

OUR VIEW

Veiled Bias

The Pahrump Town Board on Tuesday moved dangerously close to legislating discrimination by passing an ordinance making English the town's official language, putting various restrictions on flying foreign flags and denying town benefits to undocumented immigrants. During an hour-long meeting to decide on the ordinance—the board voted 3-2 in favor of the new rules—passions were inflamed, with some folks showing open disdain and outright hostility toward compassion.

One man, the *Review-Journal* wrote, "wore a stars and stripes bandana on his head and a T-shirt that said: Speak English or get the (expletive) out." Elliott Brainard reportedly told an R-J reporter: "These people who don't speak English ... take money and support away from our citizens who need it."

That Pahrump officials have little power to enforce the rules—the town doesn't offer public aid so it can't buy benefits and most business is already conducted in English—misses the point: government should never get into the business of legislating bias. Leading up the recent elections, those opposed to undocumented workers fanned the flames of racism, perpetuating fears of the continued browning of America. Published reports citing U.S. English, a Washington-based organization that supports the English as official language movement, note that 27 states have adopted English as their official language.

At the federal level, compassionate immigration reform seems to be winning. However, stringent and biasing strains of immigration reform have penetrated local governments. The *Associated Press* reports that more than 50 cities and counties around the country "have considered, passed or rejected laws banning landlords from leasing to illegal immigrants, penalizing businesses that employ undocumented workers and making English the city's official language."

There's no way to extricate these ordinances from the connotation that they're anti-Hispanic. It's one thing to call for sensible immigration reform, say, guest-worker amnesty programs and a streamlined process of obtaining temporary citizenship. It's quite another to pass racist and largely toothless ordinances.

America's diversity has always been a vast source of strength; our differences have given us the opportunity to broaden our human experience. To attend cultural events we wouldn't have given a first glance, much less a second one. To visit neighborhoods and cities we wouldn't have been caught dead in. To eat foods we may have never tried. (We've probably all heard someone say, "I love Mexican food," or, "I love Mediterranean food.") In discovering our differences, many people invariably learn that we more similar than anything.

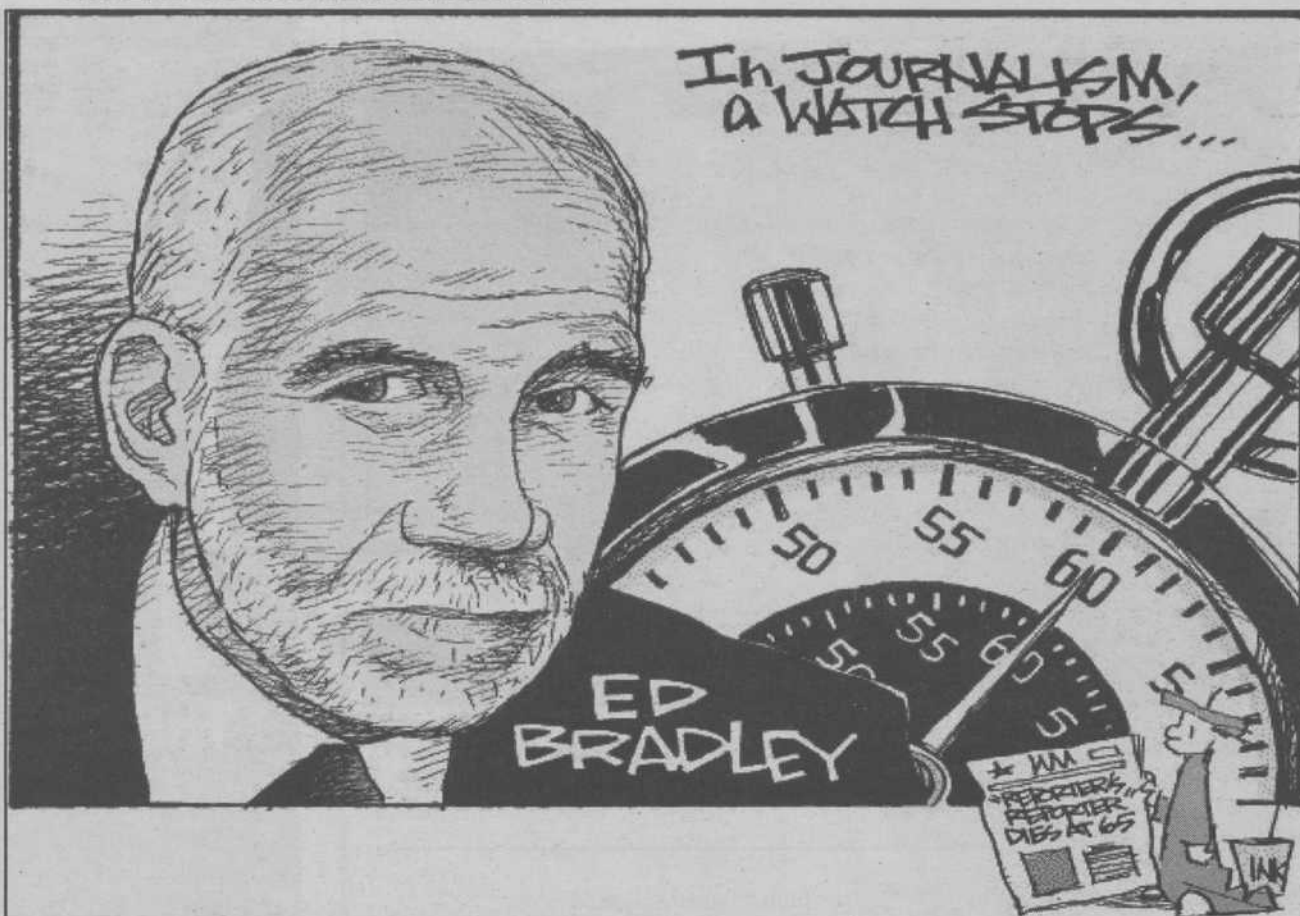
With ordinances that legitimize discrimination, we're not in danger of anything like the Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised African-Americans; however, the danger is that these ordinances give supporters the grounds to do other foolish things, like refusing to serve a patron because he or she speaks Spanish or is Muslim or wears baggy clothes. The question is, where does it stop?

