

OUR VIEW

Learn Lesson

You may or may not have heard the story about the teacher and the racist test. If you haven't, here's a quick primer. A teacher printed a test that had several questions that were, to say the least, racially sensitive if not racially inflammatory. One question in particular dealt with a type of foods Blacks traditionally like.

So on the day of the test, the teacher was absent. A substitute instructor led the class. This substitute teacher happened to be Black. The test was given to five classes. She found some of the questions off-putting and deemed it necessary to explain to the students that some of the questions might be offensive.

Rather than deride the test or challenge its authors on the underlying intent of some of the questions, the substitute instructor used the scenario as a teaching opportunity: Prior to handing out the test, she explained the need for students to develop racial and cultural sensitivity, an understanding of history's role in race relations and empathy for others. For this, she deserves praise.

This story isn't completely touchy-feely. One enterprising student took the test home to her mother and showed her the questions. Her ire raised, that mother, rightfully so, complained to the school about the test. As a taxpayer whose hard-earned dollars help support public education, this mother wanted to know why her child was taking a test with racially inflammatory questions.

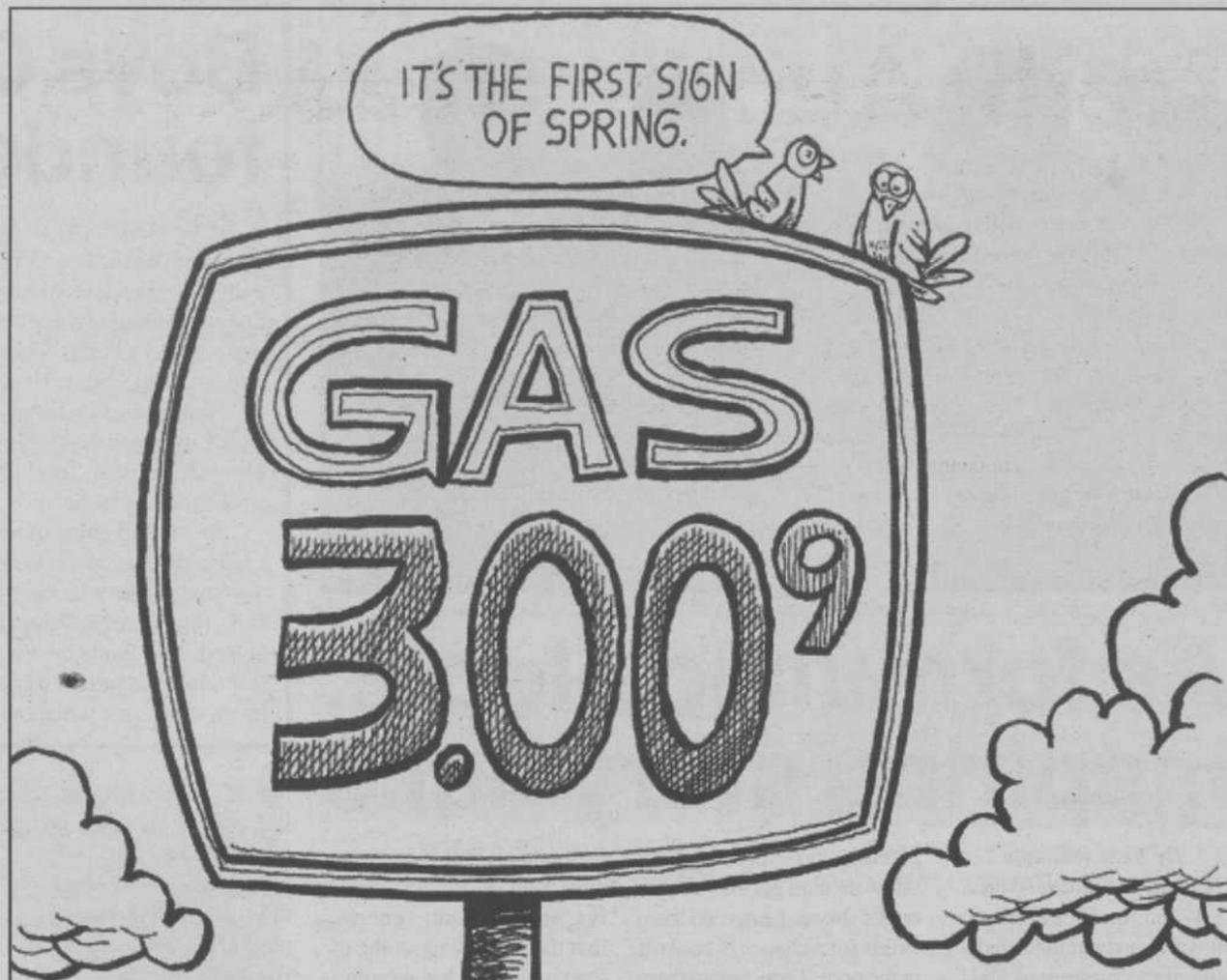
Here's the subsequent issue: why didn't more students alert their parents to the test and why didn't more parents get involved. Much as the substitute teacher used this incident to teach a lesson, students and parents can learn from it as well. Students: be active participants in your education. Respectfully question knowledge. You are your own best advocate. Parents: know what's going on in your child's school. Ignorance is a lame excuse for inaction. Your children learn from you. The more invested you are in their education, the more likely they will take it seriously and there'll be fewer incidents like these.

