

## OUR VIEW

Remembering  
Johnnie

There are some people who welcome the news of the passing of famous lawyer Johnnie Cochran, who died Tuesday from a brain tumor. There are those who blame Cochran for exacerbating the always-bubbling-under-the-surface racial tensions that continue to plague America when he successfully defended O.J. Simpson against murder charges in the death of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman. There are those who label Cochran a racial opportunist who did more legal harm than good. For those people, please stop reading now.

This editorial isn't for you. It is not for the myopic of vision or for the narrow of mind. It is for those who recognize that in losing Cochran, America lost a hero.

Those that view Cochran negatively don't know his history, his impact or his importance. Johnnie Cochran was so much more than the sum of his most famous courtroom quip — "If it doesn't fit, you must acquit." While his national notoriety came from defending O.J. and representing other celebrity clients — brokering a multi-million dollar settlement in an early '90s child sex abuse case against Michael Jackson, as well as defending Tupac Shakur in his 1993 sexual assault case, P. Diddy in a case stemming from a 1999 nightclub shooting and Snoop Dogg against murder charges in 1995 — Cochran built a career and a stellar reputation by championing the downtrodden, taking on clients who weren't rich or famous but were no less interested in (and deserving of) justice.

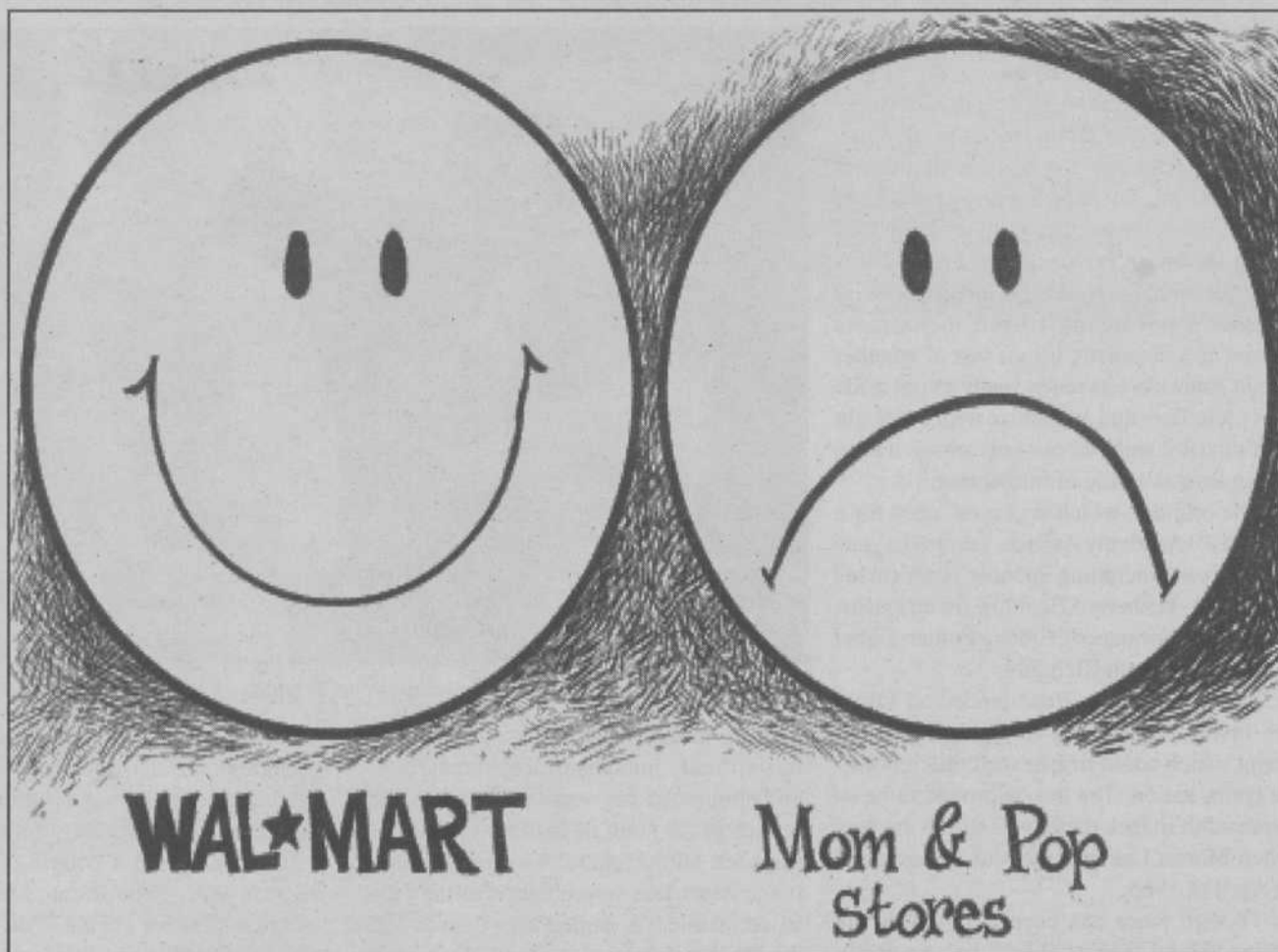
As early as the 1960s, Cochran was challenging police brutality. Over the decades, he routinely lambasted the Los Angeles Police Department for its horrible record of abusing minorities. He represented the widow of Leonard Deadwyler, a Black motorist killed during an LAPD police stop. Proving that he valued justice over racial animus, he also represented Reginald Denny, the White trucker pulverized with a brick during the 1992 LA riots (Cochran unsuccessfully argued that police violated Denny's rights by withdrawing from Florence and Normandie where Denny was beaten).

