

POINT OF VIEW

OUR VIEW

When activists attack; all lose

There comes a time when someone has to say "enough is enough," a time when civility should rule, a time when sideline pacifism must be tossed aside in favor of vocal but tactful opposition to the status quo. That time is now in the local civil rights movement.

For years, many blacks have sat idly by and watched the vociferous among our activists rant, rave, hoot, holler, shout and kick up whirlwinds of dust in their plight to engineer equality into biased systems, destroy discriminatory methods and change incongruous ways of thinking. When they succeed, we cheer their triumphs. When they fail, we applaud their efforts. But when they step out of bounds—as was done recently at meetings of the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District and a forum held by Ward 5 City Councilman Larry Weekly—seldom do we chastise their missteps. That needs to stop now.

Don't consider this high-handed criticism of the methods employed by equality's local champions; rather view it through the prism of tact: Use of it can bridge barriers of all types; lack of it can foment conflict. Whether you agree or disagree with a person on a weighty subject, verbally haranguing and physically assaulting them does nothing but cast attention away from the matter. Increasingly, it appears that, "we all can't get along" (sorry Rodney King), because some would rather rabble rouse and give diplomacy a chance, they know no other way to spark change than to bumrush the opposition.

The derisive name-calling is bad enough, but, increasingly, it's being followed by verbal threats of physical reprisal, and in some cases, actual attack. That must stop. As if blacks don't have enough to worry about: police abuse; violence in the streets; we don't need to be watching our backs to avoid flying fists from angry activists. Besides, such foolishness only makes a sideshow of black activism and circus clowns of the pot-stirrers. If such degenerative behavior continues, don't expect young people to rush into careers as social architects and forward-minded politicians.

Upward for NUL

The National Urban League recently appointed former New Orleans Mayor Marc H. Morial as its new president and chief executive officer, a good selection by all accounts.

Particularly adept at coalition building—he was president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors—Morial should be a good for the Urban League, a 93-year-old civil rights organization seeking to reinvigorate itself. Perhaps Morial's greatest accomplishment—besides becoming one of the Crescent City's most popular mayors; he left office with a 70 percent approval rating—his work in crime prevention (crime fell 60 percent), economic development (thousands of homes and hotel rooms came online and he facilitated the NBA's return to New Orleans) and reforming the New Orleans Police Department, once one of the nation's most corrupt.

A graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center in 1983, Morial was in private practice—honored in 1988 by the Louisiana Bar Association with its Pro Bono Publico Award—and worked on various high-profile cases, including the U.S. Supreme Court case of Chisom vs. Roemer, which established that the Voting Rights Act applied to the election of judges; the case led to the election of the first African-American judge in Louisiana history. While in the Senate, Morial was recognized as Legislative Rookie of the Year, Education Senator of the Year and Conservationist Senator of the Year. The National Urban League has definitely chosen well.



— Playin' the race card —

By Al Triche
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In February 1993, Louisiana Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke was running for national office. For three days that month, an internationally-known African-American human rights leader was speaking in Las Vegas, near KVBC-TV, Channel 3.

On one of those days, the station interviewed Duke — live, via satellite, from Washington, D.C. It never mentioned the black leader had been here.

Bigots contrived so viewers would hear an overexposed white supremacist from across the country but wouldn't send a crew just blocks from its newsroom. They forced black viewers to endure Duke's racism; suppressed the message of one who would only have begged them to love somebody, even if white, and concealed from African-Americans the presence in their midst of a black man admired like Mother Theresa for roll-up-your-sleeves advocacy of America's most despised.

Across town, much worse occurred. During fall that year, at KTNV-TV, Channel 13, the tip of an iceberg of anti-black sentiment was observed in a picture displayed inside a storage cabinet door.

It was the reproduction of a black-and-white photo of that black, mid-twentieth-century film stereotype, "Buckwheat," but notably, not the Eddie Murphy impersonation at which even blacks

must laugh, precisely for the parody of white people's racism. This was the real thing, which had stopped being an interracial joke before I entered kindergarten.

What message had been intended for black employees who beheld that image; more to the point, what should they have inferred? We, the public, weren't to know it had been displayed — Lord knows how long before being discovered by someone it offended — or that it remained there for another year.

Diversity, at KTNV, simply meant degrading multiple ethnic minorities.

Remember images that following year of Native American protesters and their poignant objections to sports team nicknames, as they marched outside stadiums in Atlanta and Cleveland where the World Series was being played?

That opening weekend, Channel 13's white "sports-caster" described Braves-Indians highlights in a version of English that, speaking of impersonations, seemed an attempt to channel Jay Silverheels, portraying "Tonto." On it went, over the entire weekend: video of Americans exasperated by whites who'd stolen their country, mocked them centuries later and were personified by an imbecile in Las Vegas...on television.

A white reporter there kept, on the inside of a partition at his cubicle, an 8 x 10 glossy photo of the Honor-

able Louis Farrakhan, head of the Nation of Islam. On it was written: "To the best looking white man I ever met," followed by a forged signature to create a false impression the minister had autographed it to the fraud.

Black Las Vegas had recently erupted in flames over the acquittal of white cops who had brutalized Rodney King and been caught in the act, by TV at its best. But, across town, another Channel 13 moron might have ignited something too, had his inflammatory actions been reported. That's bias in the media for you, and not liberal; furthermore, one wonders whether he'd been at all apprehensive about disciplinary action...and why he hadn't.

The boss of that jerk whose "Indian jokes" lasted a weekend — KTNV's primary sportscaster — reveals how bad apples simply land near the tree.

During an impassioned discussion about race relations, this character, seen

weekdays delivering comic relief after the weather and looking for all the world like Howdy Doody, claimed to illustrate weaknesses at the frontline of our struggle. Out of his mouth — off-camera, unfortunately — came these words: "O.J. Simpson is a black leader."

White people have to be incredibly ignorant, terribly reckless and must hate us an awful lot to wave such red flags at the race card.

This guy is part of the lily-white anchor "team" prominently displayed on a pre-"Sweeps" promotional mailer the station recently sent around the valley. You noticed the team right away, and perusal of the mailer suggested the team and its colleagues are unaware there's a black community here and aren't looking for one.

On one occasion, one of KTNV's two primary news readers, pictured near the middle of the team, was taping promotions for that day's evening news. Highlighting (See Triche, Page 14)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER
Las Vegas Sentinel Voice
GRIST COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102 Email: lvsentinelvoice@earthlink.net

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