

OUR VIEW

Brick, Airball

"I think that there's going to be a public recognition that Las Vegas does monitor this kind of alleged activity," Goodman told the Associated Press. "I don't want anyone's bad fortune to cause us good fortune, but I think it will cause people to look at Las Vegas in a light perhaps differently than they do, because we do, in fact, regulate this kind of activity."

—Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman

The following 29 words could hold the key to Las Vegas' professional sports fate: "New York —The FBI is investigating allegations that veteran NBA referee Tim Donaghy bet on basketball games over the past two seasons, including ones in which he officiated."

As bombshells go, they don't get any bigger. This is huge, momentous, potentially earth-shattering. Since NBA All-Star Weekend in February, the city has been kind of skulking along, rueful over the lackluster reviews for the first All-Star Weekend held in a non-NBA city. Our collective hopes of someday watching the best basketball players ply their trade here had been somewhat dashed by the thumbs-down reviews of the weekend. It's never a good thing when one of your town's most powerful personalities—in this case, MGM Mirage CEO Terry Lanni—discourages a return of the NBA's signature weekend because no one profited all that much.

Bless Mayor Oscar Goodman's heart and everyone else who wants the city's hoop dreams to come true, but the sad reality is that those dreams might well be dashed. For years, NBA Commissioner David Stern has said gambling (particularly sports betting) is the major impediment in terms of getting a team in Sin City. He openly worried about the possibility of players betting on the outcomes of games. They could conceivably throw a game they betted on. The prospect was enough to convince Stern this was a headache not worth having. Well, now he has a major headache of the same ilk and Las Vegas, since it doesn't have a team, can't be blamed.

In a lengthy press conference, Stern was contrite.

"The first thing that I would like to say is that our rules are crystal clear; that referees may not either gamble on our games; or, provide information to anyone about those games. We, you know, have a rule that says you're subject to discipline, which would most likely be expulsion from the league and the job. We educate our referees intensely. We have training camp presentations, we have brochures we distribute work rules, they are visited by security, and we give them copies of compliance plans and the like that make it clear that not only aren't they permitted to either gamble or provide information to people; they may not even provide other than to their immediate family the details of their travel schedules or the games they are going to work ... We take these rules seriously. We have a security department that is large. It's headed by Bernie Tolbert, the senior vice president of security, former FBI, head of the Buffalo office second in command at Philadelphia who has a background in undercover work. We have in-house representatives that are from Secret Service, U.S. Army, New York Police Department, and New York State Police Investigation."

Time will tell how things shake out. But we can already begin to estimate the impact of possibly never getting a team.

There won't be NBA-sponsored projects in poor neighborhoods. There'll be no tickets given to students for good grades and perfect attendance. No players visiting schools to talk about making positive life choices. No minority-owned businesses benefiting from contracting opportunities. No chances for sports reporters to cut their teeth on a big-time professional sports beat. No advertisements purchased in ethnic newspapers or on urban radio. No concession stands allowing nonprofit organizations to raise money. No chance to put Vegas in the perennial rotation for All-Star Weekend (and to actually get it right next time.) No players creating foundations to help youth and improve the community.

Maybe this is too pessimistic a view and the NBA will indeed come to Vegas. Or maybe a greedy referee whose decided to break the NBA's rules has spoiled that dream.



We could do better, but won't

By *Jasmyne A. Cannick*
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

I have been unable to wrap my head around the notion that putting our ignorance on blast for the world to see is somehow a good thing. It may be good for a struggling network trying to stay "in touch" and "relevant" to its community. It may be good for the network executives at Viacom who are looking at their bottom line, and it's probably great for the advertisers who are looking to market to the folks who would tune into a show like this, but that's about it.

A blog is one thing, but to turn it into a show is a completely different situation. And by it being on one of the "Black" stations, it's almost as if we are cosigning the show ourselves, saying, "Yeah, that's us."

Name change or not, "A Hot Ghetto Mess" a.k.a. "We Can Do Better" is going to take us back several decades of hard fought battles for respect. Respect for a group of people that have and continue to endure so much in this country. It won't matter if you're a part of the upper-class Black bourgeoisie when 13-year-old Timmy tunes in from White suburbia, and it won't matter if you don't even watch the show, once these images are broadcast on national television, that's going to be the image

of Black people for everyone everywhere. Are you ready?

When a White gay man dressed up in drag and blackface begins impersonating Southern Black women, we immediately went on the defensive, including myself. How dare he? Who does he think he is? However, should we rethink our position on Charles Knipps a.k.a. Shirley Q. Liquor?

Here's a dose of reality for you: BET can and will do more damage to Blacks in 30 minutes than Knipps could ever do in any of his shows.

It's no secret that Blacks continue to be exploited in this country. It's not always as overt as it was with slavery and Jim Crow, but it still happens.

If you ask me, this is just the latest example. Blacks are being used to boost the ratings of a network and create financial wealth for its advertisers.

Us on the receiving end, we get nothing but the embarrassment of being Black.

If "We've Got to Do Better," how is this show supposed to help us accomplish that? After we finish laughing at each other so hard that it hurts, are we then supposed to be inspired to do better for ourselves?

All this show is going to do is further put out there that Blacks are ignorant, because when it's all said and done,

we'll all be lumped into one dumb-ass category. Don't think other races aren't going to tune in just to get a good laugh at us. I wonder who will be laughing harder, them or us?

I'll be the first to admit that I've seen worse in our community right here on the streets of Compton, Watts and South Los Angeles. I've seen things and people that almost made me take out my camera — I said almost.

What stopped me was looking at the bigger picture. Yeah, it may be funny, but in reality, this is the effect of years of slavery — coupled with Jim Crow; backwards thinking and teaching, and self-hatred — has after manifesting itself in poor communities with people who just don't know any better.

Now ask yourself, is that really funny?

If you want to really know

what a "Hot Ghetto Mess" is, I'll tell you: A Hot Ghetto Mess is when you have communities of poor people of any color that can't find employment at a living wage, or affordable housing; they have relatively no access to decent healthcare, and a school system that is not educating their children and preparing them for the future.

A "Hot Ghetto Mess" is when you have people killing each other over a color, calling each other "niggas" and "bitches," and then try to justify it to you. Now that's what you call a "Hot Ghetto Mess."

But this isn't bash BET hour; after all, BET is only trying to reach its targeted audience with the shows that it thinks will connect to them and raise their ratings. If more than just a couple of us had watched the "BET

(See *Cannick*, Page 9)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER
LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice
GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.
THE VOICE WE ALL WANT TO HEAR

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104
Telephone (702) 380-8100
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Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association
and West Coast Black Publishers Association