

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 26, ISSUE 19

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

September 8, 2005

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

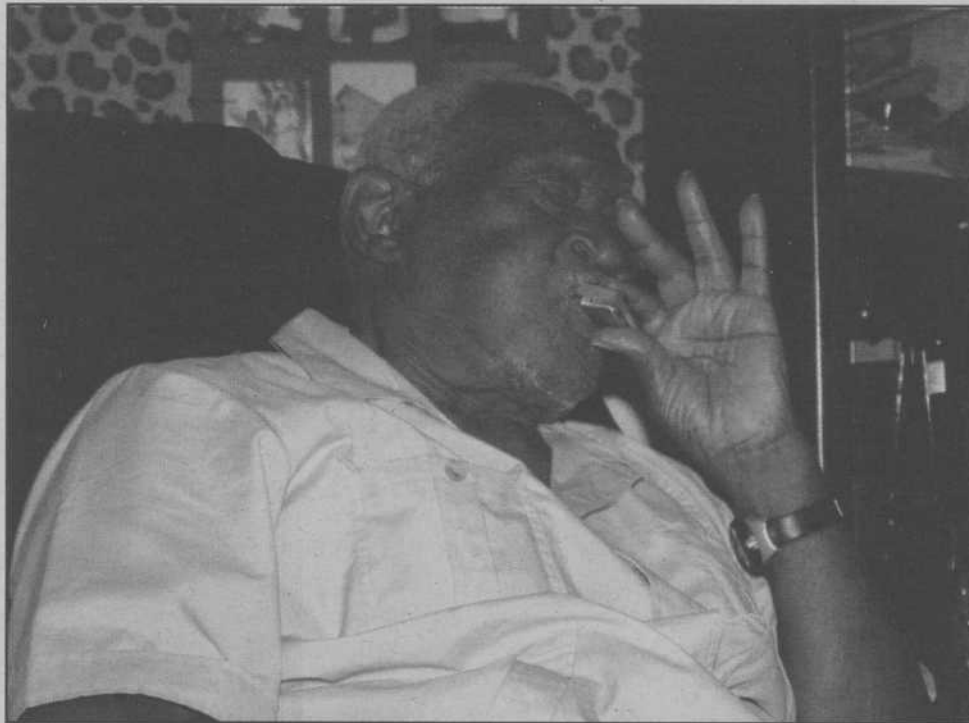
Family credits faith with reunion after flood

By Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

Huddled lovingly, four generations of one family are sharing more than a bloodline now. All together in Las Vegas, with a common unthinkable bond—three are survivors of Hurricane Katrina and the New Orleans flood, one of the most destructive natural disasters in U.S. history—still with an incalculable fatality count—and one mother, Dion Smith, spent days, miles away, fearing for her child and other family members.

From the eldest, the great-grandfather, Fleming Smith Sr., age 93, to his son, Fleming Smith Jr., to his daughter Dion Smith, to her daughter La'tai King, an Xavier University student. Three have had a harrowing brush with the awesomely destructive force of Katrina, survived a protracted flood evacuation, and they made a long trip here to tell the worried Dion Smith about it.

"I'm very happy to be back," said King. "The hardest part was just not knowing when you were going to



Sentinel-Voice Photo by Ramon Savoy

Family patriarch Fleming Smith Sr., plays a tune while relaxing in the home of his granddaughter, Dion Smith. The New Orleans resident survived Hurricane Katrina.

get out." The youngest family survivor was starting her semester's classes at the New Orleans historic Xavier.

"You had no way to call 911," King added.

The first part of her difficult ordeal began when the campus was asked to evacuate. She initially packed three

days worth of clothes.

"I thought and was [later] told that she'd need to pack for a week. She was advised to go to a hotel [in order] to 'get on a higher ground' because of the evacuation warning that took effect in the two days prior to the arrival of the hurricane.

"Friday night we were at a club...and Saturday morning they said there's a hurricane...and Sunday morning they said we had to go to a hotel...and Monday..."

That's the fateful day that Katrina slammed into the Gulf area and wiped deci-

sively across New Orleans causing an eventual levee breach and a record flood that trapped her and relatives along with thousands of other residents who could not, or did not, or simply weren't aware of the urgent need to evacuate beforehand.

King, a Las Vegas resident, who said she'd never experienced a hurricane, spoke about the slim provisions of food and water that were made available at the hotel, the Park Plaza, when they were trapped there on the fifth floor.

"I wasn't really worried about the wind, I was just worried about the hotel flooding because they said there would be 15 to 20 feet of water," said King.

The 175 mph wind and rain was destructive, more than she might have anticipated.

"I looked out the window... the vinyl had blown off the roof; some windows got broken; some of the ceiling had fallen down and the first floor of the hotel was flooded," she recalled.

She said she was more

worried after the hurricane about "getting out," recalling that she thought they would "just be able to leave."

The tension and fear began to set in, though relatively calm and brave initially, King said she eventually knew it was a bigger problem: "On Monday night, when they said in the next 12 hours the water was going to rise from five to ten feet—and it was about three feet high already."

King shared what it was like for the first few days:

"It was pretty lean. We had water and ice, and they had food for us the first night... but there were so many people, they had to manage it... So, the first day we had three meals... then the next day it went down to two... then pretty much one... if you [came late] you didn't get any."

There were six people in the hotel room, including "me, my Aunt, my uncle, my granddad and my great-granddad," she said.

From Sunday, King said, they were on "lockdown."

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Beware: Disaster relief scams can trick donors

By Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

"There are predators and pariahs who are waiting to take advantage of you..."

Patricia Morse Jarman, Nevada's Commissioner of Consumer Affairs, said strong cautions should be taken by those who want to donate money, but don't want to become a fraud victim when giving charitably.

Jarman said "Americans are very giving... that's wonderful," but the problem starts when scam companies and fraudulent charities violate unsuspecting donors.

Las Vegas is reaching out in a huge way to help the survivors and evacuees of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf region and the New Orleans flood. She began her warnings recognizing and sharing that "all of us are feeling the devastation of what happened... it's horrific, deplorable."

She issues the warnings now because people are "very emotional" at this time

and consumers can easily become prey for unscrupulous, ruthless crooks who would take dollars meant for charity and steal them. Jarman encourages donors to give as they feel, but to make sure their precious dollars are going to the places they intend—to the survivors, not to the selfish.

The commissioner points out that fraud can come from many directions: Internet, telephone, door-to-door, public solicitors at shopping centers, and many more. Scammers and thieves are "opportunistic," she warned.

"You have to be a little paranoid, unfortunately."

Her office oversees the practices of Nevada companies and those doing business in Nevada from a foreign state, said that scammers are already using trickery on a regular basis under the guise of being a charitable organization, adding, "We shut

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Blacks urged to support survivors of hurricane

By Kenneth Mallory and
Valencia Mohammed
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - In arguably the most resounding response to Hurricane Katrina from African-American leadership, Congressional Black Caucus members, leaders of the NAACP, National Urban League and other prominent Black organizations were finding ways to work together to help victims while they prodded the federal government to act more swiftly.

"Now is the time for Americans to immediately respond," U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), said at a news conference



"The people are not refugees; they are American citizens. They pay taxes; they raise their families; they help America grow, and I wish the media would call them American citizens."

— Carolyn Kilpatrick
CBC member, (D-Mich.)

called by some of the leaders. "Now is the time for us as a people to take action with a force equal to that of Hurricane Katrina."

Cummings said he was disappointed with the response from the federal government, indicting Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) and President Bush for alleged lax response to aid hurricane victims.

CBC members decried what many considered to be a listless response from federal emergency aid officials and President Bush—even

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