

OUR VIEW

Giving Praise

The folks at cityguide.aol.com think highly of the West Las Vegas Arts Center: "Since 1995, the West Las Vegas Arts Center has been a fertile training ground and production facility for the visual and performing arts. The facility houses a fully-equipped recording studio, an art gallery, two dance studios and an arts-and-crafts studio. Classes are taught to children and adults in ballet, tap, swing, salsa and African dance. The arts center is home to the Performance Dance Group, the Community Youth Theatre Ensemble, the Community Theatre Workshop, the Reader's Group, Saturday Storytelling, the Poet's Corner and 365 Days of Black History. Though primarily a teaching establishment, performances are also held at the Center. John Amos' play 'Halley's Comet' was staged here, as was the Alvin Ailey Dance Company youth workshop's performance of 'A Tribute to Swing.'"

One of the center's best programs, the annual Performing & Visual Arts Camp for Kids, is celebrating its 10th year. The theme of this year's event, "Children Out of the Box... Exploring Their Freedom," aptly sums what the program is about: cultivating a love of the arts. As such, the community should also think highly of center director Dr. Marcia Robinson and her staff. Over the past decade, they've immersed hundreds of youth in dance, film, theater and the visual arts.

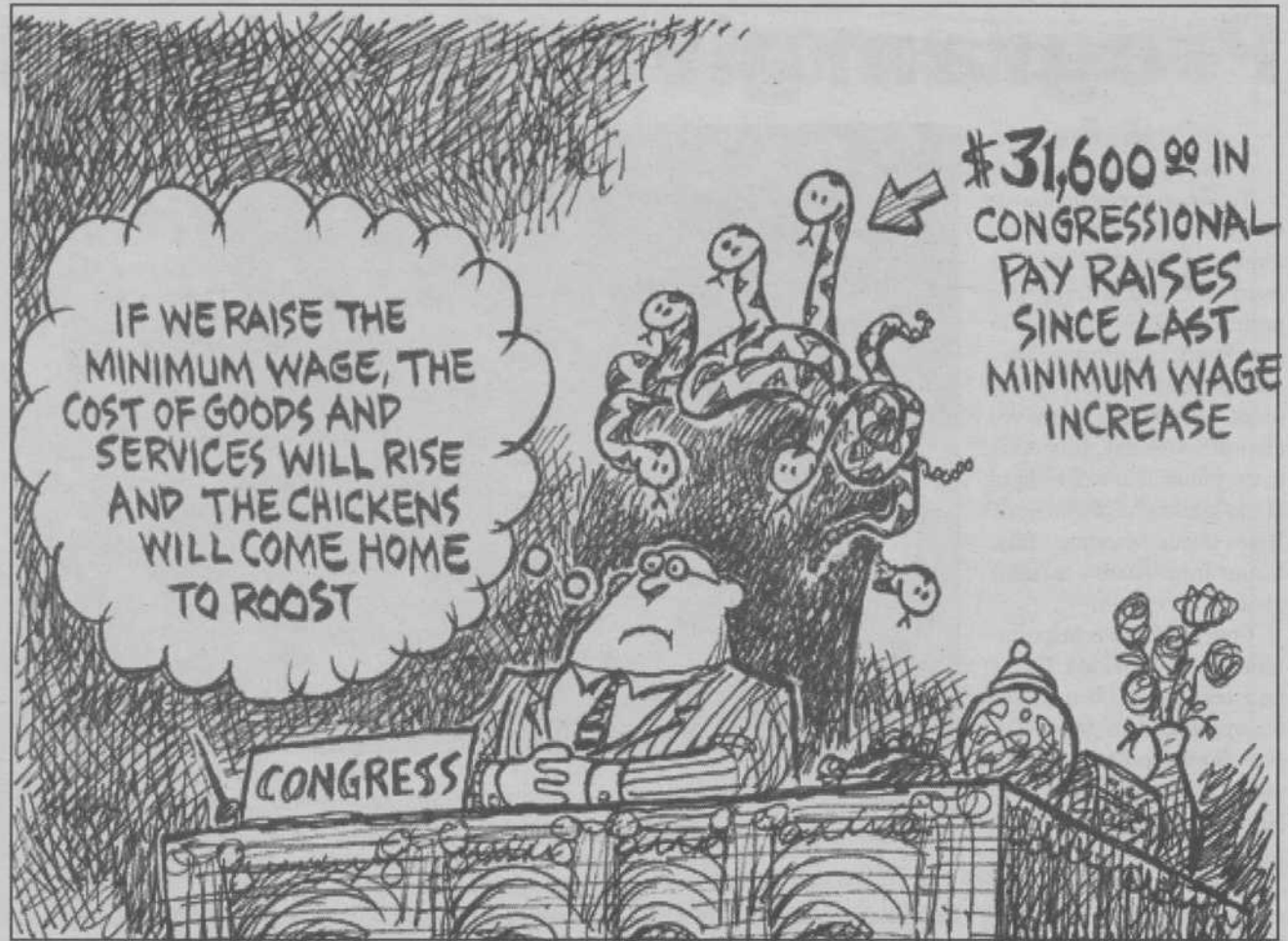
The work Robinson and her staff continues is a centuries-long legacy of African-American involvement in and with the arts. The famous 1851 painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware River features Prince Whipple, an African aristocrat whose parents thought they were sending him to America to get an education, but he ended up a slave because of a nefarious sea captain. Whipple earned his freedom by fighting in the Revolutionary War. The painting depicts Whipple rowing through tempestuous waves and ice formations in the Delaware River, as Washington stands stall, sword in his sheath. The abolitionist movement produced art such as the abolitionist medallion, depicting a chained slave, the banner beneath him asking, "Am I Not A Man And A Brother?"

