

OPINION/ LETTERS

Winston-Salem Chronicle

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Editorials

Buying Black this Season

This holiday season, African Americans need to make a conscious effort to spend more money at African-American-owned businesses. According to the area Chamber of Commerce, nearly \$335 million were spent by all residents at city and county businesses last month. November is almost always the highest sales-volume month of the year. A good portion of that \$335 million — about 20 percent, according to the Chamber's Director of Research Louis Abramovitz — came from the pockets of African-Americans. And most of that \$67 million spent by African Americans were spent at large, white-owned department store chains. A mere pittance of it went across the counters of black-owned businesses.

Many area African-American businesses continue to suffer because African Americans refuse to spend dollars in their community. Furthermore, many large, department-store chains take for granted black spending. Some, including Dillard's, have been accused of mistreating black employees and harassing black customers.

African Americans must realize the importance of turning a dollar over at least once in the community.

This holiday season, African Americans should pause and reflect on the gains they have made as a race in this country. But they should also reflect on what needs to be done in order to make future advancements.

Economic viability is the lifeblood to self-preservation of a people. And who better to ensure that self-preservation than African Americans themselves. African Americans should not have to depend on any other race to do for them what they are capable of doing for themselves. And white participation should not be the bellwether of African-American viability and success.

Black-owned businesses, and therefore the African-American community, will always suffer as long as it is perceived that the white man's ice is colder.

Gift of Giving

This is the season when hearts are usually filled with love and helping those in need is bountiful. Many charitable organizations need to see an outpouring of that love and gratuity in order to fulfill their mission of serving the community's neediest. The Rescue Mission is one such organization. The organization brings a holiday cheer into the lives of thousands of the area's less fortunate each year. It needs your help in bringing forth that same effort this holiday season.

The Rescue Mission has placed at 39 businesses and schools around the city boxes where non-perishable items, preferably canned goods, can be dropped off. One location where you can drop off items is the office of the *Chronicle* at 617 North Liberty Street. The Rescue Mission will collect the goods on Dec. 16. This year, the Rescue Mission has served over 86,000 meals; at Thanksgiving alone it served 809 meals and expects to do the same on Christmas day.

Your donations will go a long way toward bringing cheer to those who feel they have little reason to smile.

Credo of the Black Press

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from antagonisms when it accords to every person — regardless of race or creed — full human and legal rights. Hating no person, the Black Press strives to help every person, in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

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Letter Does Not Tell Whole Truth

To the Editor:

I recently read a letter to the editor in the *Chronicle* that disturbs me ("NAFTA, Tax Hikes, Unions & Jobs"). Many of your readers may have wondered who is Peter C. Holland and why is a man from Kannapolis concerned about what is happening in our city. Well, I know of the author, and of his personal financial interest in the issues that he outlines in the letter. Holland failed to reveal those interests.

Holland criticizes an effort by workers at Lee Apparel's Winston-Salem plant to join the Teamsters Union. However, he conveniently avoided telling the readers that he is getting paid to oppose the union campaign.

Peter Holland works for B&C Associates of High Point. Lee hired the firm to target its African-American employees. B&C advertises itself as a public relations firm that counsels companies on "minority affairs." In reality, it is a firm that helps large corporations avoid giving their employees decent wages and working conditions. B&C is made up of union busters for hire.

B&C is run by Bob Brown. He has been criticized for selling out the interests of African-Americans since he worked for the Nixon Administration in the 1970s. Brown's firm now earns large fees from corporate clients. In turn, he pays top dollar to ministers, ex-civil rights leaders, and others who manipulate the African-Americans involved in union campaigns.

They did it with Fieldcrest employees in Kannapolis. They did it with Tultex workers in Martinsville, Va. Now, they are attempting to do it with the employees at Lee. What are their methods? Peter Holland is a minister. He is using that religious station to ask Lee employees to consider opposi-

tion to labor unions from a spiritual point of view. Tragically, the workers at Tultex and Fieldcrest who came under B&C's influence find

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CHRONICLE MAILBAG Our Readers Speak Out

themselves worse off.

Plying workers with food and drink, Holland and other B&C representatives gather information about the workers' problems on the job. B&C then uses this information to advise management on what changes they need to make to defeat the union in the election. The changes, however, have proven cosmetic and temporary.

Besides employing ministers, B&C hires ex-civil rights leaders. Take the Golden Frinks example. Once a formidable civil rights leader, Frinks works for B&C. He has told workers that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. opposed unions. Frinks knows better. Every sincere student of history knows that King believed we could not achieve real social justice and civil rights without fighting for economic rights through union organization.

Remember, King was killed while in Memphis, Tenn., helping a public employees union win dignity and fairness for sanitation workers there. Frinks' comments are not only inaccurate but dishonest, yet B&C cunningly employs this approach to cast doubts among African-American workers about the value of union organization.

