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"Barbershop 2: Back In Business" highlights the trials of black-owned businesses located in the inner city.

The tearful business lessons of 'Barbershop'

By Denise Rolark Barnes
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

If you heard someone sniffing in the theatre during "Barbershop 2: Back in Business" last weekend, it was me. I did the same thing when I saw "Barbershop" I when it opened in the fall of 2002. Both films were produced by and starred rapper Ice Cube, who plays the role of Calvin Palmer, the third generation owner of a barbershop that has become a cornerstone of a neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. His co-stars include Cedric the Entertainer, Eve and newly featured Kenan Thompson and Queen Latifah.

I won't delve into the entire story line here, but suffice it to say, this is a "must see" film. It is entertaining, but more importantly, it strives to tell a story of community pride that is actually more real than those who have abandoned the inner city or those who are so deeply entrenched in it might believe. And in between the slapstick comedy and continuous jonin' on politicians, entertainers and athletes, there is a serious story of the struggle and survival of small Black-owned business owners.



Ice Cube

In "Barbershop," Calvin came close to selling his family owned-business simply because of his inability to turn it into a thriving enterprise. The local banks had refused to give him a loan to make much needed improvements, and he was concerned over the prospects that he would not be able to adequately support his growing family. On top of this, there were his personal desires to explore other opportunities that just might, in the long term, mean more for him and his family.

In "Barbershop 2," Calvin, once again, is offered a chance to sell his family business to big business interests that have set their sights on the South Side community that lost its glory during the riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. With the expansion of economic development into the "ghetto," the neighborhood has the chance to see a major revitalization with new businesses, including Starbucks, Blockbuster and a full-service barber salon located directly across the street from Calvin's barbershop.

While audiences across the country laughed at the jokes or criticized the film for some of its offensive rhetoric, I saw it as a real story of the plight of black-owned business and my personal experience of becoming a second-generation publisher of a black-owned newspaper in Washington, D.C. In business for more than 40 years, the Informer has never received a bank loan, or any loan for that matter. We operate in the 'hood, and we love it because of the flavor personalities in barbershop grace our tiny office in Southeast. We have faced and welcomed competition by other newspapers that believe they can serve our community better, and the economic and political climate has not been favorable to us, but we have survived.

These films represent the first that I have ever seen that address the story of the dedication, commitment, sacrifice, and never-ending challenges families face that struggle to survive in the world of businesses. James Herbert, professor of Entrepreneurship and Management at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta, notes that African-Americans represent 12 percent of the population. In 1987, we represented only 3.1 percent of the nation's businesses; and by 1992, the numbers increased to 3.6 percent. In addition, less than one-third of all businesses, black or white, survive a generational transition, and only 10 percent of those make it to the third generation. How this has transpired within the African-American community will be the subject of Dr. Herbert's future work.

With these statistics, the story of Barbershop I and II is not only a story of survival, but it shows how Calvin continues to beat the odds. I become teary each time sit through the film because it is a reminder to me of what my father, Calvin W. Rolark, envisioned for his newspaper that he left to his family 10 years ago. The message to me is very clear: with your continued support, I, too, can beat the odds and The Washington Informer will be with us for generations to come.

See you at Barbershop III, and please, bring me a tissue!
DENISE ROLARK-BARNES is publisher of the Washington (D.C.) Informer and second vice chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.



Formula for deciding news coverage

Post 101

HERBERT L. WHITE



So, you have questions about how The Post goes about its business of providing news and information. Here's a sampling of inquiries we've fielded and our reasoning behind what ultimately shows up in print.

• You want Post readers to know about an event your group is sponsoring. What are the chances we'll cover it as well?

Community events, ranging from concerts and art exhibitions to banquets, are highlighted in the Happenings section weekly. We usually publish information as much as a month ahead of the event's date depending on the volume of

announcements and keep them there for the duration. As for more extensive coverage, we follow a basic rule of what's most compelling and informative to the reader.

• So how do we decide on what gets in?

Advance notice of an event gives us an opportunity to weigh the possibilities of getting your story into The Post. The same goes for ideas related to profiles of people or trends that affect our communities. No publication way — daily newspaper or national magazine or black weekly newspaper — can report on every story that comes its way. So be patient, and be prepared to explain what makes your story idea a winner.

• There's a perception that black folks are liberals, and by extension, so are publications aimed at African Americans. But those points

of view aren't the only ones welcome at The Post.

We include a variety of editorial voices from people from different social and political opinions. Conservatives from the John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, for instance, have appeared regularly in The Post, and we've recruited locals such as former City Council member Don Reid to offer their take on political and social issues. We're also looking for more local women and young people to offer their voices to the mix.

