

DETROIT

Black business owners rail at Super Bowl snub

By Bankole Thompson
THE MICHIGAN CITIZEN

DETROIT — Detroit will host the 2006 Super Bowl in February, drawing thousands of visitors and celebrities will be in town.

A profit-making event, the Super Bowl, organized by the National Football League awards millions of dollars in contracts to render services during the week of the football event.

But many black business owners in Detroit say the Super Bowl host committee, which is the official liaison between the NFL and metro Detroit, has yet to give African American businesses significant contracts.

The committee launched the Emerging Business program as part of its overall contract with the NFL to teach new entrepreneurs how to get contracts.

On its Web site, the Super Bowl host committee described the business program as "a business procurement process benefiting local emerging businesses including minority and women-owned businesses in the State of Michigan."

Some local Black businesses claim it is a charade.

"They talk a good game. I don't see how any of us are making money," said Valena Cade, owner of Big Fellows restaurant.

Cade said she bid on four different catering contracts for the Super Bowl but did not win one.

"The only one that I received for a possible confirmation was for about \$4,000," Cade said. "When I thought about it, that is no money when I have to pay my staff. I called them back and told them I was not interested."

She said it was an "insult," for her to be given a Super Bowl contract with such low margins. According to Cade, she would make a \$1,000 profit.

Cade said she is competent

contractor. In the past, she provided similar food service for events such as the Tastefest, Jazz festival and other Detroit summer activities.

"I'm capable of doing large contracts," Cade said. "I can feed thousands of people."

Visibly upset, Cade said, "I don't need any part of the Super Bowl."

She said she invested a lot of time and energy preparing RFPs (Request for Proposal) to bid for contracts that she did not get.

"You spend hours making these proposals and don't see the money," Cade said.

Like Cade, Carolyn Hopkins owner of a therapeutic massage center, Be' Spa Elite, also said she submitted her credentials for contracts but to no avail.

Hopkins was later informed that NFL players would be flying in with their own massage therapists instead of using local businesses to perform spa service.

"It's a shame what they are doing to us in this city," Hopkins said. "The hotels I called told me that the NFL would not allow anyone to bring in businesses that they have not approved."

Hopkins said the workshops that were held under the Emerging Business program "[were] not even worth the time."

"We thought if we go there, we'll meet the decision makers but that was not the case," Hopkins said. "I've been in business for 20 years and everybody in the city knows our business."

Loretta Watson who runs Sparkle Janitorial had similar complaints.

"The hype was that they were going to leave so much money in the city but that is not true," Watson said. "Our concern is the amount of the contract, the amount of business they are leaving. I have bid on a number of the contracts. I did not get the con-

tract with the Motown Winter Blast or the NFL Tailgate party."

According to Watson, the business that the Super Bowl was supposed to bring to the city is hype.

When contacted, the Super Bowl host committee's vice president for external affairs Stacie Clayton, an African-American denied the allegations.

"To date we have spent about \$1.3 million in total on contracts. Thirty percent have been with African-American businesses and about 90 percent of those come from Detroit," Clayton said. "We have worked with 67 emerging businesses that have received contracts. Of that 67, 25 are Detroit-based businesses."

Out of the 25 Detroit based businesses that have received contracts, Clayton said 23 are African Americans.

However Clayton would not disclose the dollar amount for each contract that has been let out to black businesses.

"We do not give out the dollar amount because some of the businesses have asked for confidential purposes—not disclose those amounts," Clayton said. "It is not true that black business are not getting anything."

She said her committee is working with an overall \$18.3 million budget out of which they expect to spend about \$3.5 million for the Emerging Business program, which has a listing of about 750 businesses. Fifty percent of that \$3.5 million she estimated will go to black businesses.

"We did have a significant budget for the Emerging Business program," Clayton said. "It falls under the external affairs budget."

When asked how much has been allocated for her own external affairs department, Clayton would not release that number.

"We don't give a break down of how much we spend per

department," Clayton said. "The departmental budget is not public information. When everything is done, we will have a breakdown of how much was spent for each department."

Clayton said the host committee does not handle the NFL contracts and that not everyone who applies for a contract will get one.

Gwen Thomas, who heads Promotions Unlimited 2000, Inc. a promotional group, decried the bureaucracy in getting contracts for the Super Bowl.

"I did not even get a chance to bid on what would have been a perfect match for my company, the NFL staffing project," Thomas said. "A Troy-based company, Entech Staffing, was awarded the contract."

Tony Davis, who owns a transportation company said he was not surprised to hear many local businesses in the city complain.

"That is the same thing that happened during the All Star Game," Davis said. "Most of the cab services they used were not African-American and some were not Detroit-based."

Iconic Creative Media, a Detroit based graphic arts company said it had to fight for the amendment of the city's signage ordinance, which previously restricts the length of posters and banners to be posted on a downtown first floor building façade to 10 percent.

