeated that for each of her younger sisters.

The father saw the last bag being thrown and ran after St. Nicholas and asked, "Why did you give us this gold?" Nicholas replied, "Because you needed it."

Again the man asked, "Why didn't you let us know who you were?" Nicholas said, "Because it is good to give and have only God know about it."

After being thrown, those bags of gold generated two other St. Nicholas legends: one believable, one unbelievable.

First, the unbelievable. Pictures of the three bags of gold were mistakenly taken as the heads of three children, which generated legend: The pictures were of three children who had been killed by an innkeeper, pickled in a brine-tub and resuscitated by St. Nicholas.

The believable one is that the bags of gold ended up on the coat of arms of the famous Medici merchant family of Florence, Italy. That three yellow ball symbol on the family's coat of arms became the universal symbol for pawnshops all over the world.

By 1200 the date of St. Nicholas's death, Dec. 6, began to be celebrated as Saint (See Santa, Page 15)