

The Color of Homecoming Is Green

by Dennis Schatzman

Elderidge Cleaver gave us all the big hint some 20 years ago; "sieve the time." Comedian Scoobie Mitchell, however, came right down front with it. On one of those celebrity game shows on television he repeatedly told a Black female contestant, after every correct answer: "get the money, baby."

During this homecoming season, we can be rest assured that a lot of money was spent preparing for getting to, staying for and enjoying the homecoming weekend. Sad to say, however, that most of what we spent on this annual ritual was not spent with Black businesses. It was others, then, who "seized the time" and "got the money, baby."

This writer will not begin to estimate how much was spent this weekend on homecoming just in the Triad area. But I can pretty much guess **where** the Black dollar was spent.

Much of it was spent in department stores located in Hanes Mall, Cloverdale Plaza, Northside, Old Town, Parkview, Reynolds Maner and Parkway Plaza. Food Fair, Harris-Teeter, Winn-Dixie, Kroger and Food Lion picked up it's share of the money.

Those flying in for the festivities come in via Piedmont, Eastern, United, Delta, American, Ozark and U S Air. Reserva-

tions were more than likely made by a travel agent who got his share.

Hotels and motels, like the Hilton, the Ramada and the Hyatt, I suspect, made a good bit of change. And since much of this was paid for with American Express, Mastercharge, Visa, Choice or Diners Club credit cards, the banks made a tidy profit.

Oh, and let's not forget the ABC stores (how could we?). That means the state made a little money. Everything is taxed, so Uncle Sam made his, too.

Seems like everybody got fat or did they?

If this seems like another article on the paucity of Black economic development, it is. I cannot help but to be reminded, after writing this long list of guaranteed winners, of how everyone else seems to seize the opportunity to make money on our traditions.

Fear not, however. All was not lost. Black businesses, however slight, did make some money during this Homecoming weekend. We can pretty much guess who they were, too. Some Black caterers, particularly the smart marketing-minded ones, earned a dollar or two. Barbers and stylists cornered their market. Our Black-owned clubs did as well. WSSU made money on tickets

and concessions (and so did the state again). And the people who sell college T-shirts and paraphernalia made some money.

But in an area ranked among the nation's highest in Black businesses per 1,000 Black residents ratio (15 per 1,000 according to the Associated Press) these businesses could have done a lot better.

Who's fault is this? As the fictional Deputy Attorney-General, James J. West said in the Paul Newman movie "Absence of Malice", "ain't nobody to blame. Wish there was."

Perhaps we could realistically look at ourselves, both as Black consumer and business owner, and point a finger. As consumers, we could have gone out of our way and looked to spend a little money with the dress shop owner with good merchandise and no advertising budget. As business owners, we could have collectively began to devise a full-scale marketing plan to focus on generating support for Black businesses just for that one weekend. After all, we're all going to be in that mood-talking trash, drinking liquor, spending money. It's Homecoming weekend.

Seize the time. Get the money, baby. Somebody will.

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