

New Yorker packs bags to aid Democrats cause

By Mary Bleier
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Only able to take two suitcases with her to Las Vegas, Juana Silverio left her comfort zone in Long Island, N.Y., a few months ago and headed west.

The 24-year-old recent graduate of American University is now the deputy communications director for America Coming Together (ACT) Nevada. As part of the new Democratic efforts to educate and inform Nevada voters in hopes of pushing the current administration out of the White House, Silverio knows her position with ACT will end in November. But she hopes to leave a lasting impression.

"ACT is revolutionary and I was drawn to Nevada and its issues," Silverio said. "I want ACT to leave something behind in the communities and keep them involved politically."

Silverio studied television journalism in college but after exploring several options after graduation, she decided to head to South Carolina to work on the John Edwards for President Campaign. Once there, Silverio met several people who were involved with ACT and she made the decision to become involved with the grassroots group once the Edwards campaign folded.

A move across the country was a bold step.

"I've always been interested in politics and I was looking for something outside of New York," she said. "Lots of New Yorkers just stay in New York and never leave. I



Sentinel-Voice photo by Helena Walker

As communications director of America Coming Together Nevada, Juana Silverio works to educate voters. The group is opposed to President Bush's reelection.

wanted to find something outside of New York."

Her advice to young people interested in politics is to just get out there like she did.

"Volunteer at your local assemblyman or congressman's office and learn as much as you can," Silverio said.

As part of her job as communications director, Silverio writes news releases and makes contact with the media, as well as helps to organize Democratic protests. She also has a hand in ACT's Web site and overseeing ACT foot soldiers.

"They (foot soldiers) are so important," she said. "If it weren't for them, we wouldn't

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NAN presents Lois Greene 'Woman of the Year' award

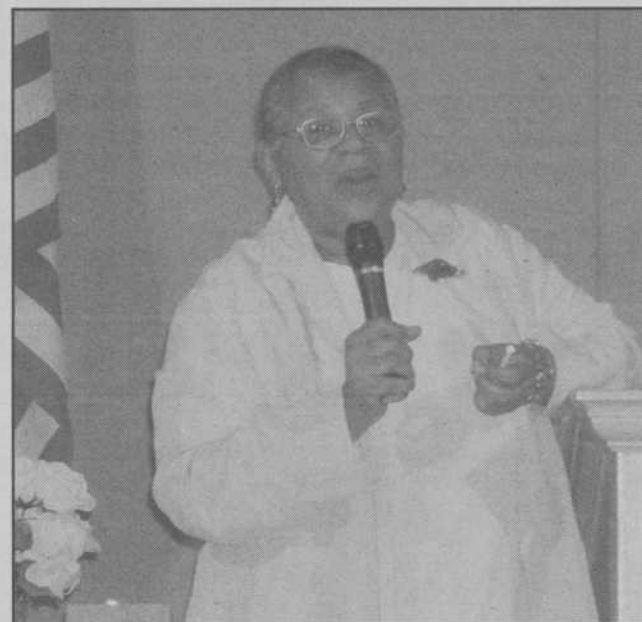
By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

"Ordinary Women . . . Doing Extraordinary Things" means it is commonplace nowadays for the rank and file of woman to make favorable impressions upon their communities. This was the theme as hundreds gathered in the Mandalay Bay Hotel & Casino to celebrate the second annual Women Changing America awards banquet of the Las Vegas Chapter of the National Action Network (NAN).

Serving as the keynote speaker was Minnijean Brown-Trickey, a longtime social justice advocate and a member of the "Little Rock Nine." The Little Rock Nine withstood all kinds of abuse to successfully desegregate Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Ark. in 1957.

"I enjoy having the opportunity of speaking to you tonight and talking about 'Ordinary Women . . . Doing Extraordinary Things,' and honoring women who are changing things in America," Brown-Trickey said. "We do it as part of our social responsibility, sometimes we do it because we have no other choice, or because we were chosen to do so. We make the road by our footsteps, our footsteps are the road, walking in our footsteps, and we have choices in what we choose to do."

Sheila Collins, event co-



Sentinel-Voice photo by Lés Pierres Streater

One of the "Little Rock Nine," Minnijean Brown-Trickey desegregated Arkansas' Little Rock Central High School. She keynoted the National Action Network women's dinner.

ordinator, presented the "Woman of the Year" award to Lois Greene of BankWest of Nevada.

Greene is a longtime supporter of nonprofit and community organizations throughout greater Las Vegas and a friend to many. She has received numerous awards for her advocacy concerning women-owned and minority-owned businesses, along with her devotion to her ministry and volunteer work in the community.

"It is a humbling experience to be honored for things that I care for so compassionately," Greene said. "I consider it to be a privilege to be able to serve the people and I appreciate my employer

BankWest of Nevada and my mentor, Larry Woodrum, who nominated me for this award, although I know that it was God who appointed me to serve in this capacity.

"As a woman, it takes time to do what is right," Greene said. "Stay in the process. Don't get discouraged or allow others to discourage you. One of my favorite sayings is 'no more self-inflicted wounds' because we are our own worst enemy in many cases and want to blame everyone else for our situation. If you're in school, stay in school. If you got a job, stay at that job until you find something better. And if you have children, stay close to your

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ACT

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also a policymaker in the New York Legislature.

"ACT Nevada has had a great response to foot soldiers, the hundreds of paid and volunteer people who canvass neighborhoods and communities," Tolbert said. As they head out into the desert heat, the ACT teams are armed with Palm Pilots so they can keep track of each contact they make and to record the issues that Nevadans are most concerned with.

"We want to know what Las Vegas' issues are," Tolbert said. "Whatever the issues, our goal is to get you information on that issue and how it affects you as a voter."

The data that's collected from foot soldiers is stored in a data storage system that can be accessed by any of the America Votes groups.

ACT Nevada has also been coordinating efforts with other local organizations, such as the NAACP, Culinary Workers Union and Voices for Working Families. While those groups target specific precincts, such as certain Latino areas, ACT's main goal is to reach



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Terence Tolbert, America Coming Together Nevada's director, says "We want to know what Las Vegas' issues are."

swing voters.

To date, Tolbert said, they've reached more than 10,000 Valley residents.

While most have been receptive to the door-to-door group, Tolbert said they're having problems reaching everyone they've set out to target. Now eleven weeks into the process, the grassroots group is looking for more innovative ways to reach voters.

"We're trying everything that's message-driven. If it's crazy enough to work, ACT Nevada might do it," laughed Tolbert, who is looking into using billboards. His goal in

Nevada is to "register, educate and motivate" every community, targeting people where they live, work, get their hair done and do their grocery shopping.

Tolbert said because the average voter only thinks about elections for seven minutes, ACT is doing more political enlightening now and plans to do a bigger push for voter registration in August.

"We want to keep the message going and we're not going to let up," he said.

To learn more about ACT, call (702) 382-4541 or log onto <http://www.americacomingtogether.com/>

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