

## The Reader's Corner

By Monica Riley Verley  
Sentinel-Voice

This Black History Month, I want to salute the foremothers and forefathers that brought us one step closer to the freedoms that we enjoy today. Freedoms that we, as a people, cannot soon afford to take for granted. We must pass on to our children the desire to read and our rights to exercise thoughtful and cognitive discussion. We must pass on to our children our unique talents as storytellers. We emerge from a "griot"(oral) tradition, which translates into a rich tradition of authors and storytellers.

This month I'll be putting you in touch with two authors. The first, Ms. Bebe Moore Campbell, is the award-winning author of "Your Blues Ain't Like Mine", "Brothers and Sisters" and "Sweet Summer: Growing Up With and Without My Dad." "What You Owe Me," her latest, is inspired by Ms. Campbell's interest with the interaction between and the possibility of loyal friendship and alliances between blacks and whites.

### What You Owe Me (Putnam Books)

Set in Los Angeles, the novel begins in 1945 when Hosanna Clark, a twenty something African-American woman befriends Holocaust survivor, Gilda Rosenstein. The two form a business and an unlikely friendship. With Gilda's knowledge of cosmetics and Hosanna's head for business, they create a line of lotions and lipsticks for African-American women.

Just as the business takes off, Gilda disappears with the company's assets, leaving Hosanna broke and emotionally bankrupt. Eventually Hosanna moves on, gets married, has two daughters and creates her own cosmetics company. However, she never achieves her financial dreams and dies angry and bitter.

This novel spans more than 50 years and takes the reader through the lives of many characters. "What You Owe Me" is as much about black people trying to make it as it is about children healing from what they didn't find early in their lives from their parents.

### Guys In Suits (Anchor Books)

I thought I would never stop laughing while I was reading this novel by author, Van Whitfield. Forget the regular humdrum tales of "studs" and the "drama babes" who love them. "Guys in Suits" spins the hilarious tale of bus driver, I mean "Vehicle Operator", Simon, and his best friend, Stuart a stockbroker, I mean "Financial Analyst", as the two stick to their "60-Day Relationship Rule for Guys" in search of the "perfect" date for their annual trip to Cancun.

These two lovelorn bachelors, are in their 30s and ready to commit, but somehow the ladies aren't happening. To make matters worse, they've got a little more than a month to figure out whom to bring along on their annual vacation with their married friends Rod and Trevor. The year before, their disastrous dates arrived sight unseen courtesy of an Internet dating service and turned out to be the cyber-dates from Hell! So this year, they are desperately trying to save face and maybe even land a meaningful relationship. Each one reconnects with an old girlfriend; Simon with Eve and Stuart with Lynn. There's just one problem. Eve and Lynn is actually the same woman. Evelyn is a beautiful, savvy and intelligent catch for any discerning man and as it happens, aiming several rungs above either Simon or Stuart.

This story is told in both the voices of Simon and Stuart and so we get firsthand details on all of their dates and intimate sessions with Eve/Lynn. The reader knows that Eve/Lynn is one in the same woman before either Stuart or Simon do and that's what makes this novel a non-stop hilarious read!

Once you get past the first page where Simon breaks it down and reveals "The 60-Day Relationship Rule for Guys" you begin to understand why these two, literally, missed the boat!

Van Whitfield is also the author of "Something's Wrong With Your Scale" and "Beeperless Remote."

Monica Riley Verley holds a BA in English and Africana Studies from Vassar College and a Masters Degree in Journalism from Northwestern University. She is currently Executive Director of Programming and Promotions for Eastern Region PBS.

## Robinson

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much as the several key people involved. This, because "our subject" insisted.

"Education is the thing now...get educated," said the photographer last week, offering what he considered his best advice for ensuring African-American progress.

Of the work he was doing at the time, he explained, "I did it for 'the Arts Center,'" referring, as most know, to the West Las Vegas Arts Center (WLVAC), which specializes in the education of black people, with particular attention to the young. At 947 W. Lake Mead Blvd., WLVAC is located between H and J Streets.

The person with whom that photographer collaborated provides the answer to this week's Black History trivia question: Who's the first and only director WLVAC has ever known?

Its founding Cultural Coordinator, and current director, is Marcia Robinson, who has been there since the facility opened on Jan. 13, 1995, making her, as the kids might say, the West Las Vegas Arts Center's "OD" — its Original Director. She's absolutely effusive in praise of her staff, comprised of four individuals whom she describes as "really dedicated to our mission, and our youth."

Robinson earned a BA from Webster College in Webster Grove, Missouri and holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in Arts Education from the University of California, San Diego. She was appointed to the Nevada Arts Council 2001 by Governor Kenny Guinn.

She heads a resource situated "in the heart of the predominantly African-American neighborhood in West Las Vegas" that, Robinson says, "functions as a central venue for cultural activities for the community."

"Since its inception," Robinson says, the facility has become "a cultural center for showcasing and promoting the talents of students in its performing arts programs as well as the rich, unique and vibrant black culture through special events, seminars, workshops, and presentations by local and visiting professionals for the enlightenment of all who visit."

"Twice yearly, or," said Robinson, "every opportunity we have, we bring the different schools in. We use these opportunities to present cultural programming, and to promote communication, community and identity."

Lou Richardson designed not only the center but its



West Las Vegas Arts Center director Marcia Robinson converses with employees. From left are Iris Newman, Lisa Russell and Jewel Jeppe.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

surrounding facilities as well. He was also the contractor who built the complex, a contribution for which he will be honored today.

"We're dedicating our Black History Month program in honor of him," Robinson explained. "Sometimes, people — especially our young people — don't know who the real resources are," she said. "That's why we are honoring those who are really doing something positive in our community."

The program is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. with Las Vegas City Councilman Lawrence Weekly scheduled to deliver opening remarks.

The center is currently featuring "African-American Perspectives on Film," which it calls "an eclectic film celebration" that's been running on Saturdays at 1 p.m. since Jan. 25 and doesn't actually end until March 1. And, on Feb. 22, it will present "Three Mo' Tenors," it says, "as a response to the success of the Italian and Irish three tenors series."

"Marion J. Caffey staged a concert featuring African-American tenors Victor Trent Cook, Rodrick Dixon, and Thomas Young," according to the center. "In addition to performing the expected operatic material, they perform numerous other styles including jazz, Broadway show tunes, and gospel hymns."

"Black History Month is our opportunity to show our people who we are, where we've come from, and the vision to get where we need to be," said Robinson.

"We have to walk the walk," she added, in a statement that, qualitatively, speaks for itself. Quantitatively, anyone who knows Robinson will tell you: that was a mouthful.

A couple of days ago, one of her friends described Robinson as "humble," which only begins to explain the problems involved in getting her to talk about herself. Cleaning the Aegan stables may have been easier... maybe. It turns out, however, that the experience was as educational as it was diffi-

## Cupid

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