

COMMENTARY

A modest proposal targeted at oneness

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

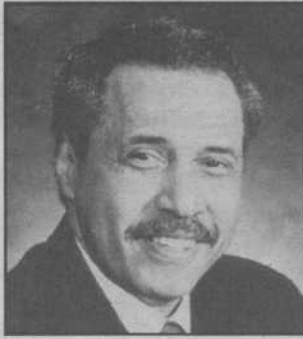
If Assembly Bill 174 becomes law, it could come to represent a significant and tangible demonstration that longtime residents and persons who are recent arrivals to the Vegas Valley are ready to "get over it," so to speak.

It is not a well-kept secret that Persons of Color who are longtime residents and those who have arrived within the last decade have developed feelings of distrust, resentment and frustration toward each other.

Your boy has not been able to determine with certainty the origin of these counterproductive feelings that are "holding us back." Such feelings prevent us from advancing against the solid front of economic discrimination in the Vegas Valley, which is well-documented in history. My guess, however, is that it has to do with the lack of appreciation each group has for the other group's past sacrifices, contributions, educational, and economic attainment.

Are you all listening to me?

The latest demographics indicate that there are now 140,000 persons of African-American descent living in the Vegas Valley. Just a few short decades ago, the vast majority of us lived in the area of town known as historic West Las Vegas. Today, less than 10 percent of us reside in this part of the city. The other 90 percent of us live all over the Valley in neighborhoods where homes range in price from \$250,000 to the multi-million dollar houses of Canyon



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Gate. That subdivision is complete with maids, wine cellars, and a private country club.

When our numbers were small, our people had to struggle mightily to overcome discrimination in public accommodations and opportunities to serve in job capacities other than those of porters and maids. Too many of us who have arrived within

the past decade do not have an appreciation for the fact that up until the mid-1960s the only place we could rent or buy a house was in West Las Vegas.

Similarly, black professionals arriving monthly to fill recently available six-figure positions are due in equal parts to them having prepared themselves educationally. However, struggles were waged by counterparts who blazed trails in Las Vegas at a time when there was no such hope for higher educational opportunities or access these "big time" jobs.

New folks you owe the old timers a simple thank you.

Understanding this dynamic, each group could benefit from a *healthy dose of reality*. Those who have blazed trails can continue to make meaningful contributions to our advancement. Those enjoying the fruits of the labor of the trailblazers, not only owe a simple expression of thanks, but you need to pay a debt of gratitude by offering a hand to those who need a lift-up in life.

Las Vegas has gone from being one of the most segregated cities in America to one of its most integrated in a few short years.

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Viewing Cincinnati in black, white, green

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Mark Twain is often quoted as saying if he knew the world were coming to an end he would move to Cincinnati, because there everything happens 10 years later. If that's true, and from all indications it is, it means Black people will have to wait 10 more years for justice as it relates to the latest in a long string of ridiculous events in this town. It also means that White people are 10 years ahead when it comes to the same things.

Want some examples? How about these? A couple of years ago, a White police officer, Steven Roach, killed a 19-year-old Black man, Timothy Thomas. The Black man was wanted on misdemeanors charges but received death. The officer committed a felony but received misdemeanor charges, for which he was subsequently told by a White judge, "You are free to go."

Last year, the second-highest ranking police officer in Cincinnati, a Black man named Ron Twitty, was indicted by a "special" grand jury for lying about a dent in his police car. He was charged with two misdemeanors and two felonies, which carried penalties greater than those of all three of the White cops who killed Timothy Thomas and another Black man, Roger Owensby, who was choked to death, even though he wasn't being sought by police when he was stopped.

There are several other incidents I could cite, especially things like a blind man who was given a jaywalking ticket for crossing against the light, and the grandmother who was cited because she put a quarter in someone's expired parking meter. But I am

sure you get the picture.

Cincinnati's latest in-your-face injustice inspired me to write this particular article. During a recent so-called "celebration," some college students decided to start invading private homes (breaking and entering, in police parlance), setting fires (arson), overturning automobiles (destruction of private property and vandalism), throwing rocks and bottles at police officers (assault on police officers), and causing fear and panic among neighborhood residents (disturbing the peace, intimidation and inducing panic).

The local media gave the incident very little coverage and some attributed it to "a few college kids getting out of line." Several residents called 911 operators but it took police more than 30 minutes to react. Despite the same thing happening last year at the same event, police were ill-prepared to take charge this year.

According to the chief of police, their "intelligence" failed to advise them of the event.