Remember Ed

Ed Bradley won Emmy Awards for his professionalism as one of America's foremost journalists. More importantly, though, he won our hearts. In him, Black America saw a man who represented the best that's in us; a man who proved that he was the equal of the Dan Rathers of the world, and perhaps better.

An excerpt from his *New York Times* obituary attests: "To generations of television viewers, Mr. Bradley was a sober presence—albeit one who occasionally wore a stud in one ear—whose reporting across four decades ranged from the Vietnam War and Cambodian refugee crisis to the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church and the Oklahoma City bombing (his was the only television interview with Timothy McVeigh). He won 19 Emmy awards, including one for 'lifetime achievement' in 2003."

In losing Ed Bradley, we lost a hero. He will be missed.



Is affirmative action dead?

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The disappointing passage of Proposal 2 in Michigan, after similar right-wing successes with Prop 209 in California and Initiative 200 in Washington State, coupled with other attacks, means that pro-affirmative action forces need to become more aggressive in defending and explaining affirmative action. A failure to do either will spell the end of affirmative action, as we know it.

The irony of the misnamed Michigan Civil Rights Initiative passing in Michigan is that it was the suit against the University of Michigan Law School that paved the way for the United States Supreme Court's upholding the concept of affirmative action. The court, rejecting a more numbers-oriented affirmative action program that the University of Michigan used at the undergraduate level, approved the more holistic approach used by the law school.

Writing for the 5-4 majority, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated, "The Law School's narrowly tailored use of race in admissions decisions to further a compelling interest in obtaining the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body is not prohibited by the Equal Protection Clause."

What the law likes to refer to as a "reasonable person" would have concluded that the issue was clearly settled. Far from it. Instead, Ward Connerly, the conservative Black California busi-



GEORGE E. CURRY

nessman who once benefited from a state set-aside program, decided to take his anti-affirmative action crusade on the road.

After winning in Michigan, he may be heading to your state. Connerly is part of a well-funded national campaign to win with confusing ballot initiatives what conservatives clearly lost in pleadings before a Supreme Court dominated by conservatives.

While Connerly leads the attack on one flank, an even more successful assault is being carried out by the Center for Individual Rights, a conservative think tank opposed to affirmative action. By simply threatening to file suit against universities, the institutions usually buckle rather than litigate. Dozens of universities have scrapped race- or gender-sensitive programs rather than fight back.

Sadly, even the Justice Department came down on the side of the center and pressured Southern Illinois University to terminate three fellowship programs whose recipients were mainly underrepresented women or people of color. But the Center for Individual Rights

didn't stop there. It is now suing the Virginia Commonwealth University and the Dow Jones Newspaper Fund for operating a two-week high school journalism program designed to encourage African-Americans to go into journalism, a field in which they are underrepresented.

The center and other conservative groups are basically using the "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment, which was passed to end discrimination against African-Americans, to attack programs aimed at helping Blacks. It has shamelessly turned the 14th Amendment on its head. And, as I've said countless times, there is no infrastructure on the political left to counter the energy and mischief of the far right.

They've been so successful that the news media has adopted the language of the far right. Conservatives have been successful in getting not only the news media to adopt their misleading language, but even our own leaders have fallen into that trap. I saw a syndicated column this

week by a national civil rights leader that asserted that Michigan's Proposal 2 "bars use of preferences by state colleges and universities as well as government agencies." How can we get news outlets to stop equating race- and gender-sensitive actions with "preferences," if we're using the loaded language ourselves?

As a 1995 report by the National Association of Black Journalists pointed out, "Since polls have shown that the public supports affirmative action, but opposes 'preferential treatment,' using the terms interchangeably, under the guise of objective reporting, unfairly characterizes affirmative action."

It further explained, "Using the term 'preferences' in this context betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the reason behind affirmative action: that it is intended to counter the built-in, systematic 'preferences' for White males that still exist."

In addition to losing the
(See Curry, Page 11)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.
P.O. BOX 10000 LAS VEGAS, NV 89100

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 380-8100
Email: lvsentinelvoice@earthlink.net

<p>Contributing Writers: Asmeret Asghedom Chelsi Cheatom Debbie Hall Lés Pierres Streater</p> <p>Photographer: Joseph Sawyer III</p>	<p>Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief Parker Philpot, Copy Editor Don Snook, Graphics Ed & Betty Brown, Founders</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association</p>
--	--