

OUR VIEW Happy Birthday

Is there no more special day each year than your birthday? That's a rhetorical question, of course. For many of us, our birthdays are the most special days of the year. A time for celebration as well as reflection, joy and rejoicing. Here at the *Sentinel-Voice*, we're nearing birthday No. 28. That's right, Nevada's only African-American weekly newspaper is almost 30. It's been an interesting 28 years. The *Sentinel-Voice* has grown as this valley has grown (if not in page count, then certainly in the breadth of its coverage and scope of its influence.)

Over the past 28 years, the *Sentinel-Voice* has demonstrated the advocacy journalism that Black newspapers were founded upon. Founded in 1827, *Freedom's Journal* was America's first African-American-owned and operated newspaper. The New York City publication's name was indicative of its mission: pressing for the abolition of slavery and other racial injustices. Thirty-seven years later, the *New Orleans Tribune* became the nation's first daily newspaper owned and operated by Blacks. During the Civil War, *L'Union* burst on the scene—it was the first Black newspaper published in the South. From there, Black newspapers sprouted across the country, as this excerpt from New York's *Amsterdam News* attests:

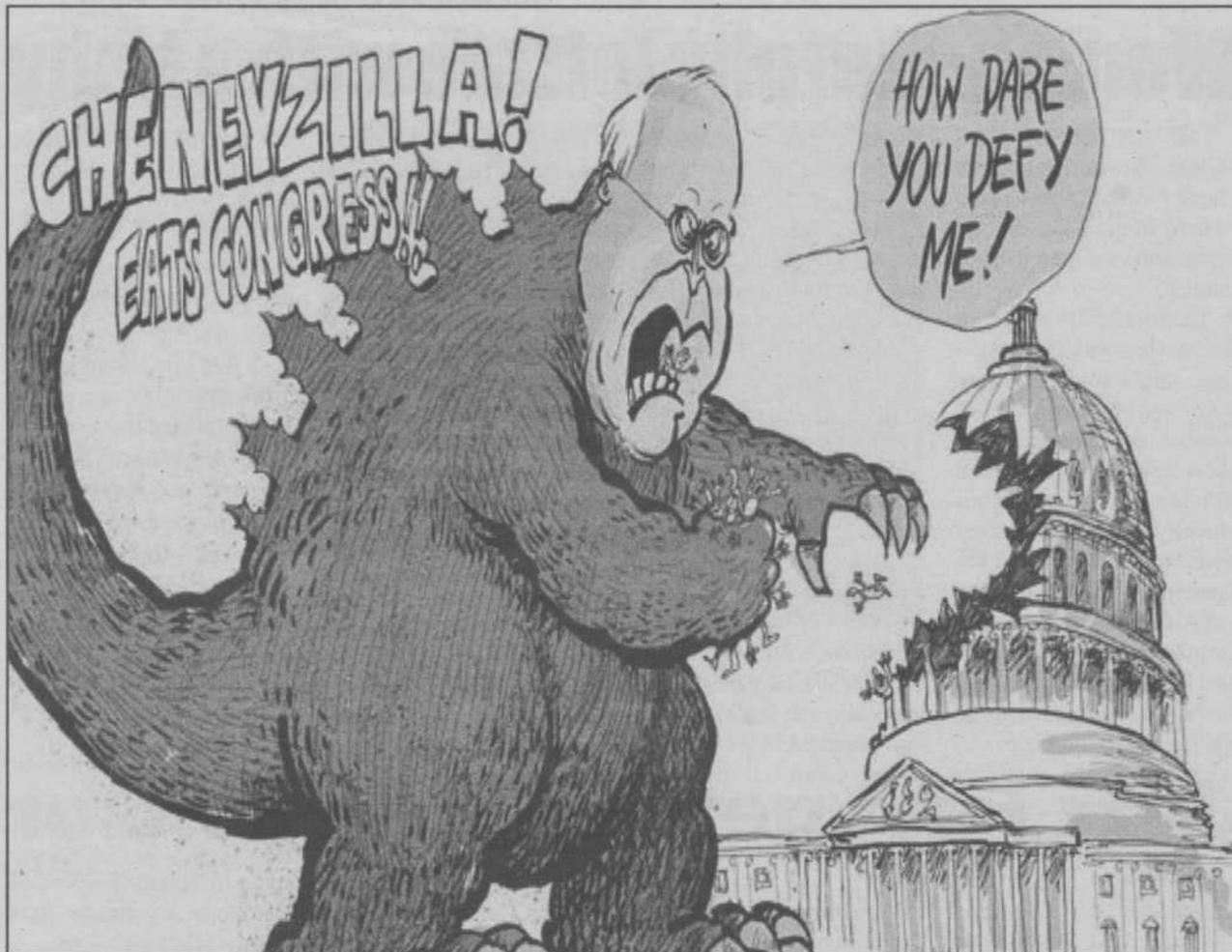
"As African-Americans migrated from fields to urban centers, virtually every large city with a significant African-American population soon had African-American newspapers. Examples were the *Chicago Defender*, *Detroit Tribune*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the (New York) *Amsterdam News*. While it was certainly important for African-American newspapers to report the news of the day, it was not their primary purpose. Most cities already had daily newspapers that were aimed to the general public. The idea of an African-American newspaper was to give African-Americans the news through the lens of their own eyes."

