

NAACP Celebrates Boycott Victory

JACKSON, MISS. — NAACP representatives from across the nation went into the small town of Port Gibson on Thursday, July 29, to celebrate a victory of freedom. It was a victory that came 14 years after local white merchants filed a \$1.25 million suit against the national NAACP and more than 100 local residents who had participated in a boycott against their stores.

Now, the weight of the ominous judgment had been lifted by the U.S. Supreme Court freeing the properties and bank accounts of many of the local defendants as well as the national NAACP of any responsibility for conducting what was allegedly an illegal boycott. So, in a manner befitting the historical nature of the occasion, the townsfolk celebrated.

The high point of the day-long program in Port Gibson was the mass meeting that night in the First Baptist Church, located at the entrance to the town square. The First Baptist Church was an appropriate place for the program to end, for it was there in 1969 that local white policemen fired shots into the midst of a packed protest meeting, killing a black resident.

The merchants filed suit for \$3.5 million in damages as a result of a series of earlier boycotts and the demonstrations that resulted from the killing.

The mass meeting in the church became much more than a celebration of the Supreme Court's judgment. At mid-point in the program, young relatives and associates of 34 deceased residents who were leaders of the

civil rights struggle in Claiborne County, lighted candles in memory of those who were no longer alive. Port Gibson is the county seat of Claiborne County.

The program of celebration was led by NAACP executive director, Benjamin L. Hooks, Mrs. Margaret Bush Wilson, chairman of the NAACP national board of directors; Aaron Henry, member of the national board, and local residents.

For Mrs. Wilson, who launched the drive to raise the \$1.6 million that was needed to post a bond to protect the association's assets after the Mississippi chancery court handed down the judgment in August, 1976, the program was especially poignant. She recalled the massive national drive that awakened NAACP supporters

and friends to the crisis. As a result, the NAACP raised the full amount that was needed to cover the bond.

NAACP associate general counsel Charles Carter, who led the association's defense during the nine-month trial, explained that because of the nature of the case, he could not help but become personally involved with his clients. Such involvement was unavoidable, he noted, when the circumstances of the case were considered.

As an example, he read a portion of the transcripts that were submitted to the Supreme Court. This was the testimony of Ms. Julia Johnson. To Carter's question, "How did you observe the boycott," she responded: "I just stayed out of the store because I had my own personal reasons to stay

out of the store. There were some things I really wanted. And things I wanted were the right to vote, the right to have a title, Mr. and Mrs., or whatever I am, and not 'uncle,' or 'aunt' or 'boy' or 'girl.' 'No that's what I want. And if I wanted a job, and qualified for the job, I wanted to have the opportunity to be hired not because I am black or white but just hired.'"

Question: "And this was your reason for observing the boycott?"

Answer: "Yes, it was."

Question: "You were in favor of the boycott?"

Answer: "Yes, I was in favor of the boycott."

Ms. Regina Duval, a local expert on Port Gibson history, rejoiced that, as a result of the increased political awareness of blacks who represent 76 per cent of the county population,

26 of 32 countywide positions are now held by members of the race. When the boycotts began, blacks were completely locked out of those positions.

"Thanks to the perseverance of volunteers among us," she said, "we have consistently progressed to

political parity." Earlier in the day, Hooks led a rousing rally and march in the town before returning to Jackson to join a small group of NAACP leaders in having lunch with Mississippi Governor William Winter in the governor's mansion.

Hints For Homemakers

Making the Most of Leftovers

Don't throw away that extra cornbread. Or those biscuits. Crumble them, mix in a bowl and cover securely with plastic wrap. Use them as a basis for poultry stuffing. Your family will love the taste and you'll enjoy the savings on your food budget.

Leftover vegetables, wisely saved, can combine to become part of a nutritious meal. Refrigerate, covered with plastic wrap, and add to a basic beef stew. It's almost like getting a meal "on the house."



Smart homemakers are praising the anti-fog feature of Reynolds Plastic Wrap, newly introduced by Reynolds Aluminum. It removes the mystery from covered bowls in the refrigerator. Reynolds has been making the same wrap for the food-service industry for the past 20 years.

Named To VPI Board Of Visitors



SIMMONS

BLACKSBURG, VA. — Dr. S. Dallas Simmons, president of Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia, has been appointed to the board of visitors of The Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI). The 4-year appointment was announced by Gov. Charles Robb.

The 14-member board of visitors is the governing body of VPI which was founded in 1872 and now has an enrollment of 21,000 students.