We wouldn't be very good stewards of the public trust if we didn't endeavor to provide debate and dialogue that benefit our readers. We know people won't always agree with what they read, but there should always be room for the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints.

• Perhaps you've read arti-

cles that paint an unflattering picture of an individual or institution. Some readers have taken us to task, arguing that black people — and media — are supposed to stick together in a public forum and offer only positive news.

We always enjoy reporting uplifting stories, but the world is more complex than that. Newspapers, perhaps more than other forms of media, should hold themselves to a higher standard of leadership in the community. Because written words have the power to transform ideas, journalists have a duty to provide balance, to tell both — or more — sides of an issue, even if it makes for some discomfort. Look at it this way: accuracy and balance don't need a crutch. They'll stand just fine on their own.

HERBERT L. WHITE is editor of *The Post*.

Freedom Summer revisited: Pain and awakening in the South and America

GEORGE E. CURRY



During the height of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, protest leaders liked to tell the joke about a Chicago seminary student who was suddenly awakened at 3 A.M. by a voice imploring him: Go to Mississippi! Go to Mississippi!! Go to Mississippi!!! The student said, "Lord, you said that you will be with me always, even until the end of the earth. If I go to Mississippi, will you go with me?" The heavenly voice replied, "I'll go as far as Memphis."

The idea, of course, was that if God was afraid to go to Mississippi, mortals had no chance of surviving.

Without a doubt, virulent Mississippi racists were the most brutal in the nation. Bob Moses and his comrades at the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee decided to launch a campaign against fear in violence by organizing Freedom Summer in 1964, a project designed to create a showdown between Mississippi authorities intent on maintaining segregation and a federal government obligated — at least on paper — to protect the rights of African-Americans, who were denied their right to vote and live as full citizens.

Moses favored what he called an "annealing

process." He explained, "Only when metal has been brought to white heat, can it be shaped and molded. This is what we intend to do in the South and the country, bring them to white heat and then remold them."

Key to remodeling the South was arranging for white college students from around the nation to descend on Mississippi.

Clayborne Carson, in his book, "In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s," said that Moses and Allard Lowenstein, a white activist who had participated in Southern protests, came up with the idea of Freedom Summer.

"They assumed that Mississippi officials could not crush such a massive force of civil rights workers and that national sentiment would not tolerate assaults against white students, especially those from leading colleges and prominent families," Carson wrote.

It became clear very early that there wouldn't just be assaults on visiting activists — some would be killed.

On June 21, 1964, SNCC workers learned that three civil rights workers — James Chaney, a black Mississippian, and two whites, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman — did not return from a trip to Meridian, Miss. to investigate the burning of a Black church. The three had been arrested in Philadelphia, Miss. and released at night without being permitted to place a telephone call.

Responding to the mounting public outcry, President

Lyndon Johnson authorized 200 Navy servicemen to help in the search for the missing workers and assigned 150 FBI agents to the case.

On August 4, the bodies of the three civil rights workers were found in an earthen dam near Philadelphia, Miss. Seven white men were eventually convicted and sent to prison.

Freedom Summer played an important part in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act and other groundbreaking federal legislation. Because of that early work, Mississippi now has more Black elected officials than any other state.

Last weekend, many of the veterans of Freedom Summer were brought together for a conference at the University of Tennessee organized by Professor Cynthia Griggs Fleming. They included Chuck McDew, who succeeded Marion Barry as chairman of SNCC; Rev. James Bevel, a key SNCC and SCLC organizer; Bob Zellner, the son of a white Alabama Methodist minister who became a SNCC field secretary and Freedom Rider; Timothy Jenkins who joined the movement as the National Student Association's representative to SNCC; Avon Rollins, a former SNCC field secretary; Lawrence Guyot, a SNCC field secretary and later head of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party; Unita Blackwell, the first Black female mayor of a Mississippi town (Mayersville), Charles Jones, a SNCC veteran and

leader of the Charlotte, N.C. sit-in movement as well as many others.

I was asked to serve as a dinner speaker at the event and was struck by the courage and commitment of those assembled in Knoxville. Many of the Whites in the room were Southerners who had joined the Civil Rights Movement because it was the right thing to do. One of them, Constance Curry, who served with Ella Baker as adult advisers to the young activists in SNCC, observed that whites are not as active in the Civil Rights Movement today as they were in the 1960s.

"They think the movement is over," she explained. "They think it ended with the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Young blacks think it's over, too. It was hard to ignore when people weren't served at lunch counters — that hit you in the face — but they don't see the less subtle things like the prison pipeline. We must educate them."

Any education about the Civil Rights Movement must include Freedom Summer. Without Freedom Summer, we might not have some of the freedoms we're now enjoying.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the *NNPA News Service* and *BlackPressUSA.com*. His most recent book is "The Best of Emerge Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.