

## Forum

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He also said that the racial and ethnically diverse forum was a way to "step forward... to paint a face of the 268 cases" and deal with the issue "from a more comprehensive approach" in this new civil rights era, as many called it.

He said that more than 60 percent of those cases are "hinged on personal conflict," and because of the severe harms resulting from civil rights violations, legal intervention is usually required.

Several speakers recognized African-Americans for their historic battles and experience in civil rights issues.

"We're all fighting for the same thing — civil rights," said Mia Youhne of the Organization of Chinese Americans.

Speakers and panelists commented about the effects of racial and cultural discrimination and the serious problems, creating a long list of areas of particular concern, among them: racial and religious profiling; voting fraud and disenfranchisement; predatory lending; scholastic disparities, unfair testing and grading; biased criminal justice treatment and high incarceration rates; barriers of language and other insensitivities leading to overt or unintentional rights infringements.

In addition, under representation in the political arena, was pointed out by Rozita Lee of the National Federation of Filipino American Association when quickly answering, "none," to a question of how many legislators in office reflect her community, which she added, "is the fastest growing" ethnic group.

The most pronounced problem, expressed primarily by the Hispanic and Asian-Pacific Island communities' representatives, Alex Garza of Hispanics in Politics, and Lee, respectively, is the hatred and physical threats many other Americans are wrongly aiming at them about illegal immigration.

Gary Peck of the ACLU explained the negative effects of racism in law enforcement. He said it determines "who gets stopped, whether they go to jail, whether they are charged, how they are prosecuted..."

On racial profiling, Peck said it's hard to even get the police department to collect data that would help measure and track how race factors into law enforcement problems in the community.

Peck also commented about elected officials and their reluctance to talk about civil rights issues — noting their absence at the event. He drew the most applause of the evening when he asked several times, "Where are our elected officials?" Peck said their "silence is deafening," punctuating his point.

The post-9/11 backlash against people of Muslim faith is "the worst" of all times and has made its citizens "fearful of coming to the

mosques or donating to organizations helpful to their communities," according to Aslam Abdullah, representative for the Islamic Society of Nevada.

Abdullah said, "We are not born to hate, discriminate; someone tells us to fear others, hate others, discriminate..."

Larry Gamell of the Community Partners for Better Health, said that "the fight for quality health care is the new civil rights struggle," be-

cause health disparity, where African-Americans have the worst statistical numbers and outcomes of death, is because of "unequal care...due to racism" — not just lack of income, education or other factors.

One man in the audience, Wendell Campbell, a resident since 1971, took particular notice of what he heard from the various speakers,

"I saw what other communities are doing...[and how they handle their prob-

lems]." He added that he was glad he attended and sees the need for education and training as key to advancement for everyone.

Dean Ishman, President of the NAACP, said this event is the first of more to come and that he looks forward to further educating the community on this topic.

"I give the event a B-plus," leaving room for things that can be improved upon, such as greater outreach to increase audience

size, he said.

Overall, it was a sharing of thoughts and ideas toward "racial healing," as expressed by Fernando Romero, president of Hispanics in Politics and 38-year resident of Las Vegas, who wondered if the discussion, though beneficial, got to the heart of the matter. "We're in a comfort zone, and we need to get out of it... Let's get the unfinished business finished," Romero told the audience in his summary.

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