Black Theatre In Durham

Poses A "To Be Or Not To Be" Question

By Josephine Scarlett

"To be or not to be" may not be a dilemma exclusive to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Black dramatists in the Durham area must also ponder that question in regard to their careers.

"The only on-going black theatre in this area is at Central," said Johnny Alston, assistant professor of dramatic art at North Carolina Central University. According to Alston, the Durham area lacks a theatre organization, other than the program at NCCU, that constant-

ly produces plays written by black playwrights that have roles for black actors.

Alston attributes the low production rate of black plays in this area to the commercialization of the theatre. Before a theatre or organization will produce a play, there must be evidence of audience interest to ensure that the play will be profitable.

"Community theatres too must consider what is successful," Alston said. Especially organizations that use professional people." Bud D. Winter, presi-

dent of the Theatre Guild, says that his organization uses a formula to determine whether they will produce a play or not. "We have a play reading committee that helps decide on the plays, we accept suggestions from outside," he said, "and we pass out questionnaires to the audience that ask which plays they want to see."

The Theatre Guild, which is financed in part by the Durham Arts Council, produces one play of four yearly by a "minority" playwright.

Minority meaning blacks, Hispanics, women and other groups.

Since audience interest is a factor that theatres consider before producing a play, there must be an audience in order to measure audience interest. But if there are only a few black plays produced in the area each year, how can interest develop enough in the black community to create "an interested black audience?"

Alston contends that the "black audience" in the Durham area must be built. "The companies that work out of recreation centers build the audience and we can start from there," he says. Step two, after the audience is established or growing, would be the creation of the community theatre which Alston says is hard to form because of finances.

"You'll have to have people who are dedicated to the arts. But even to sophisticated community, finances are important," he said. "The dramatic arts program at NCCU does not share that problem because of its support from the state."

There is no lack of talent in the Durham area, but playwrights have a hard time getting the exposure necessary to develop a career. While theatre groups and organizations in this area lean toward popular plays and those that create a busy box office, the unknown artist is all but left out in the cold. "Occasionally we produce local playwrights," said Winter, "but we tend to use popular plays."

The cycle continues while there are, not only black playwrights, but actors/actresses, and technicians in the Durham area who are capable of producing black theatre productions and have something to say as well. "There are people who have the expertise," said Alston. "Some of them aren't involved at this time, most are teachers."

Why all the fuss about black theatre? Since William Wells Brown published "The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom" in 1858, black artists have attempted to express their experience in America. Langston Hughes, in his essay "The Need for an Afro-American Theatre," contends that black theatre must exist for two reasons: to open up avenues of expression "for us all," and to ex-

pose some of the rich material of black life that exists in the fields of drama, dance and music.

Alston sees the educational advantage of black theatre. He interprets education in the theatre as an opportunity to learn from the life experiences of other people. "When people are in a situation to experience things they don't ordinarily experience, to have the interaction with other people," he said, they come out to be well rounded individuals."

Whatever the playwright suffers, so does the actor. Alston says that students interested in the technical aspects of theatre, such as lighting and sound, have more opportunities than the students of acting and directing. He recommends that aspiring actors/actresses leave this area and go on to Broadway or graduate school.

"Alston suggests that playwrights in this area bring their work to the university which could prove as an avenue of exposure."

The fact is that English society, in the 17th and 18th centuries, refused to bury dead artists and today black artists in the Durham area have only a slim chance of seeing their works borne onto the stage. As for those who wish "to be" actors/actresses, they could be better off going somewhere else to make a living.

Mitchell

(Continued from Page 3)

artificial when these increases are attributable only to the performance of 8(a) contracts which are by no means permanent sources of income, as this latest maneuver demonstrates."

Mitchell stated, "I have received over 200 telegrams, letters and telephone calls in less than three days protesting this unreasonable and inequitable situation. As a result of this massive community outcry, I have initiated discussions with the White House, SBA, Members of Congress and the minority business community." To date, neither the White House nor Administrator Sanders has responded in a positive fashion.

SBA is consistently acting to deny economic parity for minority businesses. Programs for economic advancement are being sabotaged by those very persons who, by law, are directed and charged with responsibility for their proper implementation. SBA's failure to stop these kinds of abuses is testimony enough to its lack of commitment to the economic revitalization of this nation in general and the minority business community in particular," according to Congressman Mitchell.

By Donald Alderman

RALIEGH — Reflecting the sluggish American economy, black business owners watch the bottom line a lot more closely today.

Many of them have put expansion plans on a back shelf, halted new hiring for the moment and some are even laying people off. Most of them also say they are watching costs a lot more closely, and trimming wherever they can.

