



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Former Las Vegas Charlotte Holt Fuller recently returned to talk about her new home, South Africa.

## Former resident tells African tale

Tanya Flanagan  
Sentinel-Voice

South Africa, home to the cities of Soweto, Durban and Johannesburg, has developed in many ways over recent years with some traditions being pushed aside to make way for the kind of modern living that is so common to the Western Hemisphere. Travelers to the region see activities, commercial buildings and homes that resemble parts of New York City. Not only are the structures reminiscent of Western-style architecture, but modernization has brought social challenges to the region, such as homelessness and the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The children of South Africa is the population very much at-risk, according to Charlotte Holt Fuller, a former Las Vegas who moved to South Africa in 1998. Fuller went to South Africa after retiring from working in the juvenile court system with at-risk children in Southern Nevada. Once there, she picked up where she left off here.

Before leaving the U.S., Fuller helped organize a group called Your African Connection or YAC. The group was initially formed to serve as a planning agent for the Las Vegas International Food & Cultural Festival. Fuller said she went to the festival and saw no signs of African-American culture, so she approached the event organizers and asked if they would be interested in having such representation. The answer was yes, and she formed YAC to bring some Black influence to the festival.

The group incorporated in 1990 and eventually evolved to take interest in the plight of South Africans. Fuller and her close friend Helen Toland, a retired educator residing in Las Vegas, began taking trips to the country that led to the work Fuller does today.

Fuller was in Las Vegas recently for a visit with Toland and other close friends before returning to South Africa. Before leaving, she took time to share stories on conditions in South Africa.

Fuller, 73, lives in the coastal city of Durban and spends her days working with orphaned children. She divides her time between three homes for children in South Africa. The orphanages are unlike those in the U.S.

(See YAC, Page 2)

## Famed attorney Cochran dies

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor in December 2003, died Tuesday at his home in the Los Feliz area of Los Angeles. He was 67.

Cochran's legal career representing both victims of police abuse and celebrities in peril converged under the media glare when he successfully defended O.J. Simpson from murder charges.

With his gift for courtroom oratory, Cochran became known for championing the causes of Black defendants and for the iconic phrase, "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit," in Simpson's murder trial.

Sandra Morgan-Douglas of the Las Vegas law firm Parker, Nelson & Arin said of Cochran: "Although I never had the opportunity to meet Mr. Cochran, he was

definitely an inspiration. He was not only an inspiration to the African-American law community, but the law community nationally and internationally."

While Cochran represented celebrities who included professional football players and rappers, he also stuck up for — as one colleague put it — the "common man."

Cochran represented a Haitian immigrant tortured by New York police, a 19-year-old Black woman who was shot a dozen times by police as she sat in a locked car and a White trucker who was videotaped being beaten by a mob during the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

He proudly displayed copies in his office of the multimillion-dollar checks he won for ordinary citizens who said they were abused



Sentinel-Voice file photo

Attorney Johnnie Cochran announces a partnership with the Mainor Eglet Cottle firm at a press conference last year.

by police.

"The clients I've cared about the most are the No Js, the ones who nobody knows," he once said.

Over the years, Cochran represented football great Jim Brown on rape and assault charges, actor Todd (See Cochran, Page 4)

## S.I.S.T.A. hosts rites of passage event

By Lés Pierres Streater  
Sentinel-Voice

Over 100 people attended the graduation ceremony of

the 2005 Rites of Passage program held on March 20 at the West Las Vegas Arts Center by the service organiza-

tion Sisters in Society Taking Action.

Eight young women completed the 22 week program where they attended classes on various subjects, including these interrelated courses: Sexuality; Familyhood; Our Community-Your Friends; Our Time-Our Work-Our Money; Being-Becoming Whole and Proud; and The Well of Creativity.

In addition to their main classes, the girls had sessions about etiquette and how to take care of their bodies. For their community service projects, the girls participated in a food drive for the homeless, and they went out to a school and read to children.

The mission and vision statement of the organization S.I.S.T.A. is to provide opportunities for Black female adolescents to help them prepare in these ways: physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually and culturally — for passage into womanhood.

Parents are encouraged to be active participants in the program and to not only support the efforts of the girls during their training and ini-

tiation but, also, to emulate the teachings of the program at home.

The program was created by Kianga Palacio and China Hudson who saw a need to provide young African-American females an opportunity to learn about themselves and develop into responsible and respectable young women.

Both of the women shared their perspectives about the organization and the work that they're doing to ensure that young these and other girls have the ability to grow and develop guided into adulthood.

Palacio stated: "[For the past] 22 weeks the girls have gone through an extensive program and workshops dealing with family, sexuality and community. We tried to instill in them principles that they can take with them later on in life and use to give back to the community and mentor other young girls. All of this work is not done in vain. We hope that these young women can practice everything that we taught them and become successful in anything that they chose to (See Rites, Page 3)



### TRAGIC LOSS

Affable and driven, Polly Gonzalez made a mark not only as an anchor for KLAS-TV Channel 8 but also as a tireless advocate for children and Latino causes. Gonzalez died Monday in a car accident while traveling with her two daughters near Death Valley. The Sentinel-Voice staff expresses heartfelt condolences to the Gonzalez family, loved ones, friends and colleagues. She'll be missed.