

## COMMENTARY

## Help near for equality

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

March 2003 may come to represent the month that Southern Nevada finally turned the corner onto the street of equitable opportunity and fair treatment of persons of color.

The four prime conditions that need to be satisfied in order for any community to

assure that persons of color have access to equitable opportunity and are treated in a fair manner are as follows: (1) elected officials who are willing to advocate for inclusion; (2) effective community-based organizations; (3) formation of alliances; and (4) unbiased law enforcement.

Fortunately, Southern Nevada now has whites and persons of color who are willing to risk their political capital by speaking out and actively working to change the image that Nevada is "the Mississippi of the West." In local politics, Councilman Lawrence Weekly, Mayor Oscar Goodman, and County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson-Gates have no problem getting in people faces when it is a matter of fairness. At the state level, Assemblypersons Morse Arberry, Chris Giunchigliani and Wendell P. Williams do not take you-know-what off anybody. On the national level, Senators Harry Reid and John Ensign, and Congresswoman Shelley Berkley are quality and decent human beings.

The values demonstrated by the foregoing persons and others not mentioned here



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satisfy the condition (1) where politicians have the courage to advocate for inclusion.

Under the leadership of Hannah Brown, the Urban Chamber of Commerce has emerged as the recognized leader in advocating for business development. However, it is not a well-kept secret that the Urban Chamber is

unable to do it by itself. Help is needed and it just might be on the way.

This possibility was embodied in three events that took place last month, namely: the National Urban League announced that it was in the process of establishing a presence in Las Vegas; the Las Vegas Chapter of the NAACP has satisfied all conditions needed to have its chapter reinstated, after a nearly two-year suspension; and a speech given by Sheriff Bill Young at a monthly luncheon of the Urban Chamber.

Championing the establishment of a National Urban League is Jackie Shropshire. Her advocacy for promoting training and employment opportunities has made a difference in the lives of others at the national level. Her husband, Tom Shropshire is a hero of mine. This dude, in his former position of Sr. Vice President and Treasurer of Miller Brewing Company made some serious money available to black publications and organizations during the 1970s. What is highly significant about his "pull" was the time in which he exercised such influence. He was one of the highest

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## Supreme Court ignores U. of Michigan's racism

By George E. Curry  
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The Supreme Court heard oral arguments Tuesday on whether two University of Michigan affirmative action programs should be left intact. But the Justices declined to listen to the strongest argument for continuation of the programs: The University of Michigan has a long history of racial discrimination that continues to this day.

To its credit, Michigan has vigorously defended its admissions programs for undergraduate and law school students, a decision that has cost more than \$10 million.

The university has not always been progressive and that's the point that Ted Shaw, the lawyer representing Black and Brown students at the University of Michigan, had hoped to argue.

Because Shaw is a former law school faculty member who helped reshape the school's affirmative action program, the court excluded him from arguing the case.

Consequently, proponents of affirmative action were allowed to make only half of their argument before the Supreme Court.

The University of Michigan made its case by stating that a diverse student body benefits all students and is reason enough to institute affirmative action programs.

Fearing that it might expose itself to additional litigation, Michigan did not argue that affirmative action is needed because of its racist history.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration

joined the efforts of the Center for Individual Rights (CIR), the Right-wing group that brought both suits against Michigan on behalf of rejected White applicants, to overturn the programs.

Had Shaw, the lead affirmative action attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, been allowed to participate in the arguments, he would have made the points that LDF and three other groups made in their friend-of-the-court petition supporting Michigan.

The brief states that in earlier legal proceedings, the students had "presented substantial and uncontroverted evidence that during its entire 185-year history, the University has repeatedly engaged in racial discriminatory and exclusionary practices against (students of color) on campus, the effects of which, to this day, are manifested in their continued underrepresentation on campus and in the University's reputation for discriminatory behavior."

Blacks are 16.2 percent of all college-aged residents of Michigan, but less than 9 percent of the university's student body.

Founded in 1817, the University of Michigan did not admit its first African-American students until 51 years later.