In other words, black businesses are being rocked with the same mainstream business problems that other firms are suffering.

Blacks who want to go into business must have an equally tough row.

Borrowing money from banks and other lending institutions is often like trying to pull hen's teeth. Investors are scarce. But even when these entrepreneurs get the start up capital they need, they then must battle with tradition to convince black and white consumers that the products and services marketed by black business operators are of high quality and competitively priced.

But that's not all. Market development is a rigorous task, and doing business with government and large corporations is even harder.

In other words, black businesses today suffer with mainstream business problems, whether they operate in the mainstream or not. And since that is true, the question becomes why not operate in the mainstream. The problem is how to best do that?

About 300 black business owners began sorting through that maze of problems and questions last week during a daylong confab at Raleigh's McKimmon Center on the campus of N.C. State University. The meeting was sponsored by the N.C. Association of Minority Business, an organization that has both business members and members that are business organizations.

According to most of the conferees, one of the biggest problems plaguing black businesses is mismanagement stemming from a lack of experience.

The conference's primary focus was to develop strategies designed to alleviate most business problems and to draw closer ties between the state's eight black business leagues. The delegates decided that the individual leagues could best tackle business problems on the local level, with the state organization serving in an advisory role.

But by this same token, members of the

association think they're in a good position to make state government work better for black businesses, especially small contractors. The association attracted the attention of Gov. Jim Hunt and Secretary of Commerce D.M. Faircloth, both of whom said they would support the group's efforts.

But even with that potential help, the association must work to get the house of black business in order.

Black business needs a stronger capital base, according to Donald Baker, an official with the state's Minority Business Development Agency, which helped the association get started about 18 months ago. He says black businesses need to pool resources to start joint ventures.

It is clear that better communication and trust between the state's black businesses is necessary to do that, but getting the money poses another problem.

Baker says black business operators should reorder their priorities.

"You know, hold off on the Mercedes and put the money in a money market," he suggests for example. Most ways suggested were simple, but conference organizers conceded that a careless, spendthrift attitude represents a major obstacle to black capital development.

They pointed to the \$150 billion gross national income of blacks, noting that about \$2 billion can be attributed to black business receipts.

"The country is based on money," Baker says. "As long as blacks don't accumulate money, we don't have a base."

But lack of capital doesn't carry all the blame.

Off the record, some businessmen talked candidly about perception that black businesses market poor quality products and services, the poor competitive nature of the business and the mixing of social and

economic concerns. But many contend that the perceived inferiority of black businesses again leads back to a lack of experience and is a perception that can be corrected.

"All we're saying is give us a chance," said Larry Shaw of the Fayetteville-based Shaw Food Services. "We have the ability and it's a matter of time now," suggesting that the black entrepreneur is about to enter a new booming era.

Julian Brown, a state procurement specialist, sees better communication and information sharing as the beginning of that boom. In the construction industry, where competition for large government contracts is heavy, he says, black sub-contractors have made gains.

Though bonding small firms remains difficult, he says small bonding firms are cropping up now making it less difficult for small black sub-contractors to get more business.

A welcomed change from the past, Brown says, black firms are getting more professional, keeping up-to-date financial and personnel records, which is important for bonding, and using information such as market studies more.

"It's all about sharing information," Brown says. "You have to throw yourself in that environment. You have to make contacts, participate in social, political and civic affairs."

And, as Brown implied, blacks need business exposure. Speaker after speaker said it's incumbent upon business operators to help young dreamers get started as well as established businesses banding together to spur more economic development in the black community.

Mrs. Eva Clayton, who directs a Raleigh consultant firm, agrees. "I think entrepreneurs banding together is going to be the only vehicle to allow us to accumulate capital."

Physical Fitness: Profile Of Youth

American youngsters are not as fit as they should be. That's the verdict of one recent physical fitness study, which reveals that only 43 percent of young people in the United States can achieve the physical fitness standards that should be met by the average healthy youngster.

Happily, the study also reveals what the average youngster can do to become more physically fit, through basic exercising.

The Fitness Profile of American Youth, from Nabisco Brands, Inc., and

the Amateur Athletic Union, is based on an analysis of exercise tests conducted from 1979 to 1981 among more than four million Americans aged six through 17, as part of an ongoing Physical Fitness Program.

Each year, some four million boys and girls in more than 10,000 public and private schools take part in the Program by performing a series of exercises that includes distance runs, sprints, long jumps, high jumps, situps, pushups and pullups.

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