The African-American imprint on art is all throughout American history. It's in the telling, insightful and inspiring photos of the Gallery of African-American Soldiers: WWI and WWII. It's in the deft oil and watercolor work of Lois Mailou Jones, daughter of Thomas Vreeland Jones, the first Black to graduate from Boston's Suffolk Law School. It's in the superior chronicling found in "African-Americans in the Visual Arts," where you learn about sculptor Augusta Savage and documentary filmmaker William Greaves, among others. It's in the longevity of the Dallas Black Dance Theater, entering its 30th year. It's in forward-thinking Black Media Foundation hosting a youth film festival; in the selfless civic activism of a Detroit man who teaches classical music to the inner-city youth. It's all the numerous offerings hosted at the West Las Vegas Library, its theater and its arts center. Congratulations on the 10th year of the performing arts and visual camp. Here's hoping for 10 more great years.

Shame on U.S.

The Bush administration has some nerve. Ever since the president and his neocon warhawks embarked on the misbegotten war in Iraq, they've collected foreign enemies the way some people collect rare coins. The latest country pissed off (and pissed on) is Palestine. The current violence between Israel and Lebanon, while rehashing historic tensions between the two entities, is seen in many parts of the Middle East as an extension of America's campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

While America would never tell Israel to tamp down on its pursuit of a top-notch military—the country is surrounded by rivals—it seems absurd to expect Iran, North Korea and other nations to not protect themselves. If self-preservation is the first law of survival, the second should be that when faced with the chance to use diplomacy or force, you should always first consider diplomacy.



Black hair care tragicomedy

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

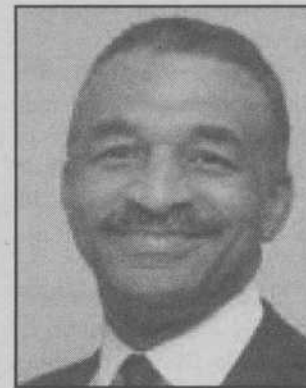
The saddest part about this issue is the fact that we could see this one coming. Now that it has hit its mark, right between our eyes, maybe the pain will be severe enough not only to get our attention but also to hold our attention long enough for us to rally our forces and fight back. The Black Hair Care Industry has, once again, become a hot topic among folks other than Koreans.

Now that an investigative documentary has been produced about the Black Hair Care Industry, the BHCI (obviously shocking Black people once again), maybe some of us will resolve to do something to reclaim at least a portion of that vertical market.

After all, the last time I checked, no one is using Black hair care products except Black folks.

The documentary discloses information, none of which was news to BHCI insiders, about the ownership of stores and distribution of hair products sought and bought by Black people. The main point of the report centered on the fact that Koreans own and control—and I do mean control—the overwhelming majority of the distribution and sale of Black hair care products, which includes shampoos, conditioners, oils and creams, and those fashionable hairpieces our sisters love to wear.

Some Black folks have



JAMES CLINGMAN

seen this coming since the 1980s, especially in light of the infamous but prophetic comments by then-Revlon executive Irving Bottner and the subsequent "funeral" and boycott of Revlon Products headed by Jesse Jackson. Man, where is Jesse now? We sure could use another funeral.

Nevertheless, as we looked on and, in some cases, collaborated in the demise of Black control of an industry that brags about Madame C.J. Walker, Annie Turnbo-Malone, Anthony Overton, S.B. Fuller, and many other Black hair care pioneers, the Koreans have used the past 20 years or so to build their businesses and create wealth for their families. Oh yeah, we still get to look good, and we are quite willing to pay for it, but is looking good better than "doing good"—for yourself?

The three questions again come to mind: What? So what? Now what? At this stage, since we have ignored the "so what?" stage, we must deal with the "now what?" What are Black

people going to do, if anything, about this situation? There have been calls for boycotts, which could be done simply by buying your products at Black-owned stores that get their products through Black-owned channels of distribution. Oops, I almost forgot; we don't have very many of those, do we?

But, we do have some, so let's start there. We also have a relatively new organization, called BOBSA, the Black Owned Beauty Supply Association (learn more at www.bobsa.org or call 650/357-0073).

Every venture begins with a first step, so our "now what?" step must be taken from where we are, with what we have, and with whoever will go. If Black people are serious about slowing down the Korean Black Hair Care Express and revving up an economic engine of our own in this industry, we had better get busy buying from one another, expanding the Black channels of distribu-

tion we already have, creating investment pools to build warehouses and wholesale facilities, and all the other things it take to become "players" once again.

BOBSA is advocating for those changes and more, but it needs help from you, the consumer, on two fronts. BOBSA needs you to become a working member and supporter, and it needs you to commit to redirecting your spending.

In addition, if you are serious, you should locate every Black hair care products store in your area and ask the owners to support BOBSA by becoming members. From that effort, a nationwide database can be developed and posted on BOBSA's website, so no matter where you are in the country, you can find a Black-owned store from which to purchase your products.

Now, these suggestions are not coming from an expert in the industry; there are (See Clingman, Page 11)

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