

OUR VIEW

Judging Earl

Nevada lost more than a judge with Saturday's passing of Earl White Jr. Expectedly, his death has brought out a bevy of superlatives: hardworking, pioneer, trailblazer, teacher, dedicated, principled. Earl White Jr. was all that and much more. After stints as a teacher and recreation director, the Howard University graduate worked as a legal assistant and lawyer for the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency, the precursor to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Hired as a public defender in Clark County in 1967, he opened a private law practice in 1969. From there, his legal career soared.

After working as a hearing officer, White was appointed as Justice of the Peace—considering the racially inflammatory times, his selection was testimony to his stellar reputation in the legal industry—during which time he sued the Clark County Commission over the distribution of Justice Court fees (he felt too small a portion was circulating back to the courts).

Like other trailblazing African-Americans, White's ascension in society wasn't welcome on all fronts. One of the valley's first Black judges, he faced death threats from racists. Though he admitted to fearing for his life, White was undaunted, continuing to appear at public functions, albeit with extra police and security nearby. Appointed to a District Court bench in 1985, he was formally elected a year later and, in 1987, was selected by his colleagues to be chief judge, yet another feather in his already decorated cap. Perhaps it was only fitting that he ended his career on the Las Vegas Ethics Review Board (1995 to 2002), ensuring politicians hewed to ethical codes; he presided over hearings for various elected officials accused of ethics breaches).

In many ways, White was the valley's version of James Nabrit, a top '50s-era litigator for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's once-powerful Legal Defense Fund. Not only a teacher for young civil rights lawyers, Nabrit was an inspiration. White served in the same, and not just for Blacks aspiring to jobs in the legal field. He gave Allen Lichtenstein his for job in the industry—as a law clerk; Lichtenstein, who credits White with teaching him about fairness, would later become an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada.

White's memorial service is scheduled for today. Many wonderful things will be said about the man and his accomplishments. All it of it worthy.

Judging Michael

So much for the whole "jury of your peers" thing guaranteed by the constitution. Already set to be one of the most bizarre criminal trials in American history, the trial of pop culture icon Michael Jackson on child molestation charges just got a lot weirder with news that none of the jurors is African-American.

You'd think that California would've learned from the 1992 Rodney King debacle, in which an all-White Simi Valley jury acquitted four Los Angeles Police Department officers in the videotaped beating of Black motorist Rodney King. After the acquittals, LA went up in flames, a riot on par with the Watts unrest in 1965 claiming nearly 60 lives and causing billions upon billions in damage.

While there's no indication that a guilty conviction could cause a repeat of the 1992 riots, the stage has been set for making a circus of a trial loonier. Sadly, such myopic jury selection only redoubles the general lack of faith that many minorities have in the criminal justice system. It makes you wonder: Had NBA superstar Kobe Bryant gone to criminal trial on sexual assault charges, how would jurors in his case look?

On second thought, need we ask?

P O I N T O F V I E W

PENTAGON DEVELOPING ROBOT SOLDIERS:



Cutting at heart of community

*Dora La Grande
Sentinel-Voice*

President Bush has been claiming that federal spending is out of control and cites this as his reason for eliminating Community Development Block Grant Programs (CDBG). This, along with the elimination of 149 other programs, will cause significant harm and unnecessary disruption at the local level if passed.

President Bush is proposing that the CDBG budget be reduced from \$4.87 billion to \$3.7 billion.

First, federal outlays as a percentage of the economy have been increasing steadily since 2001, but much of the increase has been due to defense and homeland security spending and rising health care costs for Medicaid and Medicare. Even with these increases, federal spending, as compared to other time periods, is not out of control.

Between fiscal years 1981 and 2000, annual outlays averaged 21.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP); between fiscal years 2001 and 2004, outlays averaged 19.4 percent of GDP.

Spending is not causing the massive deficits we face. Nearly half of the deficit was caused by President Bush's tax cuts resulting in insufficient revenue, declining since the 2001, which has reached its lowest level since 1959. Since it is apparent that defense and homeland security are going to continue to rise, he has no choice but to cut other parts of government to fund it.

Some of the items in the



Bush budget appear to, in effect, set up a class warfare—especially when they call for additional tax cuts for the wealthy, such as the proposed estate tax repeal, which will be paid for through cuts to programs such as CDBG.

The elimination of CDBG constitutes one of the most egregious aspects of the proposed President's Fiscal Year 2006 Budget. The 30-year-old CDBG program has been the signature program for cities and counties to create jobs, increase economic development opportunities and to expand homeownership, just to name a few of its components. It's main focus has been to serve constituents at 80% of median income and below.

CDBG was instituted by President Nixon and later signed by President Gerald Ford. Bush's proposal to cut or weaken CDBG is an antithesis of the republican philosophy, which is that local governments know what's best for their communities.

Bush appears to be walking east and talking west when, on one hand, he says that a key priority for his administration is to stimulate the domestic economy by creating jobs and expanding homeownership while, on the other hand, he is proposing to eliminate the very programs that have been most effective

at doing exactly what he says is needed.

CDBG has proven to be capable of addressing the diverse needs of communities as small as Bunkerville, Nevada, or as large as San Diego, California—whether it's homeownership, housing rehabilitation, supportive services for the elderly or children, business development or infrastructure improvement.

I clearly understand that you cannot comprehend the full impact and benefits of a particular program until you see it, walk it, touch it and feel it. Bunkerville residents couldn't take a shower and flush their toilets at the same time without getting scalded until CDBG funds improved their water system.

As a past member of Clark County's CDAC (Communi-

nity Development Advisory Committee) that selects CDBG funded entities, I know first hand the great, important work that CDBG funded organizations provide.

Programs such as Opportunity Village serve the disabled in a myriad of ways; the Community Food Bank helps feed low to moderate income individuals; Early Childhood Development Centers are vital, and homeownership programs have the capacity to spur economic empowerment and build wealth.

National statistics for Fiscal Year 2004 prove the effectiveness of the CDBG program:

- In FY 2004, 95 percent of CDBG funds supported housing activities in distressed communities and principally benefited low to moderate-income persons.

- In that year alone, over nine million persons, of which an estimated 74 percent were low and moderate income, were served by new (See La Grande, Page 11)



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 Email: lvsentinelvoice@earthlink.net

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