

Richardson recalled as rights advocate

By Dianna Saffold
Special to Sentinel-Voice
"Do not stand at my grave and weep. I am not there; I do not sleep. Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am not there; I did not die."

Local civil rights activist Rev. Chester Major Richardson was memorialized with those words by those who knew and appreciated his ongoing advocacy for justice in Las Vegas, especially the Historic Westside community.

When he found himself in the middle of adversity and controversy, Richardson often said, "When it's not right, it's not right." He would then do all that he could to straighten the situation out, ignoring the good ol' boy policies.

Native Book Store owner Sam Smith, who met Richardson in the early '90s spoke highly of the activist: "Chester had a real commitment for people in general, especially for Blacks. Chester was amazing, he was above everyone's realm, a master with words and laws."

He died Jan 2 at age 48 after a long and courageous fight against cancer.

Richardson may have died physically, but his spirit for change continues to linger in the hearts and minds

of the West Las Vegas community. Richardson was well known for his research perseverance. Once involved in a project, it became a mental obsession for him to gain complete knowledge of the project.

His thirst for knowledge and his desire to pursue educational excellence compelled him to obtain degrees in Speech, Theatre Arts and Business. Especially gifted and talented in theatre as an actor, he perfected his oratorical abilities. This talent proved to be most helpful to him as a lobbyist and as a community activist.

Local community businessman James Chaney considered Richardson one of his most intelligent acquaintances. Having worked together on many projects, Chaney observed the diligence of Richardson's work ethics.

"His project research was so thorough, he often knew more than those who set up the project," reflected Chaney. "He was a negotiator, Chester was very persistent. Because of his persistence many local businesses that experienced problems contacted Chester Richardson for consultation."

Richardson was also a

very spiritual man. Though he was exposed to the ministry at the age of 13, he did not explore his ministerial interest until his mid twenties. He attended Bishop College's School of Theology. It was his work in the ministry with youth that got the attention of Bishop James M. Rogers Sr. of New Jerusalem Baptist Church. In the early '80s, Rogers met Richardson at a Nevada and California Interstate Missionary Baptist Convention. Eventually Rogers became president of the convention and they continued to work together.

In 1996, Rogers was elected president of the Las Vegas NAACP chapter and appointed Richardson as his special assistant. He maintained that position four years.

"Richardson was well versed in politics, a strong lobbyist for the state of Nevada. He was the first, bold, African-American Republican in the heart of a Democratic Community," said Rogers.

His range of skills opened opportunities for Richardson, including his position as former vice-chairman of the Nevada Workforce Development Board and the position he held at the time of his

death as a surveillance manager at the Luxor Hotel and Casino.

He was born in Lafayette,

La., and was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his son, Major Richardson; daughters,

Denise Robinson, Jessica Richardson, Jewel Lambert, and Jasmine Lambert; two brothers; and four sisters.

Police raid UMC's office in misconduct investigation

In a Tuesday morning raid, thousands of pages of financial documents and computers were seized from executive offices at University Medical Center, Southern Nevada's only public hospital.

Detectives executed search warrants the day chief executive officer Lacy Thomas went before a regular meeting of the Clark County Commission to address higher than reported losses. Independent auditing firm Ernst & Young reported losses for the year ending June 30 hit \$34.3 million. The loss level reported by Thomas' office in December was \$15.5 million under the audit finding.

Thomas was fired by Clark County after he reported on the troubling losses.

"I think these losses are the final straw. There must be accountability."

— Rory Reid
Clark County
Commission Chairman



Responding to questions about the higher loss amount, he stated: "We told you pretty much as fast as we knew. We did not anticipate this size of an adjustment, but after the dust settles, we have to move forward. We have enough net assets in our financial statement to absorb this."

Thomas told the commissioners he was "quite passionate in believing that our collection activity will yield

[a substantial amount]."

Las Vegas police have been conducting a criminal investigation of the hospital administration's activities since last fall. Clark County Manager Virginia Valentine said in a statement. county officials are cooperating with the probe.

Valentine said Kathy Silver, the hospital's associate administrator of managed (See UMC, Page 14)



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

State Sen. Steven Horsford speaks to a crowd of fellow Democrats at UNLV on Saturday about the early caucus presidential debate co-sponsored by the Caucus of African American Nevadans and IMPACTO. The debate is slated for mid-January.

Debate

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will draw heavy candidate traffic is unclear. State party and out-of-state consultants are working to help candidates organize and navigate the terrain. The state hasn't received repeated visits from likely top contenders so far.

Reid brushed aside concerns, citing a phone call from the still unofficial candi-

date Sen. Barack Obama from Illinois that interrupted Saturday's announcement.

"I just hung up talking to Barack Obama," Reid told reporters. "He said he's on his way."

The senator's office would not comment on what else was said in the call or whether Obama had confirmed his attendance at the Nevada debates.

Retirement

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But another compelling desire drives her decision.

"My father built every house we lived in," she said. "I have a passion for building. I used to help my father build. I would go to the job site, carry the bricks — it was like watching a child being born," she said.

"I feel the pressure is off me, but I will miss my constituents. There's a lot of support for me out there."

District D takes in many older areas and expanding areas, including parts of downtown Las Vegas, the Historic Westside and North Las Vegas. She is credited with creating many youth mentoring and neighborhood development programs, as well as gaining funding for public recreational facilities and community resource centers.

After her resignation, she thanked the commissioners for their support over the years.

Her legacy, she believes, is the group of Early Childhood Development Centers where preschoolers, children and parents come together and take classes. Three centers are up and running and a fourth is under construction.

As for her replacement, she stated: "The governor will choose someone. I'm not supporting any person [for the position]."

She said in a televised news interview, "Our board should be representative of the community."

Atkinson Gates is currently the only Black commissioner. She said she would support the person designated to finish her term, which ends in 2008.



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