

OUR VIEW

Separate And Still Unequal

A generation after the 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kan.*, officially ended segregation in public schools, the Clark County School District embarked on its own fast-track integration plan. As more schools began to reflect the town's growing ethnic diversity, those in West Las Vegas, already predominantly African-American, generally stayed that way. Over the years, parents, administrators, teachers and students have put in yeoman's work to make these good schools; if they fell short, it was due less to lack of effort and more to lack of resources.

So when news that tennis star Andre Agassi would open a college prep school in West Las Vegas, investing both his money and considerable celebrity, people were justifiably excited. The Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy opened in 2001 with great promise, its capped enrollment and tough curriculum figuring to make it an enviable educational institution. Parents would be lining up and beating down the door to get their children in.

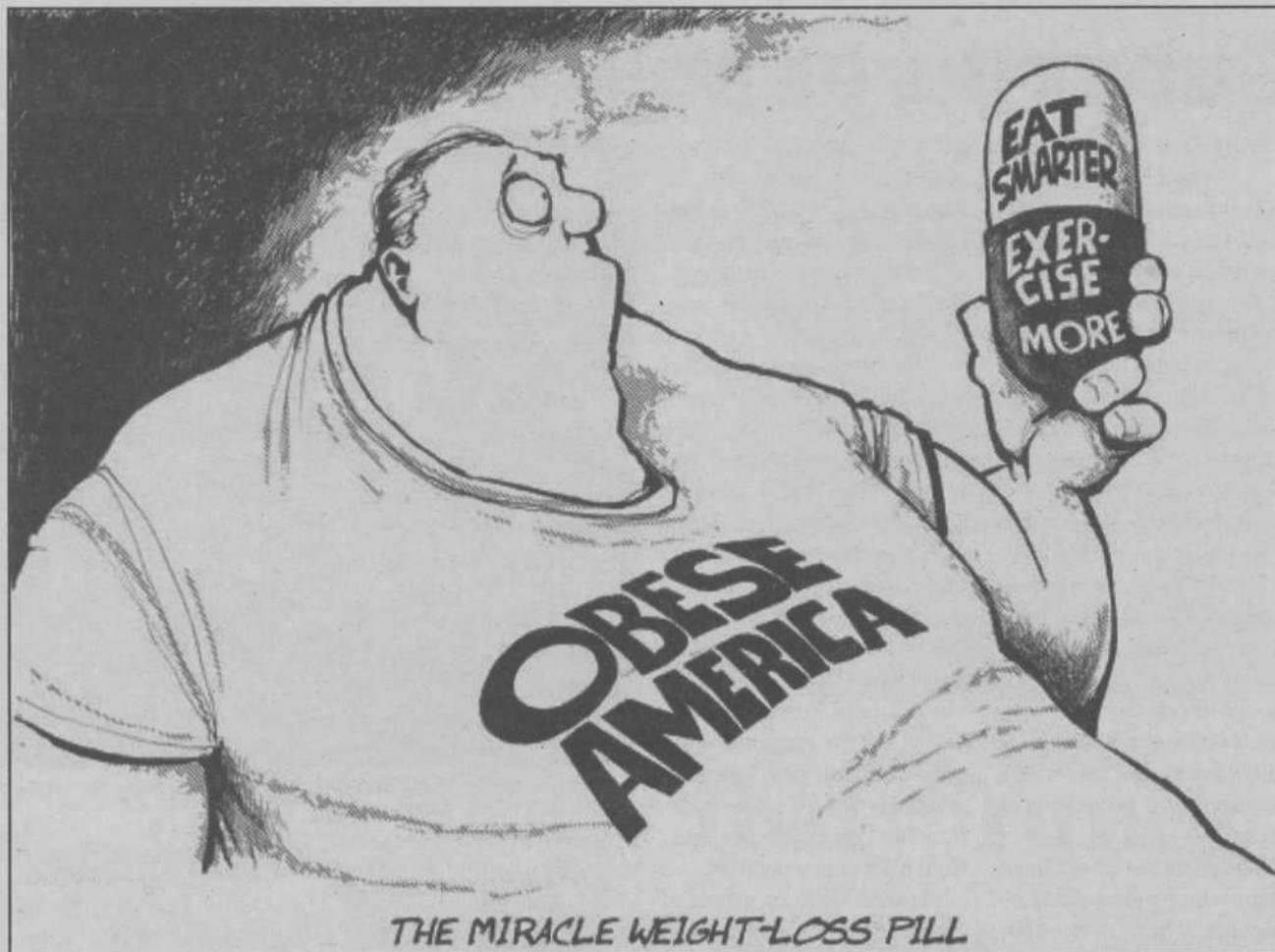
Four years later, some parents have snatched their children out of Agassi Prep, disenchanted with infighting between administrators and teachers, allegations of student harassment and school district and state investigations into, among other things, personnel issues, testing security and student reporting procedures.

