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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Book traces Black history

By Debbie Hall

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Las Vegas is a city that often chooses not to remember its past. Thirty-year-old buildings are torn down or imploded to make way for a bigger and better complexes.

Visitors see Las Vegas as a place to lose themselves in extravagant resorts surrounded by contemporary designs of water, foliage and shimmering crystal.

It is a part of life in Las Vegas to see every race and creed represented in casinos from management to staff to tourists. What many don't realize, though, is what promise this new place held for early settlers and how the struggle of African-American pioneers helped create the Las Vegas of today.

Las Vegas native Trish Geran writes about the history beyond the Strip and legend of Bugsy Siegel in her book, "Beyond the Glimmering Lights: The Pride and Perseverance of African Americans in Las Vegas," published by Stephens Press.

Told through the eyes of early settler Magnolia, referred to as Aunt Mac, this tale of history, family saga and tribute personalizes the hope and perseverance of those African-Americans who lived here and those who performed here. Most importantly, this history is told through the life of one woman who was as much a part of Las Vegas as Elvis and who deserves to be applauded and honored.

While many people recognize the "Rat Pack" from the 1960s, few realize how the Black member, Sammy Davis Jr., was denied rooms, meals and the right to walk through the front door of the casinos where he performed to packed showrooms nightly. Many do not know how the famous and working class African-Americans had

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TRISH GERAN

Expo hails Black music

By Debbie Hall

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The Black Music Month Expo 2006 is PJ Production's second annual event to celebrate and recognize African-Americans who have made remarkable contributions to American music, and it provides a showcase and networking opportunity for new artists. The expo will be held this weekend on Saturday and Sunday, from noon to 7:30 p.m. each day at Mandalay Bay Convention Center and is preceded by a Friday night gala awards fundraiser.

The expo is free and open

to the public. Invited guests for the expo include Bell Biv Devoe, Johnny Gill, Too Short, Warren G, Blackstreet, Guy, Omar Gooding, Sharnice Wilson, Tony Terry, the Carlton Malone Gospel Choir, Domino, Lenny Williams and other well-known performers.

"We expect there will be a lot of interest this year," said Paula Jackson, PJ Production event organizer. "Everyone is excited to see the big names come through, but there really is a sense that the newer, up-and-coming acts will generate some heat."



CUBA GOODING SR.

On Friday night, the Gala Fundraiser Awards Ceremony will honor the memory of Grammy award-winner Luther Vandross. Awards ceremony proceeds will benefit local nonprofit organizations — community radio station KCEP-FM 88.1 and the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Greater Las Vegas Scholarship Program.

Invited guests for the fundraiser ceremony include Luther's mother, Maryida Vandross, singer Cuba Gooding Sr. and Little Anthony and The Imperials. Patricia Lacy Atkins, former back up singer to Luther, will

be performing some of his hits. In addition, Miller London, CEO and publisher of *Urban Network Magazine*, and Helen Greer of Greer Entertainment Agency International are featured guests.

The weekend spotlights aspiring African-American recording artists and recording studios seeking new talent. The concept was created by PJ Production to utilize the expo as a promotional tool to market its services.

"Most expos are just for industry attendees," but according to Jackson, this is an event that "allows the performers and musicians to

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LITTLE ANTHONY AND THE IMPERIALS

U.S. inmate population exploded in 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) — Prisons and jails added more than 1,000 inmates each week for a year, putting almost 2.2 million people, or one in every 136 U.S. residents, behind bars by last summer.

The total on June 30, 2005, was 56,428 more than at the same time in 2004, the government reported Sunday.

That 2.6 percent increase from mid-2004 to mid-2005 translates into a weekly rise of 1,085 inmates.

Of particular note was the

gain of 33,539 inmates in jails, the largest increase since 1997, researcher Allen J. Beck said. That was a 4.7 percent growth rate, compared with a 1.6 percent increase in people held in state and federal prisons.

Prisons accounted for about two-thirds of all inmates, or 1.4 million, while the other third, nearly 750,000, were in local jails, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Beck, the bureau's chief of corrections statistics, said the increase in the number of

people in the 3,365 local jails is due partly to their changing role. Jails often hold inmates for state or federal systems, as well as people who have yet to begin serving a sentence.

"The jail population is increasingly unconvicted," Beck said. "Judges are perhaps more reluctant to release people pretrial."

The report by the Justice Department agency found that 62 percent of people in jails have not been convicted, meaning many of them are awaiting trial.

Overall, 738 people were locked up for every 100,000 residents, compared with a rate of 725 at mid-2004. The states with the highest rates were Louisiana and Georgia, with more than 1 percent of their populations in prison or jail. Rounding out the top five were Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma.

The states with the lowest rates were Maine, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont and New Hampshire.

Men were 10 times to 11 times more likely than women to be in prison or jail,

but the number of women behind bars was growing at a faster rate, said Paige M. Harrison, the report's other author.

The racial makeup of inmates changed little in recent years, Beck said. In the 25-29 age group, an estimated 11.9 percent of Black men were in prison or jails, compared with 3.9 percent of Hispanic males and 1.7 percent of White males.

Marc Mauer, executive director of The Sentencing Project, which supports alternatives to prison, said the in-

carceration rates for Blacks were troubling.

"It's not a sign of a healthy community when we've come to use incarceration at such rates," he said.

Mauer also criticized sentencing guidelines, which he said remove judges' discretion, and said arrests for drug and parole violations swell prisons.

Said Mauer of his solution: "If we want to see the prison population reduced, we need a much more comprehensive approach to sentencing and drug policy."