

OUR VIEW Money Talks

Sure money talks, but what does it say? In the case of NBA All-Star Weekend's impact on the Black community, it's not saying very much. For those of you who don't know, Las Vegas is making history this weekend. There's the obvious history of being the first non-NBA city to host an All-Star game. But more important is the Black History the city is making — which is fitting since February is, after all, Black History Month.

The Black History in the making is this: at no other time in this town's history have there been (nor probably will there ever be, unless Vegas lands the Super Bowl) more Black millionaires in the 702 than the next few days.

Think about it. This was one of those singular times when a large event (the biannual MAGIC apparel convention) that brings nearly 100,000 people to town (among them, Black millionaire clothing-company and music moguls like Russell Simmons and Sean "Diddy" Combs) dovetails with a singular event like NBA All-Star Weekend, which magnetizes the fraternity of millionaire Black athletes for parties, parties and more parties.

Where Black millionaires congregate, other Black millionaires tend to follow. So you can expect Black millionaire baseball and football players to be hobnobbing with their millionaire hoops brethren. You can expect Black millionaire rappers and producers who don't have clothing lines to kick it with their millionaire friends who do. You can expect Black millionaire actors and actresses who don't have clothing lines, record labels or platinum albums to hang with the Black millionaire athletes and entertainers. You can expect the Black millionaire entrepreneurs to be somewhere within the millionaire mix. And once all the festivities are over — the last party has shut down, the last groupies have left town, the last billboards and posters have been removed — these millionaires will take their millions back to their respective homes and West Las Vegas will be left with what? Memories, probably. Memories of what could have been.

Being the moving economic feast it is, the NBA and its corporate sponsors should've made room at the table for economically struggling sides of town. The league's civic slogan is "NBA Cares," but to look at how it's treating the neediest in Las Vegas, you have to wonder what it cares about. The league's image? It's relationships with corporate sponsors? Judging by where the majority of the estimated \$25 million expected to be pumped into the economy, the answers are yes and yes. And that would be fine if more money was being spent in West Las Vegas.. But it's not. This isn't to say that All-Star hasn't been beneficial. It has benefited the *Sentinel-Voice*. Ads were purchased in the paper, but the amounts weren't mind-blowing. And the NBA has used various Black businesses to provide goods and services. The league is taking part in a Habitat for Humanity home-building project and has players and officials visiting schools. Which is all great and good until you look at the impact All-Star could have had, the changes it could have made.

Building a house is fine. But why not kick in funds to fast-track the Doc Pearson community center being built by the county? Advertising on commercial radio is fine and ditto for mainstream newspapers. But why not saturate the Black press with ad monies? The NBA's budget could handle it. Despite what your eyes may tell you, there is Black entrepreneurship and Black commerce out here. Lots of business should've been funneled to Black-owned restaurants, to Black-owned printing companies, to Black-owned production/event planning firms, to Black attorneys and insurance agents, to Black Realtors and media entities, to Black-owned banquet facilities and Black self-help professionals. It would have been simply a matter of chatting up the Urban Chamber of Commerce or finding a Black business directory and picking which enterprise(s) the NBA could've done business/spent money with.

All-Star Weekend was a golden opportunity to let people know about parts of Las Vegas not as bustling as the Strip. It was a missed opportunity for the slew of Black millionaires of every stripe who are here for fun and festivities to let their vast amounts of money talk and make a difference in lives. Guess money talks and walks.



Black women vs. HIV/AIDS

By Jewell Jackson McCabe
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's 2007, the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives is a woman. The leading candidates for president include a Black man, and a woman. Certainly, change is in the air.

Maybe not.

We've just had the 7th annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day.

Even with a woman leading the Congress and Blacks and women running for president, one of the most pressing, though frequently ignored, issues for Black women is HIV/AIDS. In their most recent State of AIDS in Black America Report, the Black AIDS Institute called AIDS in America a "Black Disease."

This week, Black women from all walks of life, from all over the United States are attending the national Black Women and AIDS conference in Los Angeles to put AIDS in our community at the top of the national agenda. All of Black America must do the same. Every African-American must stand with us, take ownership of AIDS, and fight this epidemic with every resource we have.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Blacks comprise more than 50 percent of the new HIV/AIDS cases in the U.S. — that's half. AIDS is the leading cause of death for Black Americans. Among



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women, nearly 70 percent of new HIV diagnoses are Black — that's about three of every four.

Black girls make up 68 percent of all HIV diagnoses in the age group 13 to 24. Some 78 percent of Black women who contract HIV get it through unprotected sex. Shockingly, one-third of HIV-positive Black women have no clue about their partner's risk factor.

Certainly, many causes of the epidemic — among them, poverty; the demographic imbalance that leaves so many Black women unpartnered or resigned to sharing men; the STD epidemic fueled by this gender imbalance, high costs of insurance and the lack of access to quality healthcare — are intractable and don't lend themselves to easy solutions.

Still, we have to step up to the plate. It's time for us to stop twiddling our fingers while the proverbial house is on fire. For even as HIV devastates African-American women and families, not even the most time-honored Black institutions have com-

mitted to confronting the problem in a meaningful enough or effective enough way.

Perhaps in no hurry to align ourselves with a disease that is still perceived to be primarily a problem of gays, prostitutes, drug addicts and low-income women, we seem content to accept the highly publicized, though suspect, explanation that the epidemic among Black women is caused by bisexual Black men on the "down low" who form a "bridge" between gay men, who have the highest HIV-infection rates, and their unsuspecting women back at home.

"If only gay men would leave our men alone."

Not only is this theory specious, it deprives us of our considerable power. If lying Black men who are too undercover to identify are responsible for infecting Black women, then we can claim to be victims, bearing no re-

sponsibility other than to engage in sleuth work, exercise suspicion and hone our "gaydar" to help us better detect a bisexual man. By allowing our critical thinking skills to get hijacked, Black women are missing out on a momentous opportunity to take charge of our bodies and our lives.

What can Black women at all levels do?

We can know who our sexual partners are and what their risk factors are.

We can get tested and insist that our partners do the same. Knowing your HIV status and the HIV status of your partner can save your life.

Our organizations can train and mobilize legions of women and girls to disseminate information on HIV prevention, detection and treatment.

Our organizations can create workshops that in-

(See McCabe, Page 11)



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