

WFWP USA: Diamond Anniversary of Racial Integration on the Las Vegas Strip

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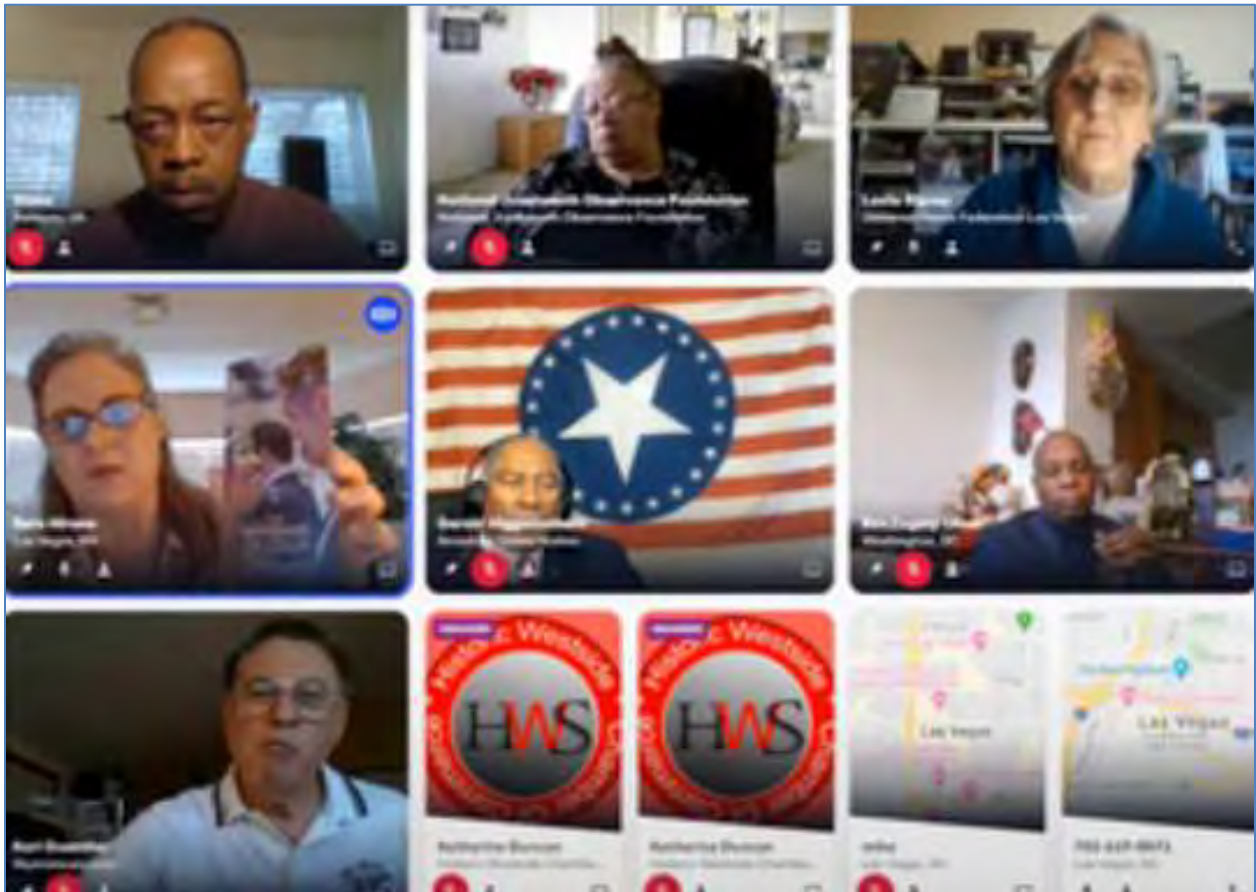


In 1955, the Moulin Rouge opened its doors on the Las Vegas Strip, becoming the first racially integrated hotel and casino in the United States. Although it went bankrupt in just six months, it became a lasting symbol for the civil rights movement, and five years later the shuttered Moulin Rouge was the site of a historic agreement between the NAACP, Nevada Governor Grant Sawyer and the city's casino executives to officially end segregation.

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of racial segregation in Las Vegas, the Historic

Westside Chamber of Commerce held a virtual, live-streamed "Moulin Rouge Agreement Diamond Anniversary" forum on March 25th, 2020. The event aimed to educate people about descendants of American slaves' history, assess their current conditions and opportunities to transform the distressed community, especially centered on the new White House Opportunity Zone tax credit.

Significantly, March 25th is also the [International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade](#), which honors all those who suffered and died under the yoke of slavery over the course of a tragic 400-year history.



