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# BUSINESS

## Black leaders launch BP boycott

By Julia Glick  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS— A group of prominent black leaders including the Revs Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton announced Tuesday a boycott of BP PLC, saying the oil company gouges customers and racially discriminates in its business practices.



Jackson

"One of the biggest issues of our time is energy exploitation," Jackson said. "We are encouraging people to go to other stations

and to turn in their gas cards."



Sharpton

The London-based company was targeted because none of its upper-level executives are black and there are no

black owners among its hundreds of U.S. distributors, Jackson said.

BP spokesman Scott Dean defended the company's diversity, saying 15 percent of BP's U.S. employees are black and they account for almost 10 percent of senior officials.

"It is disappointing that (Jackson) is playing the race card against a company that has a long-standing tradition of diversity, that has a work force that mirrors the diversity of the American people," Dean said.

Dean said that while none of BP's roughly 600 U.S. distributors are black, the company would like to find black-run companies to distribute gas regionally. The company has been sued by a black U.S. distributor who said he was unfairly denied a contract, but Dean said BP chose a different bidder with a better proposal.

Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition began weekly protests against the company last week, and he said there are plans to expand the demonstrations after he gained the support Tuesday of about 100 black leaders at a summit in Dallas that ends Wednesday.

Jackson said rising gas prices have disproportionately hurt America's poor, who travel the most for their work and can least afford to pay. He called for Congress to cap gas prices and institute a windfall profits tax that would redirect oil companies' recent record earnings to education and social programs.

BP, which runs BP, ARCO and Amoco stations, reported almost \$5.3 billion in profits in the first quarter of 2006. Dean said high fuel prices are needed to ensure a steady supply for U.S. consumers and prevent shortages.

Sharpton said protesters will converge on BP stations and offices in 12 major cities across the country. Jackson said his group plans to protest at the company's London headquarters.

Sharpton said Congress and other oil companies should take heed.

"If you give British Petroleum a good spanking, it will send a message to the other companies," Sharpton said.

Dean said the boycott and protests would not affect "business as usual" at BP stations and offices.

## Money seminar urges new income, less debt

By Herbert L. White  
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It's never too late to get your financial house in order.

A July 11 money management seminar sponsored by AJ Financial Group will offer tips for eliminating debt, creating new streams of income and building wealth. The workshop will be held at 7 p.m. New Birth-Charlotte at University Place, 604 Doug Maves Place. Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$45 at the door.

Motivational speaker Les Brown will headline the seminar, but it's message is how to maxi-

mize and exploit money to create wealth, especially among African Americans, said Frank Johnson, an organizer of the event. Although black income exceeds \$500 billion annually and is growing at record rates, African Americans still are less likely to save or invest than Americans as a whole.

"The event is really designed to help people get control of their finances," said Johnson, co-founder of Charlotte-based AJ Financial along with Emma Allen. "There's an epidemic out there where our folks don't know

how to handle money. I don't think this story can be told enough until our folks start to turn this thing around."

Allen and Johnson conduct seminars that identify ways people can make their money more productive through financial check-ups and debt-elimination programs. AJ Financial conducts workshops through businesses, churches and schools.

For information, call (704) 529-2920.

On the Net  
AJ Financial Group  
www.startnowfinishrich.

## Employers look to keep boomers

By Joyce M. Rosenberg  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Although baby boomers are starting to head into their sixties, many of them expect to keep working well past the point where their parents retired. So small businesses that depend on boomer employees aren't anticipating an exodus in the next few years.

Nonetheless, some company owners are making sure they retain boomer workers by offering them flex time and extra benefits to help offset any hankering for retirement.

At Grossman Marketing Group, a marketing and graphic design company in Somerville, Mass., President Steve Grossman expects his boomer employees to keep working even as they begin approaching the traditional retirement age of 65. He noted that many boomers still have plenty of financial obligations, and many just don't feel like calling it a career. (There are an estimated 77 million boomers in the United States, born between 1946 and 1964.)

Still, Grossman said, many boomers will be thinking about retiring, and "to the extent that we as owners of companies can continue to make the job interesting, imaginative and make that job something they look forward to every day... we can avert that wholesale departure of people."

Being flexible and understanding about the personal issues many boomers face - for example, their need to care for elderly parents - is just as important, Grossman said. So his company offers employees paid family leave.