Perhaps Cochran's greatest legal victory — and there were many significant ones — was getting the 1972 murder conviction of Black Panther member Geronimo Pratt overturned in 1997. (Pratt, who goes by the name Geronimo ji Jaga, was convicted of robbing and shooting a young White couple on a Santa Monica tennis court in December 1968. The woman died, and her husband survived). As Cochran's celebrity grew, so did the scope of his legal reach. He would go on to create a law firm with 14 offices outside California (including partnering with the local firm of Mainor Eglet Cottle) devoted to personal injury law and other civil litigation. Testament to his commitment to community, he maintained headquarters on Wilshire Boulevard, a street whose best years are long behind it. Indeed, for some, all that Cochran did — defending the defenseless, inspiring a generation of Black lawyers, tirelessly giving back to communities, mentoring Black professionals, along with countless other acts of generosity and kindness we didn't see and don't know of — isn't enough to change their skewed perceptions. And that's fine. The truth is that Johnnie Cochran represented the best that's in us.

## Selecting the elect

Because she's been a tireless worker for equality, Willia Chaney deserves to be elected as a municipal court judge in North Las Vegas. Putting her in such an important seat is beneficial for more than superficial reasons — she's African-American and female. Chaney will bring a fresh but stern perspective to the bench. Because Byron Goynes has the best credentials — 13 years as a city planning commissioner, expansive knowledge of zoning issues — he deserves to be the next City Councilman for Ward 6. Goynes deserves the chance to put his knowledge to work on a larger scale.

## POINT OF VIEW



## True Black power achievable

Dora La Grande  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If we are ever going to advance as a people, the first thing we must do is be totally honest with ourselves. We must truly understand where our economic and political power lies or, to put it more bluntly, ask ourselves if we really have any power at all. We can delude ourselves into thinking that we have political power even though we don't have any money to provide to candidates, aren't lending to them any of our talents and aren't providing any of our major resources to them (votes, etc.).

So we aren't offering any talent, any treasures or any resources. Yet, we believe that we can effectuate change in the political arena? We'd better wake up. Elected officials understand two things: money and votes. They really add it up, counting the number of votes. So, until we can deliver on both ends, the struggle for political justice and political power goes on.

We can delude ourselves into thinking that we have economic power, even though: we don't have Black businesses flourishing at a rate needed to create the job opportunities required for our people, in contrast to other communities who do so for their own; we don't understand that the means by which to control the our purchasing power (\$631 billion worth in

ON THE  
RECORD

By Dora La Grande

2003) in order to put it back into our own businesses and neighborhoods is by creating our own financial institutions instead of putting all of our money in White-owned banks who use it to develop their own communities; we still consume more than we manufacture, outspending a growing population of Hispanics and every other ethnic group in virtually every consumer product and service category.

Black women as a group is the fastest growing business sector, and our purchases are having the single biggest influence on the growth of African-American spending. With more income to spend we have increased expenditures over last year in the categories in which we are the dominant buyers. These are among the categories and the respective percentage of increase in spending for each: child care (+8), personal care products (+18), gifts (+155), food (+3), women's apparel (+2) and women's footwear (+13).

If we are ever going to prosper economically, we as Black women must understand the purchasing power

that we have and how to convert it into real gains for our children and husbands, and we must get our spending habits under control so that we can contribute to the overall economic empowerment of our community. The Biblical Proverbs 31 Woman (a virtuous woman of God) worked and contributed to her household; she didn't siphon money from it. There is an old saying, "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world." If we are going to rule, we must learn how to "Play Like a Man and Win Like a Woman" (author Gail Evans) and stop passing our poor spending habits on to our children. Guilty as

charged.

So, how do we acquire economic power, which is, without question, the basis for political status? First, we don't acquire it by allowing others to put businesses in our neighborhoods and then letting them turn around and take the money out of our neighborhoods to enhance other folk's lives and communities, in their own neighborhoods.

We don't acquire it by putting an FBI building and IRS building in our neighborhood. Even though aesthetically they enhance the community, they aren't bringing any jobs or contracting opportunities to the community for our people.

We encourage our own people to use tax incentives and other economic development vehicles to come in and do business. We acquire economic power by understanding (See La Grande, Page 9)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER  
**LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice**  
GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.  
(702) 380-8100

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

**Contributing Writers:**  
Tanya Flanagan  
Tasha Pope  
Dianna Saffold  
Lés Pierres Streater  
**Photographer:**  
Isaac Sawyer

**Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief**  
**Kathi Overstreet, Associate Publisher**  
**Parker Philpot, Assistant Copy Editor**  
**Don Snook, Graphics**  
**Ed & Betty Brown, Founders**

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association  
and West Coast Black Publishers Association