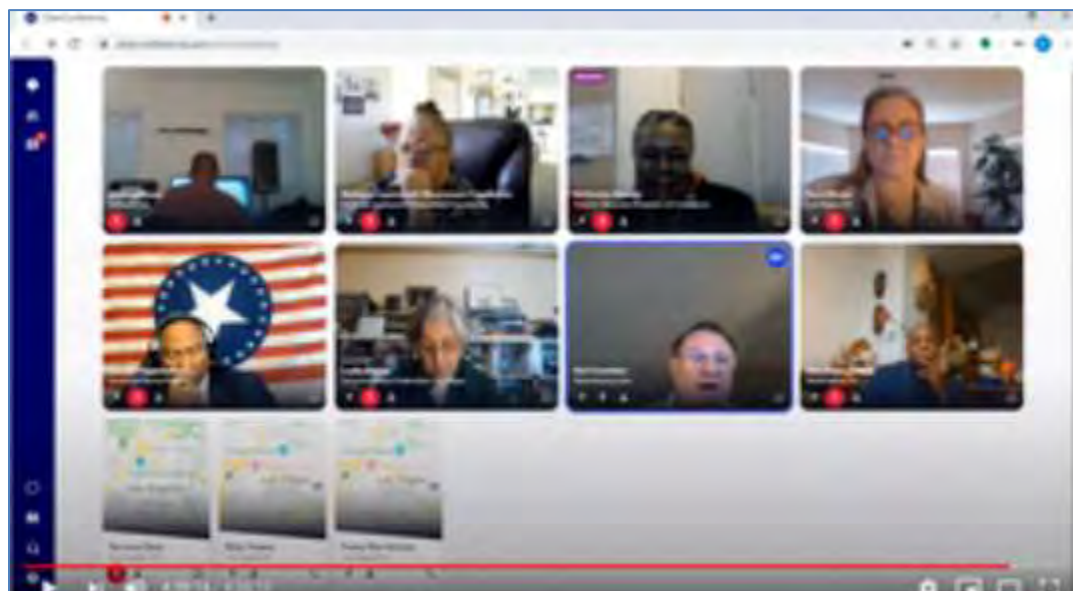
Sera Hirano (center, left), introducing WFWP activities

"The Historic Westside has the largest concentration of American Slave descendants in Nevada and is severely distressed. It lies within a qualified opportunity zone which identifies severely distressed communities. COVID-19 put it in a super distressed condition, so we were compelled to urgently reach out for resources for the people and businesses who were already distressed," said Katie Duncan, president of the Westside Chamber of Commerce.

Conference participants and organizers included American Slaves, Inc., the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJO), Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and Universal Peace Federation (UPF) USA. Religious, political, media, education, business and nonprofit leaders came together to give a meaningful summary of the challenges and progress, past and present, for the descendants of slaves in America.

The governor's order to cancel all in-person gatherings forced the conference to move to a digital platform, made possible by NJO President Steve Williams, principal consultant to Micro Information Resources. The entire event was broadcast live on YouTube and can be viewed [here](#) (please forgive the technical snafus; WFWP Las Vegas Chairwoman Sera Hirano starts speaking at about 1 hour 27 min).

The five-hour conference opened with vocalist Sylvie Boisel, local member of WFWP and an international artist from France, with a heartwarming tribute to the Moulin Rouge. Rev. Juan Morales, representing the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, prayed for racial healing and reconciliation.



Brian Greenspun, the publisher of the Las Vegas Sun, gave an attention-grabbing overview of the Moulin Rouge Agreement, which his late father Hank Greenspun had mediated on that historic day in 1960. "My dad got the governor, Grant Sawyer, convinced him to call all these hotel owners to a meeting, with representatives from the black community, in an effort to do the right thing. Ostensibly, to stave off a protest march [...] but once they got them in the room, my dad made it very clear that nobody was leaving the room that day until there was an agreement to desegregate the Las Vegas Strip.[...] Had it not been for what those people did in that room, opening the Strip up to people of all colors and all creeds, Las Vegas would not have grown to be the entertainment capital of the world, open to the world. That's what the Moulin Rouge Agreement did for Las Vegas. More importantly, it was a predicate for what was going to happen across the country."

The first panel's participants were noted author Dr. Norris Shelton, founding president of American Slaves, Inc., Prime Minister, Dr. Gerald Higginbotham, American Slave Nation, and Louisville, Kentucky County Commissioner, Dr. Kathleen Parks. The panel gave a thought-provoking dialogue on the problems associated with misidentifying this racial group as African Americans, minorities and Blacks.

The second panel was presented by UPF and WFWP. Local WFWP Chairwoman Sera Hirano kicked things off by introducing the vision and activities of WFWP. Speaking on the topic of reconciliation, she quoted the following words from the founders of WFWP: "History is calling for reconciliation, compassion, love, service and sacrifice. Today's problems cannot be solved by the logic of power. Our present problems can only be solved by the logic of love."

Local UPF representative Leslie Rigney focused on the process of reconciliation based on the principles for peace taught by the late Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Rev. Zagery Oliver, who joined from Washington, DC, spoke on the important role of America in solving the racial divide: "If the white and black brothers in the United States come together, they will be the model for the world to follow because what America does affects the world."

The third panel on multicultural education in Nevada was organized and moderated by National Communications Director and Nevada State Director of the NJOF, Mrs. Deborah Evans. The panel included Clark County School District Trustee Dr. Linda Young, Nevada State Assemblyman William McCurdy II, North Las Vegas Mayor pro-tem Pamela Goynes and Councilman Isaac Barron, and retired Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford, who sponsored the controversial education bill. Mrs. Evans' goal is to encourage Juneteenth language in the upcoming legislative session and the establishment of a Juneteenth Education Commission.

The final session on how to bring resources to the distressed community was centered on the opportunity zones. Terrence Mayfield, Rev. Zagery Oliver, who represents a Nationwide Interfaith Opportunity Zone initiative, and Bishop Ron Thomas, Reconciliation Apostolic Ministries. The emphasis was on how we pick up speed, the role of community involvement, and strategies for success. Dr. Gerald Higginbotham joined the final session and delivered a powerful message calling for a "New Third Wave".

The conference allowed callers to be part of the event and text in their questions and feedback. They expressed genuine appreciation and thanks for the information. WFWP is grateful to have been given the opportunity to take part in this important discussion in commemoration of the end of racial segregation and ongoing peace and reconciliation efforts.