Wanted: Champion

Kudos to the eight (of 10) candidates for the Las Vegas City Council's Ward 5 seat who met with the public this week at the West Las Vegas Library. Devoted readers of the *Sentinel-Voice* know that the Ward 5 election has commandeered an inordinate amount of space in these editorial pages. The reason for this is simple: This newspaper is passionate about the needs and concerns of Ward 5 and feels equally passionate about the type of person needed to effect positive change in the ward.

What Ward 5 doesn't need is a temporary seat-warmer, someone looking at the position as a step on the way to higher office, say, a seat on the County Commission or in the state Legislature. Nor does Ward 5 need an office holder looking to enrich him or herself by using the power conveyed by the office. If anything, the eventual winner should have a near-impeccable character. Local government has been routinely scandalized enough in the past decade or so. It's a wonder that our low voter turnout numbers aren't even lower, with so many politicians (Erin Kenny, Dario Herrera, Mary Kincaid-Chauncey, etc.) doing their best to destroy confidence in our local governments. Ward 5 needs someone, a champion, with the skills and savvy to be an independent voice on a council often seen as a tool for the mayor. This person needs to be willing to go toe-to-toe with his or her colleagues to bring vital projects (parks, recreational outlets, enterprise, housing, crime-prevention and community-building initiatives) to fruition.

Simply put, in the simplest of terms, Ward 5 needs more than a representative. It needs a public servant with integrity, respectability, power, passion and intellect. It needs a person willing to compromise on issues that need resolution, a person willing to sacrifice time, affection, patience and love, a person willing to walk the neighborhoods and talk with the citizens (be they the elderly or the young, the working class or troublemakers, civic servants or gang members and drug dealers). Ward 5 residents, it's that person who deserves your vote.



Nagin, stop being a wimp

By George E. Curry
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin has made some bold statements about race in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Whenever subsequently pressed about such statements, however, Nagin keeps wimping out. It is time for him to either shut up or stop backing down when challenged.

Nagin's latest saga involves a speech he gave to NNPA, the National Newspaper Publishers Association. At the event earlier this month in Washington, D.C., Nagin made some clear references to race. The *Washington Post* ran a story about his comments under the headline: Nagin Suspects a Plot to Keep Blacks Away. When the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* cited the *Post*'s account of his remarks, Nagin wimped out.

"I did not say anything racial," he told *New Orleans* reporters. "My take on it is that it was some young reporter in the back of the room, looking for some way to get a nice story out. He jumbled everything I said and brought some things [up from] in the middle of the talk to the front and painted this picture that was just not what I intended to do, nor would I say."

Rather than trying to discredit Hamil Harris, the not-so-young *Black Washington*



GEORGE E. CURRY

Post reporter covering the event, Nagin should have told the truth. And the truth is that he was accurately quoted. I know, because I was in the room. And so were members of International Business Kids, some future entrepreneurs who videotaped his speech.

Let's review what he said: "It wasn't until I described my city — y'all know the story — until everybody in America started to wake up and say, 'Wait a minute, what is he doing? What is he saying?' Maybe we should try and do something different to make sure that this man does not go any further. Because they realized that I wasn't a person to be controlled. I was going to speak my mind, especially when I saw our people suffer."

When Nagin referred to his description of New Orleans and said, "Y'all know the story," there was no doubt that he was referring to his getting in hot water for saying that God wants New Orleans to remain a "Chocolate

City." Under pressure, he ate those words faster than he could chew a slice of chocolate cake.

For the record, many Blacks in New Orleans thought that Nagin was controlled by corporate interests during his first term and felt that he had done little for African-Americans after receiving 80 percent of the White vote. In fact, Bishop Paul Morton once described him as "a White man in Black skin."

After losing his White base, Nagin was forced to court Black voters. In an appearance before the National Conference of Black Mayors in Memphis, for example, he referred to "people who don't look like us." Rather than returning City Hall to a White mayor, Black voters in New Orleans held their nose and voted for Nagin.

In his speech to the

NNPA, Nagin said: "The prognosticators were saying there's no way you are going to win because, see, they had dispersed all our people across 44 different states with one-way tickets out. They thought they were talking about a different kind of New Orleans. They didn't realize that folk were awake and they were paying attention, and they weren't going to let a plan unfold that changed all the history of what we have fought for over many, many years."

Does Nagin really think an audience that was at least 95 percent Black didn't know he was referring to African-Americans when he said "our people?"

And in case there was any doubt, after Nagin complimented Rep. Maxine Waters, he said: "And Maxine started to talk around

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