In fact, African-Americans fare very well with unions. U.S. Department of Labor statistics show that the average African-American union worker earns \$146 per week more than nonunion blacks. Add the

tions and written guarantee that protect African-American workers from the injustice and racial discrimination that we have suffered for so long.

My biggest problem with Holland, Frinks, Brown, and the others at B&C is their lack of moral integrity. B&C's dishonest manipulation of African-American workers is leaving them without solutions to their serious economic problems. African-American ministers and civil rights leaders have always been in the forefront of the struggle for better lives. They should not side with elements who profit from holding down our people.

I am proud to be part of efforts to bring justice to workers of all creeds and color in our community. I have seen first hand how workers like those at ARA are mistreated because they have been denied union representation.

I support the efforts of the workers at Lee to join the Teamsters Union. Lee has failed to live up to the promises it made when city and county officials put up \$330,000 of our tax money to lure the plant here. Regrettably, even human service officials publically acknowledge they do not refer welfare recipients to Lee because the pay is so low.

The Winston-Salem community is best served by pressuring Lee to live up to its responsibility to the workers and the city. Lee should

deserve. The company must also understand that the old divide-and-conquer tactic will not prevail among African-Americans here because we will work to reveal the truth about their methods.

Rev. John Mendez
 Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church

Unfair Criticism

To the Editor:

The editorial staff of the *Chronicle* did the cause of equitable law enforcement no good when it implied, in its lead editorial of Nov. 18th, that Police Chief George Swear wishes the deaths of African-Americans. Not only is such an implication preposterous, but it damages the *Chronicle's* credibility among all the citizens of Winston-Salem. There was a time when *Chronicle* readers could expect reasoned, rational, dispassionate editorials on questions of fairness and social justice. Now, it seems, readers must be subjected to knee-jerk harangues that are long on personal vitriol and short on substance. A convincing case can be made for police reform without resorting to ridiculous charges of genocidal tendencies in the Police Department.

Andy Nilsson

Banks Under Pressure Over Lending Bias

Despite long-standing laws and regulations banning bias in lending, African-Americans continue to face discrimination in home mortgage loans or loans to start or expand a small business.

Finally, the federal government seems ready to apply the kind of tough pressures that get lenders' attention.

Last month the Federal Reserve Board refused to approve a big New England bank's purchase of a smaller bank because it is under investigation for possible violations of the fair lending laws.

This is the first time that has happened. In the past, evidence of lending discrimination has been treated like crossing against a red light — a minor infraction that could be ignored.

Now, it is being treated as a major offense that will prevent banks from implementing such strategic business plans as mergers or acquisitions.

That should make their executives sit up and take notice, but the irony is that very often those senior executives have framed strong anti-discrimination policies and programs.

But they haven't been able to get those principles embedded in their corporate cultures, and unless branch loan officers change their behaviors the best-sounding policies are doomed to failure.

Some of those bias behaviors may be unconscious, since racial stereotyping is so pervasive that lenders may think they are objective when in fact they set the bar higher for minorities.

As a result, in 1992, application for mortgages by African-Americans were rejected at

more than double the white rate — about 36 percent for blacks versus 16 percent for whites.

The discriminatory pattern holds for applicants with similar incomes and credit histories. And very often white applicants who might otherwise be turned down for loans will get advice and help to qualify while minorities are simply rejected.

The new mood of activist government enforcement is having a healthy effect.

Many banks are hiring minority staff, adjusting loan criteria and working with community-based organizations such as the Urban League to help applicants qualify for loans and to review procedures that discourage minority applicants.

We can expect that trend to accelerate after the Federal Reserve Board's action.

In 1993, there have been over 320 bank mergers and buy-outs totaling over \$20 billion. As the industry continues its trend toward consolidation, even those huge numbers will rise.

With the stakes that high, it would be incredibly irresponsible for bank management to risk losing a merger opportunity because some loan officers at faraway branches let prejudice guide business decisions.

But even more is at stake, for other federal agencies are getting into the act.

The Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, for example, is examining mortgage lenders to determine whether their practices have a "disparate impact" on minorities.

Evidence indicating discrimination is turned over to the Justice Department for possible prosecution, and that agency is itself initiating investigations that could lead to prosecution.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development make ending racial discrimination a priority, and is using white and minority "testers" to apply for mortgages to see if they are treated alike.

So the message is getting out loud and clear, that the anti-discrimination laws can no longer be



TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

broken at will. Now the government should be as vigilant in enforcing community lending mandates, so that the credit squeeze that chokes off investment in low income neighborhoods can be overcome.

(John Jacob is president of the National Urban League.)

WHERE I'M COMING FROM

BY BARBARA BRANDON

