

OUR VIEW

It's about time

It's about time. Four years of being without a major, big-box grocery store is four years too long for any viable community. The citizens of West Las Vegas deserve all the same metropolitan amenities as the folks in ritzier areas of town. When Vons closed its 45,000-square-foot store in 2004, it was a blow to a community that's taken its fair share of lumps on the chin over the past 60 years.

When a community lacks a grocery store, the effects go beyond the surface. A segment of that community now has to find a way to travel miles outside of their neighborhoods to shop. This has ramifications for those who are on a fixed income, who now must find transportation if they can't rely on family, friends or neighbors. The elderly are hurt, too. The next-closest store may be too far to drive to. Folks tend to rely more on convenience stores and mini-marts for basic necessities. The essentials often are priced higher in these corner stores and these places generally lack any real variety. When was the last time you got fresh fruit from a quickie mart?

In a June 2007, *Urban Daily* story on the need for grocery stores in inner-city Dallas, Larry James quotes experts citing the role access to healthy food plays in a community's vitality. "Robert K. Ross, president and chief executive officer of the California Endowment, and Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and CEO of PolicyLink, put it this way: 'There is an emerging consensus among researchers and practitioners that conditions in the communities where people live — from local economic opportunities, to social interactions with neighbors, to the physical environment, to services such as local stores where people can buy healthy food — all affect health.'"

"The current crisis evidenced by our nation's growing 'grocery gap,' or the widening access disparity between more economically viable communities and low-income neighborhoods when it comes to the availability of good grocery options, has been brewing since the 1960s," he writes. "With the advent of middle-class, largely 'White flight' from older, central city neighborhoods, developers and city planners turned their attention and almost all of their resources to suburbs, leaving low-income families to struggle with transportation challenges and limited, convenient food purchasing options."

James notes that the impact on dieting, food choice and economics — items in corner stores can be as much as 49 percent higher than supermarkets.

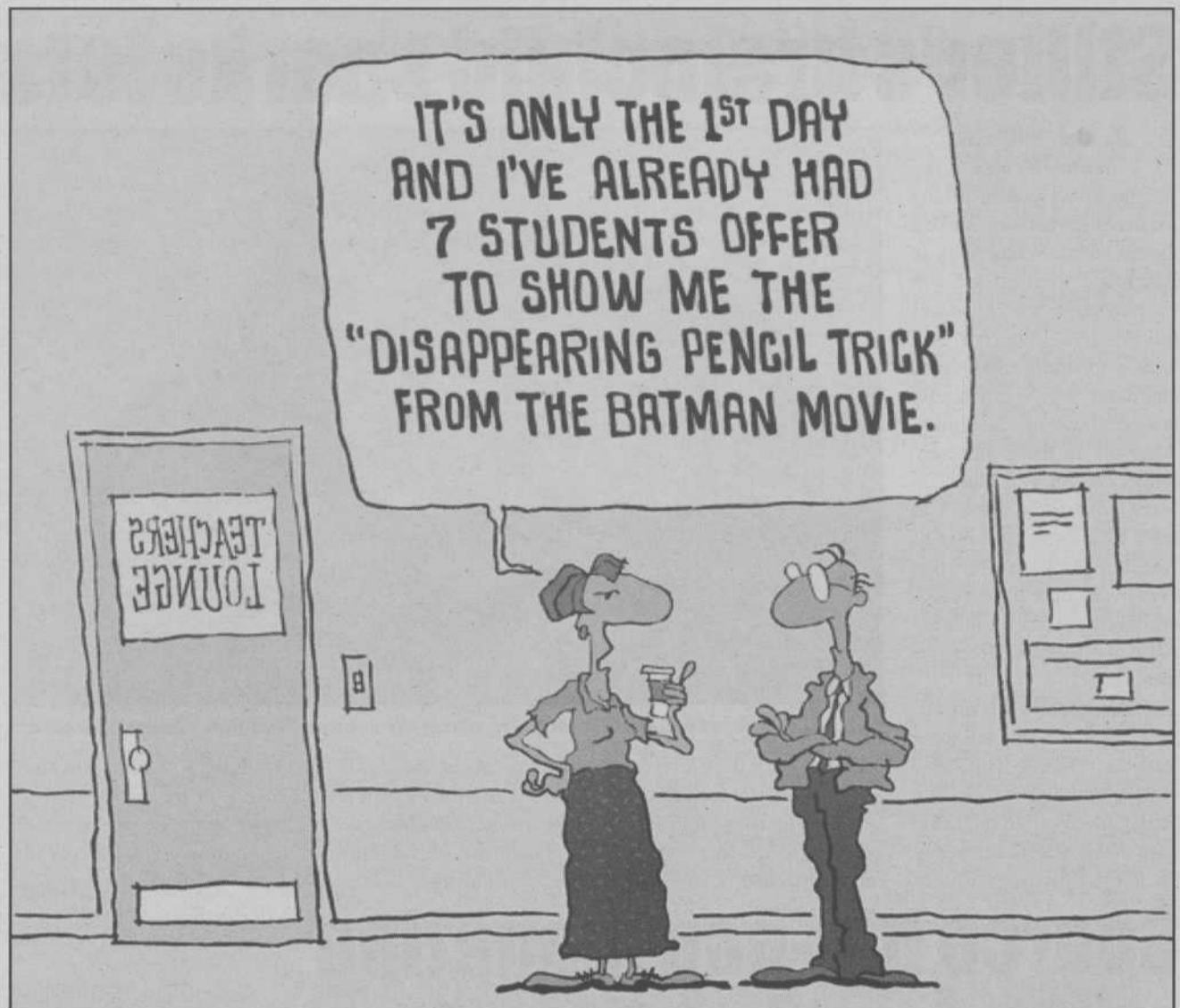
"Middle and upper-income communities in Los Angeles County have 2.3 times as many supermarkets per capita as low-income communities; predominately White communities offer 3.2 times as many supermarkets as predominately Black neighborhoods and 1.7 times as many as predominately Hispanic communities. Other regional and national studies confirm similar findings for other parts of the country."