He also said they did not have enough officers to deal with that kind of situation. I reiterate, the same thing happened last year at the same time and at the same place.

Juxtapose that scene against the one at City Hall a few weeks prior, when a few hundred Black supporters of Black attorney Kenneth L. Lawson rallied to let city officials know we would not stand by and allow Lawson to be vilified. (Lawson is the attorney who brought and won the racial profiling lawsuit against the City of Cincinnati.)

The cops assembled for that peaceful (See Clingman, Page 19)

New York Times' plagiarism scandal unfairly colored

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

After Janet Cooke concocted a story about a non-existent 8-year-old heroin addict, an embarrassed "Washington Post" had to return a Pulitzer Prize it had been awarded in 1981 for the bogus story.

At the time, I was director of the St. Louis Minority Journalism Workshop, a program that local Black journalists developed for high school students. And I still remember what I told a reporter from the "St. Louis American" who interviewed me about Cooke.

Essentially, I told the reporter that Janet Cooke should climb back under the rock that she had emerged from prior to writing about "Jimmy's World." My fear was that all those smart, hard-working students whom had given up their Saturdays to study journalism would be unfairly tainted by Cooke's action.

The recent resignation of Jayson Blair from "The New York Times" for plagiarism did not affect me the same way. Maybe I've matured over the past two decades. At least, I hope so. Instead of rushing to defend the 27-year-old rising star at the "Times," as many of my Black colleagues have, or to condemn him as the journalistic equivalent of the "Unibomber," as some White journalists have done, I've looked at this as simply the failing of one individual who happens to be Black.

Until now, I have been content to watch this one from the sidelines. After all, it was not considered a blemish on the records of White authors when Clifford Irving submitted a fake biography of Howard Hughes or when it was disclosed that Joe McGinniss, author of "The Last Brother" [Ted Kennedy] had borrowed liberally from Doris Kearns Goodwin's

book, "The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys."

When it was discovered that columnist Mike Barnicle of the "Boston Globe" and Stephen Glass of the "New Republic" had engaged in writing stories that contained more fiction than facts, no one indicted all White journalists for their misdeeds or blamed it on White privilege. To be blunt, they were simply thieves.

And so was Blair. He clearly stole numerous passages from other sources without crediting them and, according to a "New York Times" investigation, he wrote about scenes, places and events as though he was present when, in fact, he wasn't.

What Blair did was a clear violation of all canons of journalism and, as far as I am concerned, he can climb under that crowded rock with Janet Cooke, Mike Barnicle, Stephen Glass, Joe Mc

Guinness, Clifford Irving and their ilk.

Instead of seeing Blair as the liar that he is, some White journalists want to drag race into this slimy picture.

William Safire, the resident conservative columnist for "The New York Times," wrote: "Apparently this 27-year-old was given too many second chances by editors eager for this ambitious black journalist to succeed."

Referring to his conservative chums, Safire brings up "the affirmative action angle." He writes, "See what happens, they taunt, when you treat a minority employee with kid gloves, promoting him when he deserves to be fired."

Safire has it backwards. The only offenders to be treated with kid gloves are White. After Barnicle lost his \$250,000-a-year job in Boston, he became a columnist for the "New York Daily News" and has his own radio

program. Glass is about to profit on his misdeeds by coming out with a book (this time, billed as fiction) about his experiences as a liar. Meanwhile, Janet Cook has never had her career revived, and, I suspect, nor will Blair.

Unfortunately, Safire is not the only White journalist trying to colorize this sordid chapter. On CNN's "Reliable Sources," Howard Kurtz, media columnist for the "Washington Post," asked, "...Blair is an African-American. Does that suggest that, perhaps, in an effort to bring him along that he was held by the newspaper to a lesser standard?"

One panelist, Seth Mnookin of "Newsweek," answered, "I think it certainly suggests it..."

Inasmuch as these Sunday talk shows continue to mostly present White journalists, even to answer questions about race, I'll reply to them in this space. There are

countless examples of young, inexperienced reporters being fast-tracked to the top because someone in a position of power wants to help their career.

Was Jayson Blair one of these people? Apparently. But that has nothing to do with race; those slated for such treatment are usually White.

When I discussed this "golden boy" phenomenon years ago with Pam Myers, a colleague at the "St. Louis Post-Dispatch," she told me, "The problem, George, is that you're not golden and I am not a boy."

Sadly, Jayson, the golden one, has tarnished his reputation. That should be seen as his downfall, not a result of proving opportunities to previously excluded African-Americans.

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