In 2003-04, a dozen teachers (eight full-time, four part-timers and/or substitutes) were either fired or resigned. The latest Agassi controversy also involves teachers: 10 are not being asked to return to Agassi Prep; they accuse administrators of obfuscating about the real reason for their dismissals. Teachers and parents are also concerned with what some characterize as a toxic teaching environment and behind-schedule construction of the high school. Four years into its existence and Agassi Prep hasn't hit stride. The school that figured to be just what the doctor ordered is turning out to be just what West Las Vegas didn't need.

Agassi Prep's problems aren't the only issues plaguing education in West Las Vegas. Concern over the delay in approving funds to build a new campus for Booker Elementary has caused a stir. A coalition of Black groups—Caucus of African American Nevadans, the Ministerial Alliance, Nation of Islam, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Alliance Against and Political Repression—along with Clark County School Board Trustee Shirley Barber plan to present a "Bill of Concerns" at 5 p.m. at the school district's central administration building.

"We no longer plan to remain silent on the manner in which our students and Black employees are being treated by the trustees and administration of the Clark County School District," a spokesperson for the coalition said. (There's no word on whether the coalition will press for a high school in West Las Vegas, long a sticking point for many area activists).

Included in the billion-dollar school construction and modernization bond, passed by Clark County voters in 1998, are funds to rebuild Booker. But a vote scheduled earlier this month, that would've forwarded the matter to the Clark County School Board, was postponed because an oversight committee failed to vote on the measure. This has many parents concerned. Rightly so. West Las Vegas has long been on the short end of the educational stick. The district pumps millions into new elementary schools in the suburbs but can only find enough money to rebuild/repair/modernize one in West Las Vegas each biennium. They're right to fear that the delay might somehow, someday, be a harbinger. Let's hope they're not right.



Does the village still exist?

*Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice*

There is an old African proverb that states, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." This adage reflects the truth that it takes many lives to shape and mold the life of a child. As African-American children growing up in the '50s, '60s and early '70s, we knew what that village was about. We knew who the doctors, teachers, lawyers, neighbors and strangers in the village were. Mostly because they lived in our neighborhoods, they cared about what happened to us; they cared about our safety and our growth and development — and they saw all of the children as their children.

Over the next few weeks, I am going to use this proverb as the catalyst to provoke some thought and spark some discussion and as it relates to what the village used to do and provide an assessment of what the village is doing today, or let's consider whether the village even still exists.

This week I'm going to discuss parenting.

The most important people in the village, those who make the strongest, the greatest and the most permanent impact on the child, is the father and mother, regardless of whether that influence is good or bad or whether that parent is present or absent from the home.

It is clear that parents in the village are vital to the children, but how important



are the children to the village?

Children are a village's most natural resource, paramount to its survival. They are a gift from God. If the village fails the children, then the village fails to forge its own future. Have we failed to forge our future?

As a lot of us are taking care of our parents today, can we expect the same from our children? As a lot of us are being productive citizens in society, can we be sure that we are producing productive citizens in society? Will the children be citizens that respect their parents, citizens that respect other adults, citizens that respect each other, citizens that respect their teachers, citizens that give back to the community and citizens who live by some moral and absolute standards?

Let's begin with respect.

When we were growing up we wouldn't dare roll our eyes, talk back to our parents, curse our parents, use body language that we knew we shouldn't use, curse in front of other adults, talk back to our teachers, etc. But now, young people consciously do all these things and, worse yet, it's accepted. Our parents instilled fear in us, but then

we got integrated and Dr. Benjamin Spock said we "shouldn't spank" our children when they misbehave because their little personalities would be warped, and we might damage their self-esteem (his son committed suicide).

Psychologists today say that you need to raise kids without fear; well, we've done a good job. Now they kill their parents, their grandparents, their teachers, their friends and anyone else who gets in their way. Five-year-olds fight teachers in schools; parents say that they can't do anything with 2-year-olds, 12-year-olds and 15-year-olds. Teachers say that that they are literally afraid of some children in elementary schools. The child's fear of

parental and adult control has been removed, and now we're reaping the consequences.

Healthy fear can be used as productively as unhealthy fear can be used unproductively. Just ask the thousands and thousands of Black children raised during the decades between 1950 and 1980, the adult children who fear their parents right now.

Fear is just an uneasiness of the mind upon the thought of future evil likely to befall us. For us of those generations, that future evil meant when they—mother, father, grandparent or other adult-in-charge—said they were going to discipline you (and they made you go get the switch to be disciplined with), they meant what they said.

Fear has everything to do with the mind, our thought pattern and our belief system. Just like the word of God admonishes us to "fear the" (See LaGrande, Page 11)



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