"If we have paid family leave, he (an employee) can keep his job, take care of his mother, not have to go through the guilt of not having done the right thing," said Grossman, whose company has about 120 employees.

The company offers this type of leave to other employees as well, for instance, those having children or needing to care for an ill spouse. It's not all altruism - Grossman understands that being understanding, even generous, with employees will benefit his company in the long run. If he retains workers, he doesn't have to find and train replacements. He gets loyalty in return for his efforts on behalf of employees.

## Essence Fest kicks off

By Kristene Rueken  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON — Essence Music Festival organizers said Friday it's fitting that their yearly event, usually held in New Orleans, is being held at Reliant Park - the same grounds where thousands of evacuees from the city found temporary refuge after the storm.

The three-day event featuring daylong seminars and nights filled with top-name musical acts begins its 12th installment, and first outside of New Orleans, on Saturday in Houston.

"We're so happy to be in Houston," said Essence Communications Inc. President Michelle Ebanks. "Your generosity in the wake of Hurricane Katrina makes us proud to be here today."

The festival, which began as a one-time celebration of Essence magazine's 25th anniversary, has always included free empowerment sessions. But this year, in Katrina's wake, officials see the sessions with greater importance than in the past.

"We knew our mission to strengthen the lives of African Americans was more important than ever before," Ebanks said Friday. "So we've renewed the original party with a purpose which is now a bigger party with a deeper purpose."

The festival was forced to find a new temporary home because of the extensive damage to the Louisiana Superdome. Houston was announced as the substitute in November.

"This year, because of the tragedy and the displacement that so many of the people that supported us over the years are experiencing, we saw an opportunity," said Essence editorial director Susan L. Taylor. "We saw an opportunity to really bring together the leadership in black America."



BIRMINGHAM NEWS PHOTO: BEVERLY TAYLOR

Sonia Tutuwan works on the hair of Ashaki Means at her salon in Birmingham, Ala. Means is holding her 3-year-old daughter, Sloan. Tutuwan owns a big columned house in the Norwood community in Birmingham, where she both lives and runs her business, a spa called Changes.

## Palatial customer service

Historic mansion home to salon, spa

By Kathy Kemp  
THE BIRMINGHAM NEWS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — She never thought she'd end up in a 10,000-square-foot mansion in Norwood.

Sonia Tutuwan wasn't long out of cosmetology school when she decided to open her own hair salon in Birmingham four years ago. Because she specialized in African-American styles, she wanted to be in a black neighborhood and had chosen a building near Midfield.

She put down earnest money and prepared to move. But then she got a call from someone who had heard she needed space for a business and offered to lease her a floor in an old Norwood house.

"I really didn't want to go, but I thought, why not? It couldn't hurt anything just to look," Tutuwan recalls. "So I drove over here, and when I pulled up outside, I was

like, 'OK, where do I sign?'"

Instead of leasing space, Tutuwan talked the owner - who ran a mortgage company there - into selling her the 14-room, Greek Revival-style mansion. In the early 1900s, the home was the family estate of J.R. Copeland, president of the old Copeland-Ingis Shale Brick Co.

It sits at the top of 32nd Street North on the corner of 12th Avenue, which is zoned commercial. In its terra-cotta veranda is a sweeping view into the central valley of Birmingham on up to Red Mountain.

Today, a sign outside announces "Changes Salon, Spa & Wellness Center." Tutuwan runs the business on the first and second floors, and lives in the 900-square-foot attic suite. Clients fill up the house Monday through Saturday, and Tutuwan is accustomed to strangers dropping by, asking to see her house.

"It happens every day," she says. "If I'm not busy, I try to show them around." She paid \$160,000 for the house,

which, in top condition in Mountain Brook, likely would be worth millions. The previous owner had installed new plumbing and wiring and renovated. Tutuwan took out a loan, bought the place and moved in - at age 26, the owner of one of the city's oldest, largest and most magnificent homes.

Her timing couldn't have been better. In the last 18 months, others have discovered the beauty of stately old Norwood, lined with sidewalks and ancient oaks, just northeast of downtown. White gay men, young black couples and, lately, single women of all races have been buying the old bungalows and two-story family homes to fix up and live in.

Most still cost less than \$60,000 but require much remodeling.

Unlike a few of the Johnny-come-latelies, who aim to buy and flip the houses for profit, Tutuwan bought hers because she loved it at first sight. She plans to keep it and, maybe 10 years down the road, turn the second floor into a bed and breakfast.