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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Urban League new covenant

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Because America has fallen short on services to the poor and people of color, the National Urban League will use its annual convention this week to focus on resources within the Black community and establish an "opportunity covenant" for the 21st century, said National Urban League President and Chief Executive Officer Marc Morial.

"This year's convention is very different from others," said Morial. "We probably have fewer 'Washington election officials' than we've had in the past... We want to focus on the community building itself up. We also want to focus on the community developing a conversation about what we need. This is the year after the presidential election. We have to contextualize it."

Morial said that focusing internally does not mean the federal government will be absolved of its responsibility to help improve the plight of the needy.

"The opportunity covenant is about jobs, housing, entrepreneurial and business development, health care and the right of all Americans to have health care, and education, five pillars of the covenant," said Morial in an interview with the NNPA News Service.

"This is a covenant between the people and their government, a covenant between people and society, it is basically a covenant that we think is needed to develop the country in the 21st century and to develop African-Americans. The right to a job that pays a decent wage, the right to affordable health care, the right to quality education from early childhood to higher ed, the right to become a homeowner and to build assets, the right to pursue your dreams if you want to become a business owner and an investor."

In the 95th year of the NUL, the nation's premiere Black economic organization, Morial said political speeches will be limited in order to allow the organization to focus inward on the Black community with the goal of setting an agenda for Black America, an opportunity covenant.

Although some politicians, such as New York's Democratic Sen. Hilary Rodham Clinton and Maryland's Republican Lt. Gov. Michael S. Steele, have been invited to speak, in most instances, invited politicians will observe from the sidelines as civil rights and grassroots economic leaders discuss among themselves what future actions to take, Morial said. Even President Bush was not invited this year.

The Urban League's State of Black America report, issued in April, details the seriousness of the problems facing Black America. It noted:

- The median net worth of an African-American family is \$6,100 compared to \$67,000 for a White family;
- The homeownership rate for Blacks is nearly 50 percent versus more than 70 percent for Whites;
- On average, Blacks are twice as likely to die from disease, accident, behavior and homicide at every stage of life as Whites. Life expectancy is 72 years for Blacks and 78 years for Whites;
- The inequality gap between Whites and Blacks in the criminal justice system is expanding, growing from 68 percent to 73 percent since 2003;
- Blacks are three times more likely to become prison-

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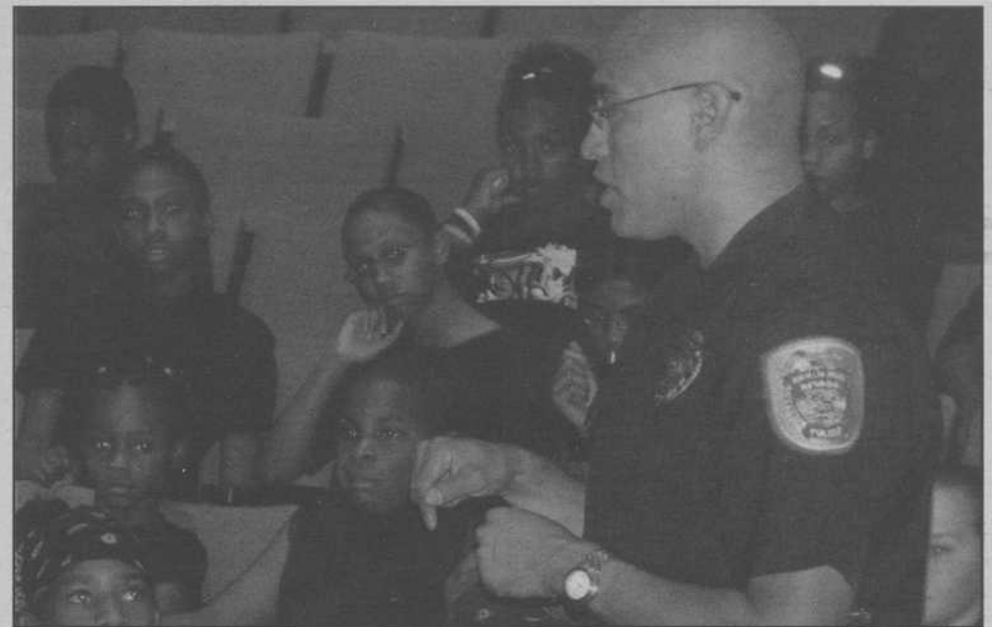
Camp offers great lessons

