

BUSINESS

The civil rights movement is often remembered for the protests, sit-ins and demonstrations that made headlines and the nightly TV news.

But many gains came not from conflict, but from hard work, skill, fresh ideas and drive.

The world of business has seen tremendous gains for African-Americans and other minorities.

Gains in Business

Professional men and women were inspired and challenged by W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington and other leaders to use their advantages to help their community.

Economic freedom, these leaders argued, was a key to freedom in other aspects of life.

No one represents the idea of economic freedom and independence more than African-Americans like Paul Cuffe and Madame C.J. Walker.

Cuffe, a black seaman, merchant and shipbuilder in Massachusetts, used his resources to aid his people both here and abroad.

He established schools for African-Americans, he won civil rights by petitioning the state legislature, and in later life he tried to establish religious missions in Sierra Leone in Africa and to fight slavery in America.

Madame C.J. Walker started out as a washerwoman in the early 1900s and became America's first black female millionaire. She started



Madame C.J. Walker began with a line of hair-care products and became America's first black female millionaire.

a hair-care products business which became a big success. She made herself rich when she sold the company to John Johnson, builder of the multimillion dollar publishing enterprise that now includes Jet and Ebony magazines.

In later life she built an elaborate mansion, Villa Lewaro, in New York and contributed great sums of money to such institutions as Tuskegee Institute and the NAACP.

Many black professionals created their own organizations to help nurture younger people coming up in their careers—and to protect them against the discrimination they might face.

The National Medical Association, the National Bar Association, the American Teachers Association and other groups were created to help black doctors, lawyers and teachers.

The business skills of African-Americans were evident in free states long before the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves.

Success Story

In 1841 William Liedesdorff moved to San Francisco, California, from the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean and launched an American success story. With sharp business skill and a keen sense of timing, he became the country's first African-American millionaire. He bought large tracts of land in San Francisco and the California Gold

Rush country, launched the city's first steamboat and started its first hotel.

Liedesdorff won election to the city council and played an important part setting up the city's first public school.

A modern William Liedesdorff was Reginald Lewis. Lewis, who died at age 50 in 1993, was the first African-American businessman to make the Forbes Magazine list of the nation's 400 wealthiest people.

He had a knack for business even as a child, selling newspapers and banking \$18 out of every \$20 he made.

After graduating from Virginia State University and Harvard Law School, he practiced law 15 years, founded his own law firm, and then moved into the world of finance. He created the TLC Group, and in four years it was so successful it could buy the Beatrice International food company for \$985 MILLION. At the time of Lewis's death from brain cancer, Beatrice was

the country's largest black-owned business and Lewis himself was worth more than \$400 million.



CHECK OUT THE PAPER!

The business section of the paper gives news about people and companies making a difference in the business world. Read the headlines in the business section of your paper for a week and find a story about a minority-owned business. Write a short description of the business and what it does. Then explain whether this business could have existed before the gains of the civil rights movement over the last 50 years.

1938 U.S. Supreme Court rules that states must provide equal educational facilities for blacks. The plaintiff, Lloyd Gaines of Missouri, mysteriously disappears after the court's decision.

1939 NAACP begins seeking one million signatures supporting an anti-lynching bill.

1941 U.S. Supreme Court rules that separate facilities on railroads must be equal.

Union organizer A. Philip Randolph proposes a march on Washington to protest discrimination in federal programs. The march is called off after President Franklin D. Roosevelt forbids racial and religious discrimination in defense industries and government training programs.



1943 Congress of Racial Equality stages the first successful sit-in at a Chicago restaurant.

Blacks protest exclusion from civilian defense jobs in Detroit, MI. Violence results in 34 deaths.

1944 U.S. Supreme Court rules that blacks cannot be denied the right to vote in primary elections.

Navy orders all naval vessels integrated.

1945 White students in Gary, IN, walk out of classes to protest integration.

1946 Supreme Court bans segregation in interstate bus travel.



1947 Congress on Racial Equality sends an interracial group on a southern bus trip to test compliance with Supreme Court ruling.

1948 President Harry Truman creates the Fair Employment Board, to eliminate racial discrimination in federal jobs.

1950 U.S. Supreme Court rules against classroom and social segregation at the University of Oklahoma. The Court also strikes down an Interstate Commerce Commission ruling requiring black railroad passengers to eat behind a partition in dining cars.