

Chamber

(Continued from Page 1)

or nonprofit, we will accept the challenges."

A large portion of the Urban Chamber's 285 members are small businesses owned by African-Americans, in addition to its corporate members.

Duncan's focus and vision for the newest chamber calls for a job training facility. "We want a five-star training facility," she stated.

"We want to start training [for youth] as young as 10 years old for the hospitality industry."

Another vision that Duncan is proud of is what she believes will be a showcase centerpiece.

"We want to create a Visitors Center in Ward 5. We want to welcome visitors before they reach the Strip."

She added, "As a former member of the Arts Commission, I know the commission has proposed gateway projects, but that's on the drawing board, and we're brainstorming."

She described those "gateways" as arches, large signs, pole banners or any type of indicator that alerts



Sentinel-Voice photo by Marty Frierson

The newly installed board of directors, (left to right) Ernest Fountain, New Ventures Capitol Development; Napoleon McCallum, Sands Corporation; Diane Pollard, Rainbow Medical Center; Anthony Gladney, Harrah's Entertainment; Jerrie Merritt, Bank of Nevada; Dennis Daniels, IGT; Secretary, Debra Nelson, MGM MIRAGE; William Dugan, Syweld Group Company; Elaina Bhattacharyya, UNLV Office of Diversity & Inclusion; Treasurer, Al Barber, TBL Construction; President, Cornelius Eason, Priority Staffing, and Vice President, J.D. Calhoun, Southwest Gas.

the public of entrance to a specific geographical area, such as the Arts District, for example.

The Urban Chamber's Eason said, "Our primary focus is our business members. To create a vehicle for multiple production that will bring sellers [our members] and buyers in our community together.

He said the Urban Cham-

ber also plans a training aspect, but one geared for the business owners.

"We want to enhance marketing and training along with bringing in resources," primarily utilizing their "lenders and partners." Eason said they would focus on training opportunities for entrepreneurs, such as book-keeping.

Duncan emphasizes that

"money" is the biggest challenge the new chamber faces.

"We need more money; we need funding. We are talking with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority for funding."

In a contentious, initially crowded field of contenders, Ward 5 voters recently elected a new council representative, Ricki Barlow, to fill the seat vacated by now-

Commissioner Lawrence Weekly, the former longtime councilman who was active in the area before appointment to his Clark County seat.

Duncan says she is "impressed" with the job Barlow is doing.

Duncan says she is not considering running for public office as long as she can accomplish her mission as a

private citizen through the Ward 5 Chamber of Commerce.

Duncan, business owner of Sales Force Hotel Furnishing, asks the public to attend the upcoming meetings for the ward's new chamber.

"You don't have to be a Ward 5 resident," she said.

For information on the chamber and meetings, go to www.lasvegasward5.org.

Clergy

(Continued from Page 1)

been reluctant to be a headlight because they have suffered consequences when they have taken bold stands. So, the number of those who have taken those kinds of stands, they are few," said Lowery. "But, I think there are many, many White people in the community who need leadership. They're not getting it at the moment. But I think the tide will turn. Unfortunately, they're assuming the taillight position, waiting on somebody else to provide the headlights. But, I think we're going to see in the coming months more White religious leaders speaking out in the context of progress and justice."

In the Jena Six incident in Jena, La., White teens hung noose ropes in a so-called "White tree" at Jena High School after seeing three Black students sitting under the tree. Numerous noose incidents around the nation have followed since the controversy and national march took place to protest unequal justice among the Black and White teens last month. But, some observers dismiss noose threats as pranks or copycats, ignoring the thousands of Blacks who were murdered by hangmen's

nooses throughout history. White pastors have a responsibility to teach their congregations from a biblical perspective on such matters, says Bishop Noel Jones, pastor of the 10,000-member City of Refuge in Gardena, Calif.

