

Rites program transforms girls into young women

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

This event, an eight-week effort by Sisters in Society Taking Action, culminated with young African-American females being taught about growing up, transforming girls from childhood into young adults.

An enthusiastic crowd of parents, friends, and community members gathered at the West Las Vegas Library Theatre recently to celebrate completion of the first Rites of Passage Program.

China Hudson and Kianga Palacio, program coordinators, talked about the significance of the program. "Tonight there is a crossing over ceremony from adolescence into womanhood," Hudson said. "Students endured eight weeks of instructions on etiquette, professionalism, hygiene, grooming, as well as dress, sexuality and their atti-

tude." Palacio added, "The students gained a positive insight into their lives from all the things we instilled in them throughout the workshop. They can take with them and use in their everyday lives, living, making positive choices, moving on and being a productive role model for the next group of teenage girls growing up."

Sisters in Society Taking Action (S.I.S.T.A.) sponsored the eight-week program. What was this program all about? There are two views.

"Following African tradition, children begin to acquire knowledge of their ancestral ties to their homeland when they accompany and assist their parents in work and social interaction," John C. McCall, author of "Re-thinking Ancestors in Africa," writes. "Through this practice in quotidian exist-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

Participants in Sisters in Society Taking Action's (S.I.S.T.A.) youth program smile brightly as they organize for a photo. Back row: (L to R) Miquela Rabb, Ashley Taylor-Young and Neisha Ligon. Front row (l to r) Menyawn Fields, Blanca Floris and Medina Shakir.

ence, they gain an emerging sense of the cultural environment. The performed aspects of ancestral practices are con-

sidered crucial to the preservation of African identity." Another view

comes from the National Rites of Passage Institute: "Rites of Passage as a de-

velopmental and transformational process is culturally-specific, not universal. It is based on the multicultural premise that a group must recognize and affirm itself before it is able to share and appreciate the differences of others. A rite of passage recognizes that entry into adult life involves the realization of social obligations and the assumption of responsibility for meeting them. What initiation does is to set a time on the journey for bringing the individuals into formal and explicit relation with their kindred. It also confronts them with some of their basic social ties, reaffirms them and thus makes patent to them their status against the days when they will have to adopt them in earnest.

"Rites of Passage as a developmental and transformational process will not only (See S.I.S.T.A., Page 13)

Williams

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internal strife. The national office of the NAACP stripped the local branch of its charter. That charter was restored on April 17, 2003.

Ishman succeeded the Rev. Spencer F. Barrett, who was elected president of the reorganized branch in December 2002. Barrett was transferred as pastor of First African Methodist Episcopal Church in North Las Vegas last November to lead Bethel A.M.E. Church in Kansas City.

"It's been a long road back," Ishman said. "We are the new NAACP. Things are just coming together. We are just starting to get some synergy. To tear that down, it would just be a bad thing for the branch and the community. We are just starting to benefit from the fruits of our labor, so to speak."

Both Ishman and Williams agree increasing branch membership is key. The branch has approximately 500 members.

"People will want to participate when they see we are working on things of importance," Williams said. "A number of people have come to tell us that they have not been involved, but this (presidency) warrants their involvement."

Ishman is an advocate for ex-offender rights, helping to establish a NAACP branch in the state prison system. Gaining a charter for a second branch is in the works, he said.

"We must engage local politicians to legislatively support our efforts to immediately restore voting rights to qualified ex-offenders who have successfully paid their debt to society," Ishman said.



Photo Special to Sentinel-Voice

100 REASONS TO CELEBRATE

The Bush family gathers around Queentilla Bush, a matriarchal figure who recently celebrated her 100th birthday. Bush's children, grandchildren and great-grandchild observed her centennial anniversary during festivities at the Lied Care Center.

Horsford opens Senate run

By Lés Pierres Streater
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Amid hundreds of supporters and well-wishers, Steven Horsford officially announced his candidacy for the State Senate District 4 seat.

"This campaign is not about Steven Horsford or what Steven Horsford wants for Senate District 4," he said. "This is about the people of this district and what they want. It is not about my agenda but a community agenda. An agenda that needs to be heard and articulated in a way that brings about results and change that makes a difference."

The senate seat is being vacated by retiring State Sen. Joe Neal, a Democrat, who has represented the district for the past 32 years. Linda Howard, who has held a seat on the University and Community College System of Nevada's Board of Regents since 2001, is also vying for the seat. Democrats Theresa Malone, a member of the state Board of Education, and Cedric Crear, a former casino marketing manager, are also stomping for the seat.

The primary will be held Sept. 7.

Horsford made his announcement on April 17 in front of the statue of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr at Carey Avenue and Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., coming on the eve of

the Nevada State Democratic Convention. Horsford, president and chief executive officer of Nevada Partners, serves as a committee person.

"We stand here at the statue of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as a reminder of what he stood for and what he fought for and making the right to vote to run for public office and the ability to serve, not just a dream but a reality," Horsford said.

"I am running for the state senate because of my desire and commitment to make a difference. This community has provided me with so much opportunity to succeed. I would be acting negligent to allow someone else who does not share the same commitment, dedication, or ability to represent this district the way I can. I want to do my part to address the complex issues that face this community."

The district includes West Las Vegas, parts of North Las Vegas and a slice of Northwest Las Vegas.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Fowler, pastor of Victory Missionary Baptist Church, offered an invocation and delivered remarks. Rose McKinney-James and Congresswoman Shelley Berkley provided an introduction for the campaign of Horsford.

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