"New supermarkets contribute to the overall economic health of neighborhoods and very often serve as catalysts and anchors for further community renewal," James said, but "low-income, inner city neighborhoods actually present major advantages to retail developers who will take the time to learn. These include density of purchasing power, limited competition, and an available labor force." As such, the new Buy Low Market in the old Vons facility is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. West Las Vegas deserves it. And most certainly, it's about time.

School's back in

As the *Sentinel-Voice* staff does every year around this time, we are imploring everyone who has a stake in the education of students in Clark County to get involved. That means you. Even if you don't have any children in the school district, what goes on in classes impacts you. Your taxes. Your quality of life. Everything.

Parents especially, roll up your sleeves and get actively involved in your child's education. Meet his or her teachers and school administrators. Learn how to monitor grades. Stay on top of their homework assignments. You are your child's best advocate. If education is important to you, it increases the odds of it being important to them. Everyone, please have a great year.



Rethink bi-racial Black leaders

By George E Curry
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

If you had a choice of color

Which one would you choose my brothers

If there was no day or night

Which would you prefer to be right.

—Curtis Mayfield, "Choice of Colors"

While Barack Obama was pondering whether to seek his party's nomination for president, there was another development already taking place in the Black community. More than any time in memory, there has been a growth in the number of people of biracial parentage assuming leadership roles in largely Black cities and organizations. They include Newark Mayor Cory A. Booker, Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty and NAACP President/CEO Benjamin Jealous. The lieutenant governor of Maryland, Anthony G. Brown, is also bi-racial.

As with so many things in the African-American community, the issue of color is a complicated one.

From the days slave masters forced themselves on Black women, there have been bi-racial children, some taking on the color of their mother and others looking as White as any White man. Even today, more than nearly



GEORGE E. CURRY

400 years later, some Blacks can still pass for White.

Complicating matters within the community, however, is the mixed signals Blacks have historically sent on color. In many social gatherings, a premium was placed on what was then called light-bright-and-damned-near-White. Some social clubs required potential members to pass the paper bag test — if you were darker than a paper bag, you couldn't join.

But all of that changed — or, at least was challenged — during the Black Power Movement of the late 1960s. Black was in, White was out. No more White dolls, no more European beauty standards, no more self-hate. We were taught to love ourselves. Of course, the Black Pride Movement never took full hold in our community — after trying an Afro, James Brown even went back to his scarry curl — but it represented a significant step in

the right direction.

Now some of us would rather cuss and make a fuss

Than to bring about a little trust

But we shall overcome our beliefs someday

If you'll only listen to what I have to say.

With remnants of the live-and-let live spirit of the 1960s still in place, color isn't any less complicated today. Clarence Thomas, a dark-skinned man, is more hostile to civil rights than any of the White conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court. Yet, Walter White — who, by all appearances, looked White — was an ardent civil rights activist with the NAACP, serving as executive secretary from 1931-1955.

Derrick Bell, a law professor at New York Univer-

sity, reads nothing special into the increasing number of bi-racial leaders.

"It shows that interracial unions are on the rise," he explained. "Obviously a number of young Whites, male and female, are looking beyond race in choosing whom they wish to marry."

Until the U.S. Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws in 1967 (*Loving v. Virginia*), interracial marriages were illegal in 16 states. According to the Census Bureau, the number of interracial marriages increased from less than 1 percent in 1970 to slightly more than 5 percent in 2000.

And not all products of these unions accept others' definition of them. Consider this exchange between Michelle Martin, host of

(See Curry, Page 9)

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