

OUR VIEW

Aid for AIDS

Today is World AIDS Day, the annual international day of action on HIV and AIDS. It's a day that, according to the website promoting the event, "is about people getting the facts about HIV and AIDS. It's a day for people to get involved..."

Looking at the damage HIV and AIDS have wrought around the globe, a case can be made that World AIDS day should be a year-round event. According to Worldaidsday.org: HIV claims more than 8,000 lives every day; five people die of AIDS every minute. So far this year, there have been 4.9 million new cases of HIV infection, of which 700,000 were children under age 15. There have been 3.1 million AIDS-related deaths, among them 570,000 children 15 years old and younger. Since the advent of HIV/AIDS statistics, 64.3 million people around the world have contracted HIV and there have been 23.1 million deaths.

When are we going to realize we are in a pandemic?

Sad as the numbers are, the stories are sadder still. HIV/AIDS is barreling its way through sub-Saharan Africa, turning an entire generation of children into orphans and perpetuating a cyclical reality of squalor and wasted human potential. The disease is gaining strength elsewhere around the world—in Asia, Europe and the Caribbean. Access to affordable medicines remains a Herculean obstacle. Pharmaceutical companies are loath to lower prices or plow money into research and development projects that might push us closer to a cure. (There's no money in a cure, only in the medicine.) The biggest problems, however, are still apathy, ignorance and indifference. This is particularly true in the U.S., and most acutely in the African-American community.

HIV/AIDS is on the rise in America, fueled largely by men having sex with men and spreading infections to their heterosexual partners—termed the "down low" phenomenon—and by drug use, which lowers inhibitions and increases sexual adventurousness. (Rising methamphetamine use has been linked to an explosion in the contraction rates for various sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis, according to published reports.)

When are we going to wake up?

Despite comprising 12 percent of the U.S. population, African-Americans account for anywhere from 25 percent to 65 percent of new HIV cases. Citing information from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Blackaids.org reports that among African-American men with AIDS, men who have sex with men (MSMs) represent the largest proportion (38 percent) of reported cases; the second most common exposure category for African-American men is injection drug use (35 percent) and heterosexual exposure accounts for seven percent of cumulative cases. From 2000 to 2003, HIV contraction rates for African-American males were seven times those for White males and three times those for Hispanic males.

Our men are dying. When will we wake up?

And our Black men are killing our Black women: Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of all women reported with AIDS were African-American; among Black women, injection drug use has accounted for 44 percent of all AIDS cases reports since the epidemic began, with 37 percent due to heterosexual contact. The CDC noted that from 2000–2003, "HIV/AIDS rates for African-American females were 19 times the rates for White females and five times the rates for Hispanic females; they also exceeded the rates for males of all races/ethnicities other than African-Americans."

Our women are dying. When will we wake up?

As with most destructive behaviors, it's the innocent victims—children—who are hurt the most. Black children represent almost two-thirds (62 percent) of all reported pediatric AIDS cases.

Our children are dying. Can we wake up?

HIV/AIDS is doing to us what slave masters, oppressive police, racist politicians, mandatory minimum sentencing, biased laws, drugs, violence and genocide couldn't do: It's wiping us out, slowly. It's time to wake up, Black America. Our future depends on it.



White press, Black community

By Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice

Over the past two weeks, several articles have been written in the daily newspaper about the arrest of Michael Chambliss, a local community activist and genuine humanitarian. For those of you who don't know, he has been charged with murder from a conflict that occurred on November 9.

The *Review-Journal* newspaper, once again, has taken this incident and used it to try to disparage African-American elected officials and other individuals that Michael has been associated with whether closely or not, recently or in the distant past. The articles are no longer about the tragic incident, but about the newspaper's apparent Chambliss-bias.

Even the tone and tenor of one of the articles by Erin Neff, the reporter who wrote an article on Friday, starts out negative and judgmental: "Some people suspected the law would someday catch up with Michael Chambliss, but no one ever thought it would involve a murder charge."

What is she basing this on?

She begins her assault by quoting "one former high-ranking politician, who asked not to be identified," adding, "because of his relationships to current elected officials tied to Chambliss." She further quoted this mystery source in her questionable negative attack, claiming that he (or she) said Chambliss "was always there when you think something is skirting the boundaries of propriety."



What is that remark insinuating? How convenient for the paper to provide its own slant under the cover of anonymity.

Neff wrote that Chambliss has been involved "whenever the smoke of scandal has risen above politicians representing West Las Vegas." (Read: Black people.) She does say "his friendships with politicians have helped bring millions of dollars to that economically downtrodden part of the city." Isn't this a good thing, Erin? Why do you make that sound like some sort of accusation or wrongdoing?

Prior to this incident, does Neff know of any illegal activity that Michael has been involved in? I suspect the answer to that question is no.

The subheading on her article says that the "power broker [Chambliss] has some detractors," but not one was actually named in the story. Oh yes, the "high ranking politician" she repeatedly quoted, but there were no others.

If the subject of her article was Chambliss and his detractors or about the incident, why did she feel the need to implicate several African-Americans who are looked up to in the community? She reaches, mentioning the names of people who knew Chambliss

— a lot of Black people. She reached for old news stories and names of organizations (serving the interests of Blacks) and placed them in her story like it had relevance. And there was a long list of names of people, public and private, from stories of yesteryear.

Furthermore, there was information and opinions thrown in that had nothing to do with the matter at hand, nor directly with Chambliss. What was the point of the 2,700-word story? What was new — and true? In fact, there were other rehashed stories, supposedly about the incident, but those, too, were more about past politics.

According to Neff, not one of the people she called other than Barbara Robinson, a former columnist with their newspaper, and Otis Harris, a longtime West Las Vegas

resident, responded to her calls to get quotes for the article. Ms. Neff, why do you think none of these people bothered to call you back?

And the one so-called detractor chose to withhold his or her name with the clouded comments? It makes you wonder.

Could it be that some people in the African-American community in Las Vegas despise the *Review-Journal* as much as it appears the *Review-Journal* despises them? Could it be that you never bothered to call some of these people, but it makes for good reading to say you did?

The *Review-Journal* has, yet again, outdone itself in the way it is reporting and slanting these stories, stories about African-Americans in this community.

There are other major problems with Neff's story:

She wrote that Michael's efforts and associations helped "bring in more than \$3 million in funding for economic development and community outreach" in West Las Vegas (a paltry
(See LaGrande, Page 11)

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