

Education leaves Black history behind

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA)
— Although 141 years have passed since the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, Black history scholars and education experts say elementary and high school students across America have few or no textbooks that fully incorporate Black history.

“Clearly there’s not enough being done on a curriculum to incorporate African-American topics into the day-to-day learning of students in schools,” said Daryl Scott, chairman of the Department of History at Howard University and vice president of ASALH, the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History.

“But, when we look out and say African-American students are not getting enough Black history, we could also say African-American students are not getting enough history of any sort.”

Scott says the No Child Left Behind Act, the centerpiece of Bush’s education initiatives, in fact, leaves his-

tory behind. Signed into law by the president on Jan. 8, 2002, the NCLB initiative calls for “strong standards in each state for what every child should know and learn in reading and math in grades 3-8,” a White House citation describes.

“Schools will be held accountable for improving performance of all student groups, so every school will be performing at proficient levels within 12 years.”

Scott says the act could have a detrimental effect on the emphasis of history in America’s schools.

“The only history that many kids are going to get — White or Black — is coming out of their community. And so, this is the larger problem,” Scott said. “I’m more concerned about history in general being restored to the classroom... I’m as concerned about that as I am about the Black History component. It’s a larger problem, because, ultimately, you’re not going to understand African-American history if you do not understand American history, just like we also say you can’t under-



“Clearly there’s not enough being done on a curriculum to incorporate African-American topics into the day-to-day learning of students in schools.”

— Daryl Scott
Chair of Dept. of History
Howard University

stand American history if you’re not understanding African-American history.”

This is the reason that the ASALH has started a special project with Holt, Rinehart and Winston — a leading publisher of textbooks and educational materials for grades six through 12.

ASALH Executive Director Sylvia Cyrus-Albritton said the organization is working with Holt to develop a textbook that places Black history into the appropriate context with American history. She says she is not certain that the book would be a first per se, but it is necessary.

“Particularly in these days of No Child Left Behind and the lack of focus on the hu-

manities in general, there’s a real struggle in standards to cover all the things that are required. And African-American history does not always get the attention and the amount of content that’s really required to provide the information that we think would be helpful to students,” said Cyrus-Albritton.

Standards of education are vastly diverse from state to state; therefore, it has not been determined whether any particular textbook has fit the bill for the inclusion of Black history, says George Jackson Sr., a spokesman for the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.3 million pre-school through 12th-grade teachers

and personnel in largely Black cities, such as New York, Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Baltimore.

Jackson says the teachers’ federation is about to launch a study on standardized tests that focus solely on math and reading.

“Is it taking away from instruction in other subject areas? Is it de-emphasizing civics, social studies or geography or history or sciences and other classes like music and art? Are they suffering?” he asked.

Africans have been a documented part of American history since 1619, when a Dutch ship brought about 20 Africans to Jamestown, Va., who were sold to Whites, beginning the slave trade. Hence, thousands of Africans were forced to live and work under inhumane conditions for the next 246 years before the ratification of the 13th Amendment, Dec. 1, 1865, at the close of the Civil War. Freedom for the slaves brought continued hardships and racial degradation that included another 100 years of Jim Crow seg-

regation, lynching and a Civil Rights Movement fraught with government-instigated violence.

The omission of or inaccurate portrayal of Black history or American history in textbooks or instruction can be traced to America’s shame, said Diane Batts Morrow, associate professor of history and African-American studies at the University of Georgia.

“American society has not come to grips with its racist past and is therefore fairly concerned about, ‘Oh we don’t want to shock these children with this,’” said Morrow.

Whatever the excuse, she said omissions are detrimental for the sociological development of all races.

“Some of the problems that we have in the American society grow from the fact that we have ignored or denied the roles that peoples of color have played in our history,” Morrow said.

Seeing how Whites have oppressed Africans and murdered and took the land of Native Americans can give
(See History, Page 14)



FIVE YEARS



TASTE & SOUNDS
of SOUL

Ashford & Simpson

Ain't nothing like the real thing, baby.

LIVE IN CONCERT
A Fitzgeralds Casino Hotel Las Vegas
5th Anniversary Celebration Event.

1 NIGHT ONLY
Saturday, February 24, 2007
Doors Open: 6:30pm
Show Starts: 8pm

CASHMAN THEATER
850 N. Las Vegas Blvd., Las Vegas, NV 89101

TICKETS ONLY \$44 PLUS TAX/FEES
Go to: vegas.com
Call: (702) 492-3960

EVERYONE'S WELCOME
Enjoy a Fremont Street Block Party Extravaganza Honoring Black History Month and celebrating the 5th Anniversary of Fitzgeralds Casino Hotel Las Vegas.

FEATURING BOOTHS, ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS:

- Enjoy delicious Soul Food
- Over 60 booths including arts and crafts
- Entertainment all day long



301 Fremont Street, Las Vegas, NV 89101 • www.fitzgeralds.com