"From an economic perspective, African-American newspapers were formed in order to make a profit. According to a study of early African-American newspapers, the 'primary motivation' of African-American newspaper proprietors was 'not uplift, but profit.' In addition, from a social standpoint, these newspapers were a source of pride for the African-American community and a focal point for African-Americans to stick together and fight the constant oppression they were under. Taking this into account, it seems apparent that it was most beneficial for African-American newspaper editors to be motivated by both uplift and profit."

The *Sentinel-Voice's* debut 28 years ago was a continuation of being Nevada's only African-American newspaper; a significant milestone for a city (Las Vegas) once derided as the "Mississippi of the West." Like its predecessors, the *Sentinel-Voice* sought to deliver news, commentary and insight through an African-American lens. In doing so, the newspaper never forsook its root cause of good journalism, and in several cases, its reporters broke stories that the daily papers couldn't. The *Sentinel-Voice* may be not be your primary source of news and information affecting the community, but for the community—our community—there's not a more trusted resource for news and announcements.

The *Sentinel-Voice's* ownership has never viewed the paper as the means to greater financial ends. That would only cheapen its mission, putting Mammon before sound journalism and business ethics. Like its sister publications across the nation, the *Sentinel-Voice* has much to be proud of. It's part of a sturdy coalition of proud publications that have offered a Black voice in the media for 180 years.

As with any birthday celebration, a tremendous amount of appreciation should be heaped upon the celebrant. We want to flip that script for a minute and say thank you, dear readers, for your support of the *Sentinel-Voice* over the last 28 years. We want to celebrate your generosity (in advertising with us), your faithfulness (in letting us tell your stories), your steadfastness (in picking up the paper every week) and your keen eyes (in pointing out the occasional mistakes and challenging us editorially). Though it is the *Sentinel-Voice's* birthday, you, dear readers, are the life of the party. Happy birthday.



Hip-hopcrisy hurts rap

By James Clingman
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

I hardly know enough about the hip-hop industry to get real deep about this. My students at the University of Cincinnati do what they can to keep me up on the genre and who is running things. But, I can see with my own eyes some of the contradictions within the industry and the folks that control it.

In this latest "epiphany" regarding the words being used by rappers and even the suggestion to ban some of those words, is it coming from the heart or is it coming from the pocket?

Aside from the fact that protests of rap lyrics have been made by others for years now, we act as though it's the first time, now that Russell Simmons has come out with his proposed ban. Simmons is on the television shows discussing the virtues and vices of rap lingo, and has gotten "religion" after all these years.

Mind you, he was explicit about his position. He said he was not trying to actually "ban" the words; he was proposing those words not be played, that they should be bleeped out. Of course, I don't know what would be left to listen to in some of those rap songs if you bleep out the banned words. It would be like watching one of those movies on BET. Every other word is bleeped out.

Has the hip-hop phenomenon reached its pinnacle?



JAMES CLINGMAN

Has it achieved its highest point of approval and is now on the way down, now that Simmons has taken a different position on the lyrics? I am not the one to answer those questions, but I believe there is a change brewing. Why? Money, of course.

When a television host suggested to Simmons that hip-hop was on the way out, Russell laughed and said, "Don't tell my investors that." It was a funny line, but it spoke volumes. It gets us to the real issue behind this multi-billion dollar industry. Who is behind Simmons and who is behind the rap industry, which is now the Black complaint du jour?

What most of us see as hip-hop are guys in big jackets, baggy pants, hiking boots, gold and silver teeth, and baseball caps, and don't forget about the ladies in thongs. They are the generators of billions in cash to the ones behind the industry, the shadowy figures who only come out to collect their huge profits.

There are a relative few

who make the money Simmons, Jay-Z, and Puffy, Diddy, or whatever he's calling himself these days make, and there are fewer still who do anything positive with what they make. The high-stakes game room is controlled by someone else. Even Simmons answers to someone else, and it's not Ben Chavis.

Now that hundreds of millions have been stashed in Simmons account, he is on tour espousing the virtues of linguistic political correctness. He is the Dali Lama of the Black experience, talking about the inner-self and the force within, and so much more. I used to think he had a speech problem because he would only say, "Thank you, and goodnight" on Def Comedy Jam. Boy, was I wrong about him.

An important point to consider is that, once again, Black people are being led—misled in some cases—by

media moguls who are only interested in "cash flow from Black folks" pockets to their bank accounts.

There have been many other Black people protesting the language in rap music for years. I recently wrote about the new documentary film titled "Turn Off Channel Zero," which decries such language, as well as the visual experience of some of the rap videos. No big media response to that. As I said, when Simmons spoke out you would have thought it was the first time anyone had.

The hip-hopcrisy runs rampant, in my opinion, within the ranks of the Black elite. "Now that I have made a half billion dollars on these words, I think we should stop using them."

BET's Debra Lee, in an interview, boasted about BET and what great work it does by bringing us the kind

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Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
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and West Coast Black Publishers Association