

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

VOLUME 26, ISSUE 46

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

March 16, 2006

"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Photo exhibit journeys through Africa

By Chelsi Cheatom
Sentinel-Voice

The West Las Vegas Arts Center hosts "Africa: Journey of Adventure," an exhibit by Helen Murphy, a local photographer's showcase of photos taken during her travels to the nation of Ghana in recent months. The center, located at 947 West Lake Mead Blvd., will display her exhibit through April 23.

Murphy used digital photography to document the beauty and culture of the Ghanaian people in their everyday life. The exhibit also includes pictures of Ghanaian nature and landscape, as well as photos of the historic slave castles.

Murphy, a New York native, relocated to Henderson in 1989. She had begun to

cultivate her talent for photography while in her teens.

"I have been doing photography all of my adult life. I have always considered it as just a hobby. I would take pictures of things that attracted me. I didn't just concentrate on one particular category. I guess you could say that I am an eclectic photographer, I take pictures of things that interest me."

Murphy has a connection to Ghana through her cousin who lives in the West African country with his native-born wife.

Another connection came when Murphy was visiting her home state. While there, she visited a place originally called the Negro Cemetery which has since been renamed The New York Afri-



Photographer Helen Murphy hosted show opening at the West Las Vegas Arts Center exhibit of her Ghana trip photos.

can Burial Ground. Here, she discovered another connection to Ghana, the Sankofa, a Ghanaian Akan word which represents the idea of learning from the past and

past mistakes in order to build a successful future.

"I just thought that it was a strange coincidence," she said. "At some point, I just decided that this was more than just coincidence. Things are just happening in a certain way for a particular reason. These were things that I felt were pointing me in one direction."

"Last year, I was very fortunate to actually go to Ghana for the first time. That certainly made it a lot easier for me to visit the places that a normal tourist would never see, and certainly not be able to photograph," said Murphy. When I was in Ghana, I traveled through almost half of the country. I was there for almost four weeks and had an excellent time of it all," she added.

"When you see the exhibit, you'll see that the photos are of people just going about their daily business. It's like I'm not even there."

Of all the photos in the exhibit, Murphy has two which are her very personal to her. "They are on the main wall when you go in," she said. One of them is a photo of Murphy's niece who is a visual/multimedia artist in New York. The other is a picture of a flame. When you look closely, you can see that the flame's shape resembles

the shape of the continent of Africa. Murphy didn't realize the uniqueness of the photo until long after she had taken the picture. "I was floored because I didn't even know that until I was [home] on my computer," she said.

Murphy credits her niece for inspiring her. "My niece is actually the one who inspired me to do what I'm doing now. I have always taken photographs, but she was that impetus who made me realize that photography is actually more than just taking pictures. People would say, 'Oh you take such pretty pictures,' and I acknowledged their validation, but I would think, 'This is something I do all the time'. She's the one who kept saying to me, 'Aunt Helen, photography is art.' I would say photography is taking pictures." She prevailed, and look where it got me."

Murphy's work can be (See *Photographer*, Page 3)

Business after Katrina: Entrepreneurs struggle

By Zenitha Prince
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Part 5 of an 8-part series of stories about the Gulf Coast and the road to recovery after Hurricane Katrina.

BILOXI, Miss. (NNPA) - Hezekiah "Hezzie" Watts stood in the glare of the midday sun looking at the shattered remains of his life's dream, H.W. Marine Repair, a boat repair and service company that he started 15 years before. It was not a large company, it was comprised of just him and an assistant — but it was his.

"This was a dream of mine, and it was going well," Watts said. But that was before Hurricane Katrina tore through the Gulf coast, leaving destruction and mayhem in its wake. Now, H.W. Marine Repair was nothing but a hollow shell.

"It's a total loss. Because

of the damage to the building itself, the city engineers came in and said... we have to 'tear it down and rebuild it completely,'" Watts said.

Watts' story is the story of many Black business owners in the Gulf States, whose businesses were adversely affected by one of the worst storms of the century.

To the west, in the Crescent City, the situation is even worse. Of the 9,747 Black firms in New Orleans recorded by the last U.S. Economic Census, many are not expected to return.

"We're going to lose a lot of Black businesses, there's no doubt about that," said James Washington, vice president of Hewitt-Washington Architects and Planners and president of the National Organization of Minority Architects.

"We were suffering economically down here prior to the hurricane. Even under

normal circumstances, Black businesses were not doing that greatly here in the city of New Orleans. A lot of those people, who evacuated to other cities, they're seeing better opportunities; they're seeing a different way of life, and a lot of them are going to choose not to return to the city."

And for those companies that choose to stay, the road to recovery will be fraught with difficulties.

Hewitt-Washington was one of the premier Black firms in New Orleans. It built most of the schools in New Orleans and participated in the building of major projects, such as the convention center, the sports arena and the aquarium.

"We've participated in the building of several of the major buildings that have been built in New Orleans in the last few years," Washington (See *Katrina*, Page 00)



Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan addresses the crowd at the National Black Political Assembly in Gary, Ind. The event drew Black America's best and brightest.

Gary II summit's plan: Turn talk into results

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

GARY, Ind. (NNPA) - The National Black Political Assembly, which drew 10,000 people here in 1972, produced enough grassroots organizers and registered voters to start a movement that increased the number of Black elected officials from less than 300 to more than 10,000 today.

As the Gary convention reconvened over the weekend, there were mixed signals on how much progress there has been in the intervening 34 years:

- In 1964, 58.5 percent of the Black voting-age population voted in the presi-

dential election, compared to 64.4 percent in 2004.

- In 1972, the Black unemployment rate was at 10.4 percent. Currently, it is at 8.9 percent, a 14.5 percent decrease, but has frequently surpassed 10 percent over the past five years.

- From 1972 to last year, the median income for Black households went from \$22,629 to \$30,134, a 33 percent difference. For Whites, it went from \$39,320 to \$48,977, closing slightly to a 25 percent difference.

- In 1974, the percentage of Black families living below the poverty level was (See *Summit*, Page 13)