

OUR VIEW

Back to future

No eulogies are in order. The Moulin Rouge can—yes, can—be restored to its former, though short-lived glory. Fortunately, the fire that decimated the interior hull of the city's first integrated casino last Thursday didn't douse the spirit of investors trying to rekindle a property that was the talk for the town when it opened in May 1955 with the city's most beautiful showgirls, an electric party atmosphere and former heavyweight champion Joe Louis serving as the greeter.

If only their energy were infectious. If only you could see what they do: an opportunity.

The Moulin Rouge of old doesn't have to exist in pictures, memoirs and memories. Sure, it was the place where Jim Crow wasn't welcome, where celebrities of all races mixed and mingled after hours, where the NAACP engineered a deal with politicians to desegregate the Strip. Sure the circumstances surrounding its way-too-early closure are mysterious—some pundits posit that Strip casino operators, angered that the Rouge was stealing celebrities and big spenders with its legendary revues and not-to-be-missed late-night parties, put a mammoth financial squeeze on the West Bonanza Road hotel-casino; others theorize that the Mafia orchestrated the kibosh. Sure, it's recognized as a nationally historic site. All that only adds to its character, its charm, its societal stature.

And sure, there are some convincing reasons to not believe it rise like a phoenix from the ashes: The surrounding community suffers from a bad reputation, plus, questions abound—about whether there's adequate infrastructure to handle traffic, whether there's room for a minority-owned casino in the Stationized era of local casinos and billion-dollar Strip megaresorts, whether blacks will support it, whether other ethnicities will come. Valid concerns, all of the same. Still, we should believe.

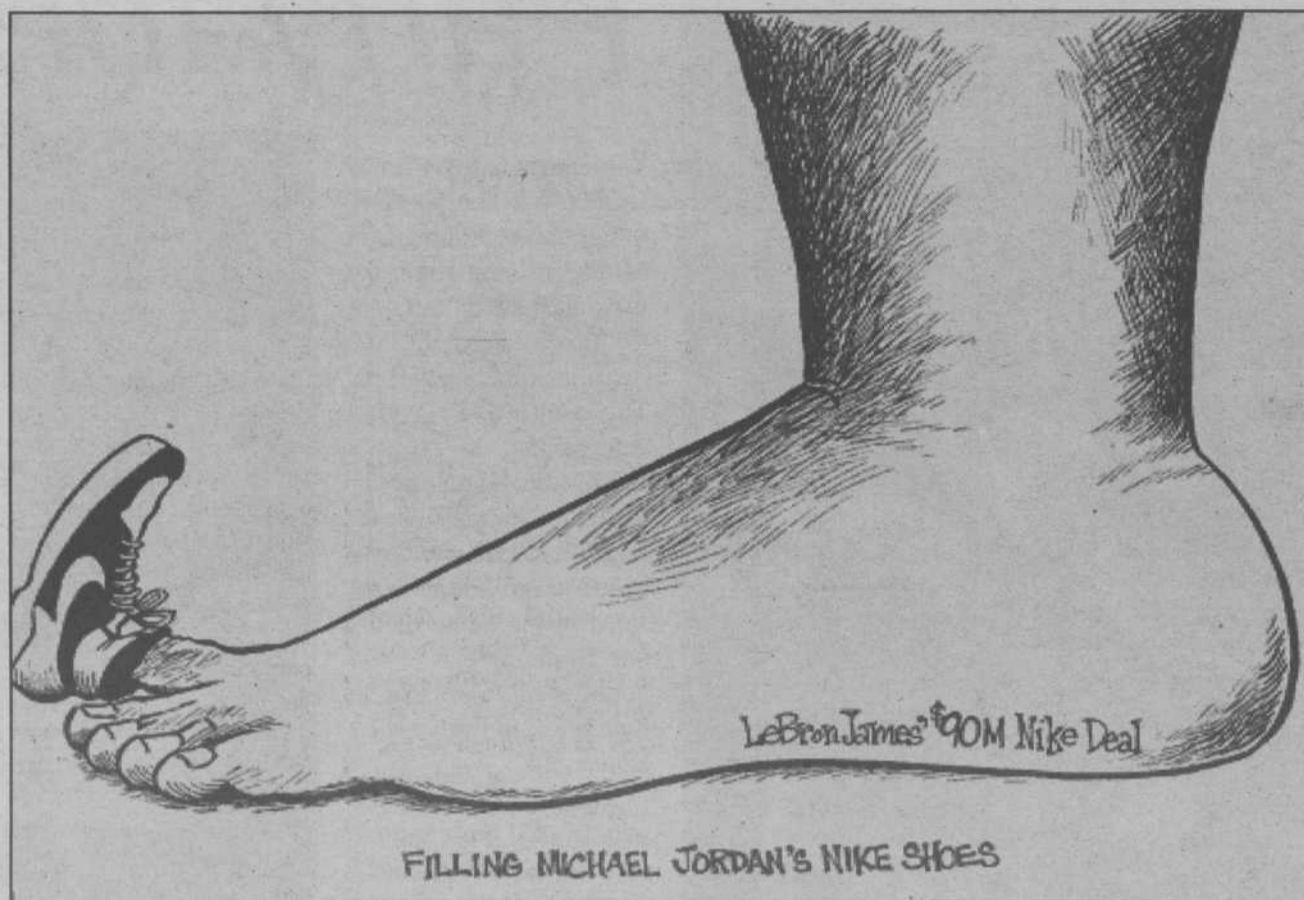
We should believe because these investors have demonstrated an unwavering commitment. We should believe because they have the business savvy. We should believe because they amassed moneyed backing. We should believe because the Moulin Rouge's storied history deserves a true legacy. It deserves to be truly venerated; as it is now, it's more of a nostalgic item than a powerful icon of its time. But if it's revived and if it succeeds, it would truly live up to its hype.

