

Community activists try to remove 'Whites Only' marker

By Gordon Jackson

DALLAS (NNPA)—The fallout over the "Whites Only" sign will not go away. Now, the sign above the sign sparked aggressive, yet unsuccessful, actions by at least two disgruntled community leaders. "We were trying to remove a sign that had no business being up in the first place," said Rev. Charles Stovall, state director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Last week, Stovall and Lee Alcorn, president of the Coalition for the Advancement

of Civil Rights, attempted to remove the plague placed above the faint "Whites Only" engraving on the marble wall above a second floor water fountain in the Dallas County Records Building. Alcorn used a black marking pen in an attempt to deface the plague. Stovall, with screwdriver in hand, tried to pry it off the wall. The public demonstration captured by members of the media, led to the two being escorted out of the building by security officers. They were not arrested.

"The original signs being

up and the [plague] being added highlights even more the shame of racism in our county," said Stovall, who only regretted they did not have the proper tools to take the plague off.

The sign, believed to have been up for several decades, was discovered by citizens in January after the metal plate that had covered it for years was inadvertently removed. At least one other similar sign was also discovered on another floor. What to do about the markings sparked both outcry and strong debate in

the African-American community. While many advocated removing the signs and sending them to a museum for display, others felt leaving them in place would serve as a convincing reminder of the days of segregation in the city. Others still have proclaimed that the issue is minor, compared to other sensitive economic development and social matters in the Black community.

Nevertheless, in February, county commissioners voted 4-1, behind Commissioner John Wiley Price's recom-

mendation, to leave the sign in its place, to be accompanied by a plaque explaining its history and to serve as a reminder of the past.

That plaque was put up last month. Stovall feels the county court's decision only reflects their disregard of African-American issues.

"The bottom line is that this is symbolic of the ways the commissioners' court deal with issues related to the African-American community," said Stovall. An excerpt of the plaque reads: "The Dallas County Commis-

sioners' Court has chosen to leave the remnants of this sign in its original location to remind us of this unpleasant portion of our history — if we cannot remember it, we would not learn from it, and we would not appreciate or respect the rights and the responsibilities that we enjoy."

Stovall said that he, Alcorn and other proponents of removing the signs will continue to make their arguments at county court meetings, while seeking legal methods toward meeting their objectives.

NAACP

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in the state? 2. What major challenges are you facing at your school or within your district?

The first speaker giving testimony at the hearing was Patricia Cunningham. In her testimony, Cunningham stated, "The high school proficiency exam was never intended to be the sole measure of whether or not a high school student graduates... we are still dealing with a civil rights issue because there are many students who only got certificates of attendance because of that flaw. In 1978, 79 and 80, there was tracking going on in the Clark County School System, whether you admit to it or not. If you have children being put into lower math, science and English courses in earlier grades, by the time they got to middle school, based on the courses they took early on, they were never allowed to get into the higher level math and science courses, which meant that they weren't going to get algebra, biology, calculus. By the time the high school proficiency tests were put in place, they were tested on materials that they had not studied, nor were they required to study because it was not required for a high school diploma... you have students who graduated with certificates of attendance, walked across the stage in a cap and gown, who never told their parents that they didn't get a high school diploma."

Two students, Robert Rose of Palo Verde High School, and Shavon Thomas of Green Valley High School spoke about the racism existing at their campuses along with the mistreatment African American students receive from school staff members.

One parent, Del Rae Rose indicated that over 50% of the students enrolled in Special Education classes in the Clark County School District are African American. Another parent, LaShan Dias, spoke about the question of due process for students being suspended apparently not being adhered to

by CCSD personnel.

Due to the lateness of the meeting, many more speakers were asked to give brief statements at the hearing and were not able to give comprehensive testimony about the conditions existing within the Clark County School District. NAACP Board President Spencer F. Barrett indicated that the organization had gathered statistical data about the despairing conditions existing within the Clark County School District as it pertains to the education of African-American students. However, he was unable to share any of those facts or offer any solutions as to how his organization would address them.

In contrast, on February 26, 1986, a cross section of representatives from Black organizations, national organizations, local grassroots communities, local and national institutions, and concerned educators and individuals, were convened to discuss the status and future of the African-American child. The focus was education in general, and urban public education in particular. The strategy was to consolidate ideas and information from all the stakeholders in Black students' education: students, parents, teachers, administrators, policymakers, as well as business and community leaders.

The product of that effort was the establishment of an organization called the National Conference (now Council) on Educating Black Children (NCEBC). They developed a framework for change called A Blueprint for Action.

This blueprint was revised in 1987, and again in 1996. Predicated on "effective schools," research pioneered by the late Dr. Ron Edmonds, and the concept that "all children can learn," it was designed to provide a framework for collaborative actions that public school districts and communities could recommend to their stakeholders for the purpose of solving problems and accelerating achievement for all children, and Black children in particular.

Cancer survivors walk to raise funds

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

The local chapter of Sister's Network Inc. is hosting its first "The Gift of Life" walk to raise money for breast cancer research and programs that help women to survive the illness. The year-old chapter has 10 members.

The event will be held Saturday at Doolittle Park, on the corner of Lake Mead Boulevard and "J" Streets. Those interested can call 648-3410.

"We try to reach African-American women and let the community know we are here," Jeanne Beatty, president of the southern Nevada chapter of the network and a 13 year

cancer survivor, said. "Our organization helps African-American women find information and resources for breast cancer."

Nine of 10 black women with breast cancer die from the disease, says Beatty, who is also concerned with the alarming rate of teenage black girls who may be developing cancer but don't know it, or don't know about the disease or how to get help.

"We're walking for African-American women's lives," Beatty said. "We tell them how to diet...and find the right resources after treatment."

Sisters Network, Inc. was founded in 1994 and has 39 chapters across the nation with more than 3,000 members.

Park

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pants are on the artistic side; the organization helps them create CDs, and books (for poetry or writing samples).

"(Most children) want to be singers, dancers, rappers, artists and so on," Laurence T. said.

"The root word of show business is business...most kids are more worried about the show than the business."

The karaoke event will take place two

days and at two venues. Laurence T. plans a series of such events valleywide over the next six months.

"My goal is to make 10,000 friends," he said.

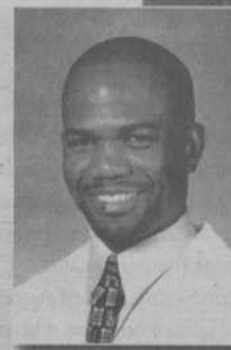
The next event is 4 to 8 p.m. Sunday at Sunset Park (Area A), followed by an event 5 to 9 p.m. Friday May 30, at the Rainbow Library Amphitheater.

Those interested can call 593-0390 or log on to www.IAMInkatha.com.

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