"The greatest thing to solve the problem would be for White pastors to stick their necks out far enough and deal with the issues of justice and to deal with the issues of what's proper and what's right in America. I'm not just talking about White people tolerating minorities, but I'm talking about White people loving them. This has been our cry since slavery."

Sunday morning church time has been described as America's "most segregated hour" as Blacks and Whites — for the most part — go to their separate houses of worship.

Minister Sharmaine Allen, an African-American divinity student at predominantly White, conservative Regent University, is not convinced that all White pastors are silent.

"I'm familiar with many White pastors who this is a passion for them. And they speak about it, but they don't have the same platform and so they're definitely not

heard in terms of the volume," said Allen, who once convinced the African-American pastorate at Dominion Church of Washington, D.C., where she now serves as a minister, to hold a racial reconciliation forum during regular Sunday morning service.

But, in White churches, just talking about racism is not enough, she says, adding that the pastor must take the leadership from the inside out.

"When the pastor's heart changes, and when there's true reconciliation in the heart of the pastor; when it's not just about a program or something temporary or a quick fix to say, 'I have this badge of honor on. I'm a reconciler,'" Allen said. "When true reconciliation occurs in the heart of the pastor, then change is imminent for that church and that community."

The weight of the pastor is crucial agrees Jack Levin, director of The Brudnick Center on Violence and Conflict at Northeastern University, a foremost authority on hate crimes.

"Our religious leaders are one of the few groups in our country that still has credibility," said Levin. "It seems to me that that is a very important place for us to make in-

roads. From the pulpit, they could help us to turn the corners." Cox points to several reasons that he believes the silence has come.

Many White Christian leaders are simply pre-occupied with other issues, such as the Iraqi War, he says. Also, both White and Black churches nowadays are simply preaching sermons that help people from any race to make it through the hardships of day-to-day life, he says.

Cox adds that among the foremost reasons that White clergy are not as outspoken on civil rights in 2007 is because there's no leading Black clergy of equal influence to Dr. King.

"It just has to be recognized that there isn't the kind of elegant and eloquent summing of the White church leaders as we had with Dr. King. Nobody, it seems to me, is even trying to do that very much," Cox said. "There is no comparable voice that I can see."

Lowery calls that a cop out.

"The model is not Black preachers. The model is Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ's Word is still there, and the call of God is still there. I admire [Rev.] Harvey Cox, the activist. And I've

admired him for a long time," said Lowery. "But, I think he's hiding behind the fact that there's no King. There's Jesus. And, you know, preachers are called by God and Christ. They don't have to have a Black person to hide behind. They can step out on their own faith."

Lowery predicts members of the so-called Christian right, including Pat Robertson, who have largely dominated the media over the past decades with their political participation will be forced to speak on racial issues as the presidential race heats up in the months to come.

"They are the loudest spokespersons, and they are the ones who are dominating the religious scene. And others have been reluctant to come forth, and that's unfortunate because they should not hide their light under a bushel," said Lowery.

"That, I think, is the sternest challenge to the communities of faith today — to put forth the positive aspects of the faith as it relates to human relations. And right now, the religious right, the [now deceased Jerry] Falwells and that group, Jones University and Pat Robertson, that bunch, they're in charge," he contin-

ued.

"They're the most outspoken, the most vociferous and they have so far intimidated White preachers and churches who think differently but have not found the audacity to speak out and be heard. I think it'll change. I think that'll turn," Lowery said.

He predicts it will change because evidence in the last congressional election in which Democrats were elected majority in both houses of Congress pointed to a White electorate that is "dissatisfied with the leadership of the political right and their collusion with the religious right. And I think that was reflected in the elections. I think it will be even more so in the elections next year."

To establish a progressive agenda that impacts racism would be worth it for the pastors themselves and for others, says Cox.

"It provided me with some of the richest experiences of my life being in that struggle," Cox recalls before pondering a possible sermon for a White congregation: "A noose. What does a noose mean to young Black people? It means what the cross meant in first century Galilee. It means death by torture. That's what it means."