Numbers game

Now that our worst fears have been confirmed—more than 1,300 Clark County high school seniors failed the math portion of the proficiency exam—maybe state education officials will rightfully decide that it's time to retool the system. Here's a novel thought: Test students on what they are taught.

It's too easy to blame the abysmal pass rate to tougher standards instituted via President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act—this year's upperclassmen were the first to take the Iowa Test of Basic Skills; the Terranova Test was phased out last year. Fact is, lawmakers set the stage for this failure back in 1997 with the Nevada Education Reform Act. There's nothing wrong with heightening academic requirements for students—the dumbing-down of American children has got to stop sometime—but it's disingenuous to stipulate higher standards and toughen tests without sufficiently preparing them. Such is our current case.

If something isn't done now, this problem will continue. When will legislators and education officials see the light? Hopefully, the raw numbers will be enough to convince them that the current system is a failure.



Act like a fool—get rewarded

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

To save time, this week I am going to make you mad at the beginning of this column, rather than the usual occurrence where you are angry with me by the time you finish reading this "crap."

As you continue to observe the unfolding of activities and events here in Las Vegas, do you ever ponder the question as to who cares? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is too often they do and we don't." Mad yet?

If the answer is not yet, then let me s-p-e-l-l it out for you. Three of the many areas where they care and we could care less are the following:

- Respect for others and ourselves
- Demonstrating a sense of purpose and unity
- A commitment to education

Two recently publicized incidents of grossly inappropriate and ridiculous behavior in public forums provide excellent examples of what I am talking about. Some of us are infamous for disrespecting others, yet holler to high heaven when we perceive people are not respecting us. Apparently, two thoughts have never occurred to us, 1) reasonable people do not respect fools and 2) the white newspapers love to report on us acting like fools.

The only people who can make a living by acting like fools are circus clowns. Since I have not observed this level of talent existing in our com-



LOUIE OVERSTREET

munity, I must conclude some of us are satisfied with playing fools in public for free. Maybe these clowns are of the hope that the Ringling Brothers will catch their act or read about it the Las Vegas Sun or Review-Journal and sign them to a contract. I do not subscribe to the need to burden anyone with the weight of carrying a race, such as Joe Louis did two generations ago. During his time, the "Brown Bomber" was often described by the white media as a credit to his race. However, I would be less than honest, if I didn't say that I hope these anachronistic people have to carry the weight of being a "discredit to their race" at the present time.

On to the second area of the lack of caring that being the failure to demonstrate a sense of community purpose and unity two simple visual references will drive this point home. I started coming to Las Vegas on a regular basis in the early 1970s. I moved here on a permanent basis six years ago. Guess what? West Las Vegas looks today pretty much like it did

30 years ago; much less than only six years ago. However, during the six years that I have lived here, I have witnessed a nothing area on Spring Mountain Road become a thriving "China Town" and a must see tourist attraction.

Since you don't care, I guess it's useless for me to ask why, right? That's okay, because I already know the answer. The answer is that we became so happy and content with the freedoms granted to us by the civil rights laws passed in the 1960s, we forgot to integrate everything but that which matters most in a capitalistic society, again spelling it out for you that being the m-o-n-e-y.

The 140,000 of us living here in the Las Vegas Valley have an economic impact of over two billion dollars annually. Next to Atlanta, Las Vegas is the most popular place for folks that look like me to visit. The 2.2 million of us who visit Vegas each year to "make a killing" leave another two plus billion here.

With all these people living or coming to Las Vegas and the money we earn or spend, the "trifling fact" is that we do not control any meaningful commerce in this town. If you haven't figured it out by now, that is why white businesspersons love to see us coming. They know we spend money like "90 going west" and have no appreciation for the concept of economic reciprocity.

If we demonstrated a sense of purpose and unity when it comes to exercising our existing economic power, at least 90% of our problems, you know the ones we conveniently like to blame on the "white man" for causing, would disappear.

It's now lack of education time! It such needs did not exist, it would be insulting to have a white tennis player care more about black kids educational and recreational needs than African-American athletes and entertainers living in Las Vegas who are equally, if not more so, rich (See Overstreet, Page 12)

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