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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Monument honors veteran community

By Lés Pierres Streater
Sentinel-Voice

A dedication ceremony was held recently at Berkley Square, 400 W. Owens, to unveil a monument marking the significance of this section of Historic West Las Vegas as a neighborhood that housed Black veterans returning from war in the 1950s. Veterans turned to an uncertain future in the segregated city of Las Vegas over fifty years ago.

In February of 1954, the first 30 of 155 homes were built on a 40-acre site near "F" Street at a cost of \$7,700 each, with the assistance and support of the Pentagon. At that time no banks were willing to finance homes of Black veterans, and the severe restrictions of segregation limited their options for places to live.

Blacks were not readily permitted to live in any other area of Las Vegas.



Set in Stone: Berkley Square, a neighborhood that housed Black soldiers returning from war in the mid-20th century, was feted recently by a group of war veterans and supporters of the effort to recognize the neighborhood as historic.

Ruth Eppender-Dhondt, interim president of the Berkley Square Neighborhood Association spoke about the event and its sig-

nificance to the community: "We recently had a celebration commemorating a monument in Berkley Square to Black Veterans from

World War II and the Korean Conflict that are still residents in this neighborhood. They were the individuals responsible for the develop-

ment of this neighborhood for themselves and their families in 1954. Originally, there were 3 families that first settled in this neighbor-

hood and others followed soon afterwards."

She continued, "We had residents including former veterans who turned out for this event..."

One of those early settlers was Arthur Jordan, a World War II veteran from Kansas who served in the Navy before relocating here in 1954. He and his wife, Leona, have lived in their home there since that time and raised five children.

"The reason they built Berkley Square is because Blacks could not live on the other sides of town," Jordan recalled. "Probably about 70 percent were veteran's," Jordan said later in an interview.

Eppender-Dhondt said the project was supported by the neighborhood services department of the City of Las Vegas. The cost of the monument was approximately \$3,000 that was funded (See Monument, Page 2)

Photo special to the Sentinel-Voice

FEMA: Evacuees obtain reprieve

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Hurricane Katrina evacuees around the nation who faced a Jan. 7 deadline for checking out of their government-funded hotel rooms have received a reprieve: Federal officials will keep paying for the rooms beyond that date as they iron out issues arising from a class-action lawsuit.

One issue: The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which inherited the program from the American Red Cross, still does not have up-to-date records on the identities of evacuees in the hotel program or where they are staying, according to court papers filed last week by government lawyers.

Under a federal judge's ruling last month, FEMA is required to keep the hotel program running until Feb. 7. However, U.S. District Judge Stanwood Duval said FEMA could stop paying for hotel rooms beginning this Saturday for evacuees who have been approved or disapproved for other FEMA housing aid, such as a trailer or rental assistance.

Now, the Jan. 7 date no longer holds, according to a flier being distributed to hotels in the program. It says: "The program will continue for all evacuees in all states until further notice pending the resolution of certain issues now in litigation."

FEMA's decision to continue the program for everyone beyond the Jan. 7 date stems from some confusion about the judge's Dec. 12 order, which was issued in a class-action lawsuit filed in November on behalf of thou-

(See FEMA, Page 4)

Companies hoard diversity data

By Sandra Guy
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Activists expressed disappointment but not surprise at a new survey showing that nearly half of the largest publicly traded companies in America fail to disclose their efforts to hire and promote women and people of color.

"The fact that such a large percentage of companies don't voluntarily disclose suggests either a general antipathy to granting the public access to important workplace information or concern about their workplace practices," said Lane Windham, spokesperson for the Washington, D.C.-based AFL-CIO, the largest federation of North American labor unions.

The most surprising revelation showed that shareholders have borne \$1 billion in costs resulting from discrimination lawsuits in the pharmaceutical, petroleum and consumer products industries, said Windham.

The survey involved Standard and Poor's 100 compa-

nies, a listing of large firms that represent a broad range of industries, but three dropped out during the survey period. Of the 97 companies left, 53 percent did not respond to the research network's survey at all.

As widely reported last month, 46 percent of the participating companies admitted they failed to publicly release their equal employment opportunity data in full, according to a report released by the Social Investment Analyst Research Network, a network of analysts based in Washington, D.C., that supports socially responsible investing.

The total of 54 percent that fully disclosed with or without being asked is probably closer to 25 percent in reality because the network assumed that most of the companies that failed to respond to its survey also fail to disclose their diversity figures.

Only 13 percent, or six of the 46 companies that responded to the network's sur-

vey, provide full public disclosure. They are Citigroup, Coca-Cola, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Intel and Merck & Co Inc. Another 19 companies said they make full EEO information available, but only upon request. Another six companies make partial disclosure. One-third of the responding companies, or 15, refused to make public any equal opportunity data.

The survey also identified companies that failed to fully disclose the extent to which they are achieving progress on equal employment opportunity. These are Altria Group Inc., Cisco Systems Inc., Walt Disney, AES Corp., Allegheny Technologies, American International Group Inc., Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, Colgate-Palmolive Company, Exelon Corp., The Home Depot Inc., Lucent Technologies, Medimmune Inc., Norfolk Southern, Raytheon Company and Viacom.

The Social Investment

Analyst Research Network called on companies to disclose the data more openly, noting that companies with a good record on diversity have a competitive advantage in recruiting and keeping employees.

The network is considering studying the feasibility of requiring companies to disclose the information, and the best way to go about it, said Fran Teplitz, managing director of the Washington-based Social Investment Forum.

Alma Morales Riojas, chair of the board of the Washington-based Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, said the lack of disclosure is inexcusable because investors need data about where a company stands or the progress it should make in its diversity initiatives. "Companies that are not able to disclose (their diversity data) are setting themselves up for, if not failure, being non-competitive," Morales Riojas said.

Nevertheless, in contrast (See Corporations, Page 3)