"First they said the ordinance allows only 10 percent of a first floor building and the NFL wanted that," said Trent Jones of ICM. "But we got the council to increase that to 40 percent in the Super Bowl ordinance. This is not just about the game, we want to contribute to the revitalization of downtown Detroit."

Jones said local businesses "must stand up and protect themselves," just as they did in lobbying the signage ordinance.

"The city was forced to consider minority businesses that would want to post signs and banners during the Super Bowl," Jones said. "They heard our argument and stood for downtown property owners."

One local tavern owner close to Ford field said he must sell a brand of beer he has never stocked and cannot use his vacant lot to park cars during the Super Bowl week.

Brian McCarthy, NFL director of communications in New York did not return calls.

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Competition for Uganda presidency

Continued from page 1A

He was arrested in November after returning home from four years' exile but released a week ago.

Speaking earlier at a news conference, Besigye, of the Forum for Democratic Change party, said he had been held illegally on charges of treason and rape and that President Museveni should be the one in court.

He told reporters: "There are so many people in illegal detention like me, and we shall struggle by all possible means to restore good governance in this country."

Besigye has been using the recent ruling against Uganda by the International Court of Justice in his stump speech. The Court ordered Uganda to compensate the Democratic

Republic of Congo for looting during the 1998-2003 war.

"Taking our troops to Congo without the authority of parliament as required by the constitution where thousands of our soldiers died. What more treason can there be?" Dr Besigye asked a news conference at his Kampala home before heading east of the capital to attend a campaign rally.

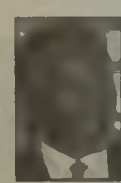
Besigye is viewed as the first credible challenger to Museveni, who has been in power for 19 years. Three other presidential candidates have also thrown their hats into next ring for next month's polls.

These will be the first multi-party elections since Museveni took power.

Mbeki under pressure to deliver

By Clare Nullis
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAPE TOWN, South Africa — The African National Congress launched its campaign Sunday for local government elections, promising to do more for South



Mbeki

Africans still disadvantaged from decades of apartheid and angry over widespread corruption.

In a speech to an estimated 25,000 people packed into a stadium in Cape Town — where the ruling ANC faces a tough challenge from the opposition Democratic Alliance — President Thabo Mbeki vowed to improve education and health care and ensure all houses have access to clean water and sanitation by 2010 and electricity by 2012.

Mbeki also declared that

the ANC branches would be "front-line fighters against corruption, to ensure that nobody uses his or her position in government to steal from the people to line their pockets."

At the last municipal elections in 2000, the ANC won 59 percent of the vote, with the Democratic Alliance on 22 percent and the rest split between smaller parties. At national elections in 2004, the ANC swept to an overwhelming 70 percent majority.

Although it is expected to win in the March 1 vote given its support among the majority black community, it risks a backlash from people fed up with inefficient, corrupt local government.

There have been violent protests on numerous occasions in the past year by South Africans frustrated that their lives remain relentlessly grim despite nearly 12 years of multira-

cial democracy.

Official unemployment is at 27 percent, but the country faces a crippling shortage of skilled workers and has to import qualified labor from abroad.

Even though the government has built about 1.8 million new homes since 1994, the number of households living in shacks rose from 1.45 million to 1.84 million — a 26 percent increase.

"The protests over poor delivery around the country — last year have demonstrated that people are losing patience with ANC elitism and cronyism," the Democratic Alliance said in a statement.

Absent from the platform was Jacob Zuma, the ANC's popular deputy president who last month stepped down from his leadership duties pending the outcome of his trial on charges that he raped a family friend. Zuma also has been implicated in a separate corruption scandal.

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Gaston East-West Connector Study

The N.C. Turnpike Authority and the N.C. Department of Transportation propose to improve east-west travel through Gaston County by constructing a new roadway between I-85 west of Gastonia and I-485/NC 160 in Mecklenburg County [TIP Project No. U-3321]. This workshop series will present maps and information on the alternatives to be studied in detail in the next phase of planning and design.

The N.C. Turnpike Authority is authorized to study, develop and construct up to 9 toll roads in the state. The Gaston East-West Connector is one of the projects under consideration for development as a toll road.

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| 1 West side of Gaston County:
Tuesday, January 31, 2006
4:30-8:00 pm
Hunter Huss High School
1518 Edgefield Avenue
Gastonia, NC 28052 | 2 Mecklenburg County:
Wednesday, February 1, 2006
4:30-8:00 p.m.
Olympic High School
4301 Sandy Porter Road
Charlotte, NC 28273 | 3 East side of Gaston County:
Thursday, February 2, 2006
4:30-8:00 p.m.
South Point High School
906 South Point Road
Belmont, NC 28012 |
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NOTE: Participants are encouraged to drop in at any time between 4:30 and 8:00 p.m. for any of the workshops. All three workshops will present the SAME information and displays. The NCTA will provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled persons who wish to participate in the workshops. For more information or to receive special services, please call 1-800-475-6402 www.ncdot.org/projects/gastoneconnector