

OUR VIEW

No Support

Are we becoming the type of people we often criticize? The type of people who continually complain about what we lack, then compound the problem by taking seats on the sideline and making a sport of carping? The type of local resident who has forever said that this city needs this (culture) or that (an attractive downtown), and when remnants of those missing things start to come, complains loud and long about getting what they asked for?

We just might be.

Over the weekend, the City of Las Vegas Department of Leisure Services hosted its 16th Annual Unity Fest at the Doolittle Community Center, located at 1950 North J St. The festival had an eclectic mix of offerings for everyone: a bike show, carnival games, vendor booths, jump houses, demonstrations, contests, health and wellness information, 3-on-3 basketball tournament, special guest performers, swimming and a "Taste of West Las Vegas" food court. A who's who of community organizations offered information about services and civic programs. Local youth troupes performed, and Circus Circus Adventure dome sponsored a raffle for a \$250 birthday package.

The entire event was set up perfectly. The only thing missing was, well, you. Only a few of you thought well enough of the event, of West Las Vegas, to come and support. This is an absolute shame, largely because it sets a dangerous precedent and could come back to hurt us, as African-Americans, in the future. We know Vegas isn't Harlem or D.C. or the South Side of Chicago, which means we know that we take culture where we can get it. For years, we've been able to get our cultural fix, however small, in West Las Vegas and, more accurately, at the West Las Vegas Library, its theater and cultural arts center.

The hard-working folks there do a wonderful job of keeping the calendar packed with workshops, forums, plays, symposiums, forums, performances and other activities that appeal to us. The theater has become the de facto home for many civic groups to operate productions from, while the cultural arts center has taught scores everything from art appreciation to African dance. Democratic Illinois Sen. Barack Obama, the man with a real chance of becoming the next president of the United States, has been there more than some of you have. For years, we complained about a lack of cultural amenities, but now that we have a place that can serve as a unifying point, we simply don't support it like we should. Why?

It's not just the Unity Festival that draws poorly (to be fair, it has had large crowds in the past). The annual Juneteenth Festival held in honor of Texas slaves learning of their freedom in 1865 should draw thousands of people of all races, colors and creeds. Yet it doesn't. Is it because the events are in West Las Vegas? If so, why aren't we coming out? Thousands of us venture into the neighborhood on Sunday for church; why can't we come back and put our money in the community? The real danger in our scant support is that it could send the wrong signals to municipalities, businesses and sponsors. They could interpret our no-shows as unconcern and could reduce, or worse, cut funding. Watch the crime go up and neighborhoods grow more dangerous. Then we'll really have something to complain about.

It wouldn't be right to be all spice and no sugar. A super shout goes out to the City of North Las Vegas for the best installment yet of its annual Taste & Tunes festival, which mixes street fest with great cooking. Culinary Training Academy students provided cooking demonstrations. There was a carnival, a wine and beer garden, a classic car show, amateur boxing bouts and a "Best of North Las Vegas" salsa contest.

And the music was a stone gas, honey. Rose Royce, the voice behind seminal tunes like "Car Wash" and "Love Don't Live Here Anymore" performed Friday night, while Midnight Star — best known for "Midas Touch," "Wet My Whistle" and "No Parking on the Dance Floor" — entertained on Saturday night. Best of all, you showed up en masse, guaranteeing that city officials will invest the time, the resources and, most importantly, the money to bring it back one more time.



Who has Black America's back?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Having been concerned for many years about the reluctance among politicians, both local and national, to directly cite the economic disparity that still exists between Blacks and Whites in this country, a search of my "keeper" files turned up the following quote: "We could pretend it's not true, but decade after decade of slavery followed by decade after decade of segregation, followed by decade after decade of discrimination has an impact. It has an effect. If you're African-American in this country today, you have about — on average — 10 percent of the net worth of White families.

"Ten percent — average net worth of [B]lack families is about \$8,000; [while that for] White families is about \$80,000. And let me tell you, we're not moving in the right direction. African-American children who were born into middle-class families in the 1960's are now living in poverty."

Former presidential candidate John Edwards made that statement during his recent campaign, and, to my knowledge, is the only candidate, prior to and since the campaign began, who has spoken specifically on behalf of Black people in his country.

It is intriguing that the current campaign has moved to a point where the candidates are vying to see who



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supports Israel the most. They are so busy pledging their allegiance to persons of the Jewish religious persuasion, committing their (and our) unwavering support to the extent that we will go to war and "obliterate" any country that attacks Israel.

Hillary suggested she would wipe out Iran if it made a move on Israel; Obama described Israel as our most important ally and said he would respond with force if that country was attacked; and McCain, along with his sidekick, Joe Lieberman, turns a 1960's hit into a theme song for more war, singing, "Bomb, bomb, bomb, Iran," all in an effort to assure the Israelis that we've got their back. From that backdrop I have wondered why there is little or no mention of the candidates' support for Black people in this country. Who's got our back, y'all?

The rationale for Obama not being able to mention Black folks in his speeches, unless it is mitigated by the negative side of Black life in America, is understandable.

He cannot get elected by 13 percent of the population, many of whom don't even bother to cast a vote anyway. Hillary and McCain are a different story. Although the so-called Black vote is so important to a Democrat being elected, it is and has been taken for granted. The Republicans, of course, have all but written off the so-called Black vote; it's obvious judging from the way they shun our institutions. That kinda puts us in a political pickle, as they say; it's a real conundrum for Black people in America. Who's got our back?

It is rational and reasonable to suggest that Black people, having been in this country as long as Whites have, and having created much of the wealth of the United States, should be so well positioned that we have some priority when it comes to maintaining our allegiance to the U.S.

It is reasonable to think that any political candidate, especially the ones running for president, would at least acknowledge the contributions made by Black people and speak out boldly about the injustice against Blacks that has continued for centuries, just as U.S. Representative Thaddeus Stevens did in 1867 when he called for reparations for formerly enslaved Africans. In the current campaign, we cannot even get an honorable mention.

It's all about our support for Israel. I wonder if we would go to war if Ghana is attacked. Why didn't we go to war when the slaughter of 900,000 Tutsis was taking place in Rwanda? Who's got our backs?

The answers are obvious to most of us; those answers reflect the underbelly of this country, still grounded in racial animus and a racial hierarchy that has been sustained (See Clingman, Page 9)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.
1000 EAST CHARLESTON BOULEVARD, SUITE 100, LAS VEGAS, NV 89104

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