"The school segregated its own campus housing, and allowed students of color to be excluded from fraternities and sororities into the 1960s," the LDF brief observes. "Despite calls in 1949 by the Michigan Civil Rights Congress and again in 1952 by the campus Committee on Student Affairs

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## U.S. dropping smart bombs but producing dumb children

By James Clingman  
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Whatever happened to George Bush's education mantra, "No child left behind?" Oh, I almost forgot. He has something much more interesting occupying his time right now. Maybe he'll get back to the children when his war is over. But maybe by then there won't be enough money left to assure that even one child gets ahead, let alone none of them being left behind.

Priorities come into question here. Do we prefer "smart bombs" rather than smart children? It looks as if George Bush does, considering his budget requests for the war in Iraq and its subsequent "clean-up" and "reconstruction."

Yet another "Gotcha" has been played on the people by George and his merry men (and woman—that's right, I said woman, not women). I always wondered why old Dick Cheney left a \$36 million job for the job of vice

president. Now I know. The Kellogg Brown & Root unit of Halliburton has pulled up to the national gas station and said, "Filler up, George," and he has accommodated.

Cheney must be a soothsayer; he resigned from Halliburton just in time, didn't he? Yeah, just in time to make more "smart bombs" with which to decimate Iraq so Halliburton could waltz right in and make billions cleaning up the mess.

Meanwhile, leaving no child behind has faded into virtual oblivion, conjured up every now and then in our memory of a compassionate conservative who, during his inaugural address, looked us in the eye and said, "America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of America's conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault."

Well, it may not be their

fault, George, but they will certainly be the ones to pay for it.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund, wrote an article last year titled, "Does President Bush Really Mean to Leave No Child Behind?" She noted, "The president has said that education is his highest priority yet that is not reflected in his budget. For every \$1 he has proposed to invest in education, he has proposed to invest at least \$40 in a tax cut that will leave millions of children behind and widen the gap between the rich and the poor." Edelman is the real soothsayer, folks.

What we have now is a country that is willing to sacrifice its children's education for more smart bombs. Many of us, including our compassionate president, are willing to accept smart bombs and dumb children, smart bombs and poor children, smart bombs and hungry children. At this point in the "No Child

Left Behind" charade, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is doing more than our government to help our children get a good education! But I keep forgetting, we are at war and Bush needs \$75 billion to pay for it. What could I have been thinking?

At a time when a large percentage of our children are functionally illiterate, dropping out of school, displaying the lowest of social and interpersonal skills toward their classmates and their teachers, and then ending up in prison, you would think the "No Child Left Behind" cry would get top priority. But remember back in the 1980s when Reagan and Daddy Bush were in the Big House ("wars" on crime and drugs)?

And remember what Master Clinton did when he moved in (\$20 billion for new prisons)? According to an article in "Time" magazine, "...And Throw Away The Key." by Jill Smolowe, (February 1994), the spending

priority during that period centered on prison-building, private as well as public. Are things getting clearer now?

While telling us more money does not make a better student, our prison-crazed leaders were spending billions on new prisons that were equipped far better than our schools. Their obvious reasoning was that more money made better criminals. How ridiculous was that? But just look at what we have today. The stock market loves the prison industry.

How can you do better than owning hundreds of acres of land, complete with a prison facility, and to top it all off, it comes with its own group of slaves? What a deal, huh? In that "Time" article, Robert Gangi, executive director of the Correctional Association of New York, warned, "Building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease."

Now we have ushered in a new era. The moneychangers

have subscribed to the notion that building more smart bombs is more important—and more profitable—than building smart children.

Remember the old Doritos commercial on television? I can see some Jay Leno impersonator in Washington saying, "Go ahead, use as many as you like; we'll make more." Well, we are also making dumb children. But who cares about that? We'll just put them in our nice private prisons—and throw away the key.

"Pass me another billion dollars," Cheney says to Bush. "They won't miss it."

George asks, "What ever happened to my No Child Left Behind policy, Dick?" Cheney mused, "We didn't leave any behind, Mr. President; they are all in jail. Hey, you wanna send 'em some smart bombs for Christmas?"

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