

OUR VIEW

Redemption

Who can blame North Las Vegas for wanting answers? Answers to why the older, more established parts of the city aren't benefiting from the suburban boom that's sprawling on its outskirts. To why crime seems to continue going up. To why there's a lack of recreational infrastructure. To why many of their voices aren't heard.

North Las Vegas resident Wendell Venable wanted to know when city officials would do something to make the nation's fastest growing municipality more livable: "The only thing that these kinds do around here everyday is to smoke crack cocaine and do tricks. There are no community centers around here to offer them something to do. The EOB [Economic Opportunity Board] building is abandoned and used as a hangout by some of the people. The kids wander around during the day and nobody stops them and asks why they aren't in school."

Richard Johnson wanted to know when his tax dollars will be spent in the grittier areas: "I've lived in this community for 30 years and I have seen this community thrive in the past and now suffer from a lack of commitment from the city to care for the lives of the individuals living here and the infrastructure existing here. I believe that my City Council member and the other leaders downtown don't care what happens here, and have looked the other way as they develop the newer communities using our tax dollars. We want them to care about us and keep our community just like the way they do it in Summerlin."

J. D. Thornton Jr.'s concern was about crime—when are more resources coming to fight it and when's the community to take part in its overall redemption: "We need to come together as a community and work with the authorities to improve our neighborhood. You have to worry about people trying to break into your home, too much rental property and landlords moving people in and not doing background check-ups on any undesirables or problem people. Also, the halfway houses that they set up in this community lack any supervision and people left to their own and no one is accountable."

Three quotes that encapsulate a myriad of feelings. North Las Vegas is at a crossroads in its existence, and these next few years might determine the city's next 100 years. So the concerns expressed at a recent forum hosted by North Las Vegas City Councilman William Robinson must certainly be heeded. No longer can city officials give tacit support to revitalizing the urban core; it must be priority. Overcoming the stigma of "Northtown" as a crime-ridden land of welfare families and illegal immigrants will take more than building exquisite master-planned communities on the outskirts. It takes more police, more recreational and educational amenities and outlets, a crackdown on absentee landlords, drug dealers and gangs, resources for economic uplift and innovative ideas on creating affordable housing and spurring community pride.

Redemption is also dependent—maybe solely dependent—on repairing the inner circuitry of this fractured city. That is for individual residents to take ownership of their space, of their lives and then to form coalitions with friends, neighbors and people with like ideals to tackle neighborhood-specific or issue-specific problems. Got a problem with strangers creeping through your neighborhood at night? Form a Neighborhood Watch program. Notice kids wandering the streets during school days? Call the school district. Having trouble with thuggish tenants? Encourage management to join Metro's Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program, which runs prospective tenants names through criminal databases. Trouble with cars racing through your complex? Push for speed bumps. Cops don't respond to your calls fast enough? Get active politically—send e-mails, make phone calls, write letters, attend government meetings; let politicians know that you need more police. If other people are neglecting their responsibilities toward you, shame on them. If you're neglecting your responsibilities as a citizen, shame on you.

North Las Vegas resident Kaherine Joseph summed it well: "We need to attend City Council meetings and let them know what's going on in our community and what they can do to help improve things."

In other words, redemption is a team sport.



Words to live, die by

By Parker Philpot
Sentinel-Voice

When there is a funeral, there is usually a great deal of sadness and mourning for a deep, painful loss. Even in a New Orleans-style, raucous send-off celebration for the dead, with trumpets leading a strutting band, there is still the element of sadness for the departed. So, that's why I was left feeling ambivalent about the made-for-TV homegoing for the n-word. It was, for me, a mixed message.

Should the "funeral" attendees for the dearly departed word feel grief or relief?

The gesture, from a marketing or PR standpoint, was okay. It got the cameras and news reporters' attention, but what is the lasting impression in the minds of the broader public — Blacks and non-Blacks — supposed to be?

On one hand, I was glad to see ol' n-word go, sort of, but cannot understand why it had to be buried. It isn't dead, not really. It is a part of history, even if no racist ever uses it again to insult and denigrate a brown-skinned person; even if no rapper or Black person were to ever rationalize uttering it again in casual, just-us-Blacks, no-Whites-allowed, kinds of conversations.

I think I would rather it had been put on ice, deep freeze, out of sight. Or, perhaps, put high up someplace,

out of reach, on a dusty shelf. It should have been put in a politician's idea of a "lock box" (since Social Security funds haven't safely made it there yet) and never let out. Or, it could have been electrocuted in Texas; that makes a really nice image in my mind.

At least that way I could see it die and imagine it really could and would be capable of the ultimate termination.

But a funeral? That's what we do for our beloved ones.

I'm having a hard time being sad that the word is buried, and I'm sure that's not the emotional response organizers wanted either — sadness. But that's the device they used, opting for a funeral. I am only pointing out the fallacy of how they did it, not the why they did it. The intention was well founded.

Instead, if it had to die, I would rather have had a party to hang the word from the highest tree on a rope — yes, that's right, lynch that n-word.

And speaking of that other word, I have way back advocated that anything "lynch" should be changed out of respect for the tens of thousands of early Blacks in America (and recently in Texas) who were hanged by all-White, angry, sneaky, cowardly, vicious gangs of fellow Americans. Cities named Lynch-, last names Lynch, and Supreme Court

Justice nominees who claim they were "L-worded]" by media. If only. One in particular makes me long for the free use of the n-word, for it does actually have use for some egregious, backwards-behaving, un-Black-loving, self-effacing, useless folks who are themselves Black. But I digress.

If there had been a public lynching of the n-word before the mock "burial," then we could have explained to the young'uns the ugliness originally attached to the word and the ugliness of the bigots that used it. We could show them bulging eyes and burnt flesh, depicted by Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" — innocent Black people "hanging from the poplar trees."

My late father was never right in his spirit after being 9-years-old and finding a hanged Black man behind a Tallahassee store, not in slavery days, but in the mid 40s

in a U.S. city. So, it is so very real for so many African-Americans, many still alive today.

The younger ones don't always know that the word is so pain-filled, so bloodied, so despicable. The youngest population, both Black and White kids, have a whole different relationship with the n-word than their parents and other elders did. It's not intended as mean-spirited to most of them.

It's hard for them to know the horrific history of it when it's a word that comes with its own beat box soundtracks, like some kind of Broadway musical. The n-word, over the years, for the younger ones, has been sanitized, re-organized and digitized for delivery over boom boxes and iPods.

Fo' shizzle, my nizzle.

I can see how children and young adults (mostly under 35) don't have the same

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