By Chelsi Cheatom
Sentinel-Voice

In its ninth year, the West Las Vegas Library's Division of the Performing Arts hosts an annual summer program called the Performing and Visual Arts Summer Camp for Kids.

The public is invited to interact through the daily Unity Circle sessions and by attending two public performances that showcase the children's talents. The first show will be held Tuesday, August 2, at 10:00 a.m. at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino. The second one will be held at the West Las Vegas Library at 951 West Lake Mead on Saturday, August 6, at 2:00 p.m. Both performances are free and open to the public.

The camp is an eight-week program that started June 13 and runs through



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Richard Rodriguez, an officer in the North Las Vegas Police Department, speaks to students in the Performing and Visual Arts Summer Camp at the West Las Vegas Library Theatre on Tuesday. The students are participating in an activity called the Unity Circle.

August 6, Monday through Friday. It is based at the library and the adjacent West Las Vegas Arts Center at 947

West Lake Mead Blvd. The program is co-sponsored by the City of Las Vegas in partnership with the Las Vegas

Clark County Library District.

The program was co-created by the Las Vegas (See Arts, Page 2)

Roberts' civil rights record lacking

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Judge John Roberts, President Bush's nominee to replace swing-voter Sandra Day O'Connor on the U. S. Supreme Court, is likely to build on his ultra-conservative legal record that has been unsupportive of civil rights, say constitutional and legal scholars.

"I would expect him to do pretty much what we think," said Mary Frances Berry, a constitutional scholar and former chair of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. "In the history of the Supreme Court, which I have studied carefully because I teach about these matters, most justices have done pretty much what you would have expected them to do, based on their backgrounds before they came to the court. There have been exceptions of people who grew and changed and we can all cite exceptions. But, by and large, you can pretty much bet that given whatever pattern they've been following,

"It would be good if Black folk were to educate themselves as much as possible about this nominee and about the process."

— Ted Shaw, President and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund



that's the one that they're likely to follow."

Berry, who teaches a course on the history of American law at the University of Pennsylvania, notes that Roberts' two-year record as a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit yields little empirical evidence of his anti-civil rights bias, but his legal background and associations give little reason for optimism.

"There's nothing that he has done in his career that appears to be anti-establishment. And since most Black people are not a part of the establishment, I would think

that there is a reason to be concerned," Berry said.

President Bush announced his nomination of Roberts last week to the immediate applause of conservatives around the country, including Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-Penn.), who praised Roberts as being a "non-activist" judge. That's an indirect way of describing judges hesitant to aggressively support civil rights or the landmark Roe v. Wade case upholding a woman's right to choose to have an abortion.

Harvard Law Professor Charles Ogletree, who gradu-

ated from Harvard law school a year ahead of Roberts, said the nominee is indeed an activist judge.

"Spector's well-intentioned efforts to go out and try to make Roberts something that he isn't, I think, will not pass scrutiny," Ogletree explains. "Just as [Supreme Court Justices Antonin] Scalia, [Clarence] Thomas and [Chief Justice William H.] Rehnquist, there are conservatives who are actively trying to change things they disagree with."

Progressives had hoped that Bush would nominate a more centralist judge in the mold of Sandra Day O'Connor, the swing voter on the court. O'Connor cast the deciding votes in more than 100 cases decided on a 5-to-4 vote. She provided the deciding vote to uphold the University of Michigan affirmative action case. Yet, she sided with the court's conservative wing in invalidating the University of Michigan's undergraduate affirmative action program that relied, in (See Supreme, Page 14)