

OPINION

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Make a resolution to buy black in the year to come

James Clingman
Blackonomics

Spend, spend, spend. That's the rallying cry of our politicians, with George W. leading the way. They know, as many others do, that the economy begins and ends with consumption. They know that unless we, the consumers, spend our money, this economy

will collapse. They know they have to put a good spin on the current atmosphere in this country, especially since Sept. 11. They know they had better make us feel better about the economy, about our future, and about this country, or we will withhold our dollars and bring this country to a screeching halt, something bin Laden - with all of his dastardly deeds - could never accomplish.

As we hear and see these messages coming from our political and business leaders, it should give us a hint as to what black people can and should do to build an economy for ourselves. Spend, spend, spend - only spend at black-owned businesses. If it works for America's multi-trillion dollar economy, it will surely work for what currently stands at a \$600 billion economy, the black economy.

We should, we must, start our own rallying cry to spend as well, but with black businesses. We must use the same promotional strategy our national leaders are using to get our brothers and sisters to understand that buying from black businesses is the key to our collective prosperity. I am so glad the president and others finally let the secret get out. They told us, as I have been writing for years, and many other brothers and sisters have been saying for decades, that the only way we can build and maintain an economy is to trade with one another.

While the national call is for consumers to spend their money on American goods and services, resulting in a "circle the wagons" mentality among many consumers, black people should once again, as in the days of segregation, do the same thing. There's just one hitch. We should not continue to go out and spend our money with those who care nothing about us, those who hold us in disdain, and those who continue to suck the lifeblood (our dollars) from our neighborhoods.

Don't you think it's time we stand up and follow the directions of our national leaders? Wouldn't it be a good idea for black people to get on the bandwagon that Bush has started? I know I would love to see us spending more, buying more products and services from black people. Just imagine the boost to the economy it would have. Picture the patriotism of an army of black consumers spending just another 10 percent to 15 percent of our \$600 billion with black-owned businesses.

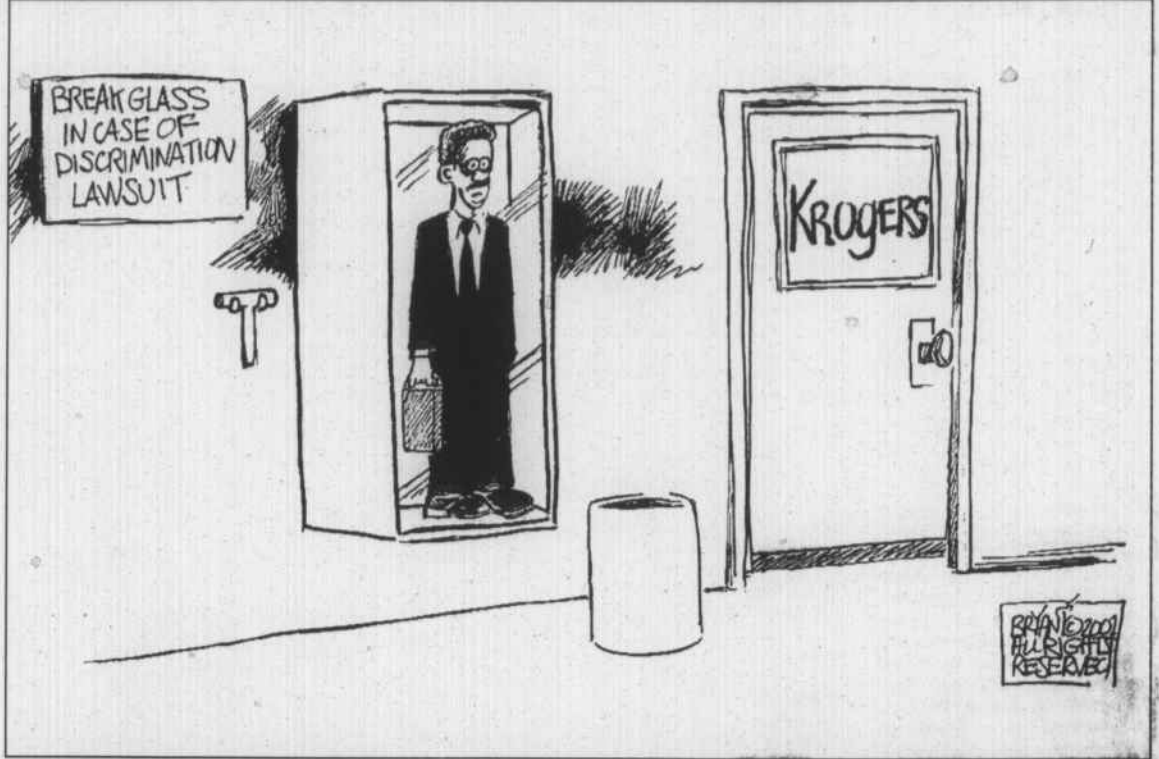
Let's look at the connection between spending and economic freedom. If at least a portion of the latter were not dependent upon the former, we would not hear the clarion calls to spend, spend, spend coming from the power structure. Thus, it follows that the economic freedom of black folks is directly related to how we spend our money.

National leaders are asking us to spend, despite the fact that thousands of employees are being laid off and executives are getting millions of dollars in raises and golden parachutes. To add insult to injury, blacks do not own the businesses to which this spending spree is being directed. What else do we need as proof to move us toward mutual support and cooperative economics? By the way, won't we be celebrating Ujamaa very soon? It is a shame we do not practice it and the other six principles of Kwanzaa 24/7. But I digress.

Here's what's up: Brothers and sisters, we do not own 30 supermarkets in this entire country. If a national calamity beset the United States, unless white folks, Arabs and Indians share their food with us, we will be up the proverbial creek without a paddle. We own very few banks; therefore, our need for funds during such a time would be a very low priority to those who do own and control the majority of the financial institutions in this country. We own one national channel of distribution, The MATAH Network, and if we are faced with developing new ways to earn a living by creating our own products and services for our people, how will we gain access to those products and services as well as to black consumers without a black channel of distribution?

This is my plea to us as a people in this country: Don't take lightly the things you see happening around you. Understand that if we do not follow the basic tenets of economic survival - you know, the way the Arabs have done in Dearborn, Mich., the way the Vietnamese have done in Westminster, Calif., and so on - we will be left wanting, left begging someone else to take care of the necessities of life for us. Some of us may be well-off, but what about our people?

Please act upon that understanding - that reality - by spending a greater portion of your disposable income with your brothers and sisters. Our very lives, our children's lives, depend upon it.



Letter(s) to the Editor

Event sponsors deserve thanks

To the Editor:

I, Santa "Ben Piggott" Claus, would like to thank the following sponsors for helping me with the ninth annual city-wide Peace Toys for War Toys project at the William C. Sims Recreation Center: Winston-Salem Recreation and Parks Department, Winston-Salem Journal-news staff, Piedmont Federal Savings and Loan (Liberty Street, Parkway and Parkview), Happy Hill Community Association, Southside Community Development Corp., Hill Middle School, James Williams, Christmas Cheer Toy Box, North Carolinians Against Gun Violence (local and state), Paul's Schwinn Cycling and Fitness, Ecclesiastes Deliverance Center, Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Inc., F.C. Mothers and other chapters of Million Mom Marchers, Borders bookstore (Thruway), Art



Happy workers from the Harrell family's business and Ben "Santa Claus" Piggott

Blevins, Kay and the Forsyth County school resource officers.

God bless you.

Ben "Santa Claus" Piggott

Center supervisor W.C. Sims Recreation Center

Kick off 2002 with educational reform



Armstrong Williams
 Guest Columnist

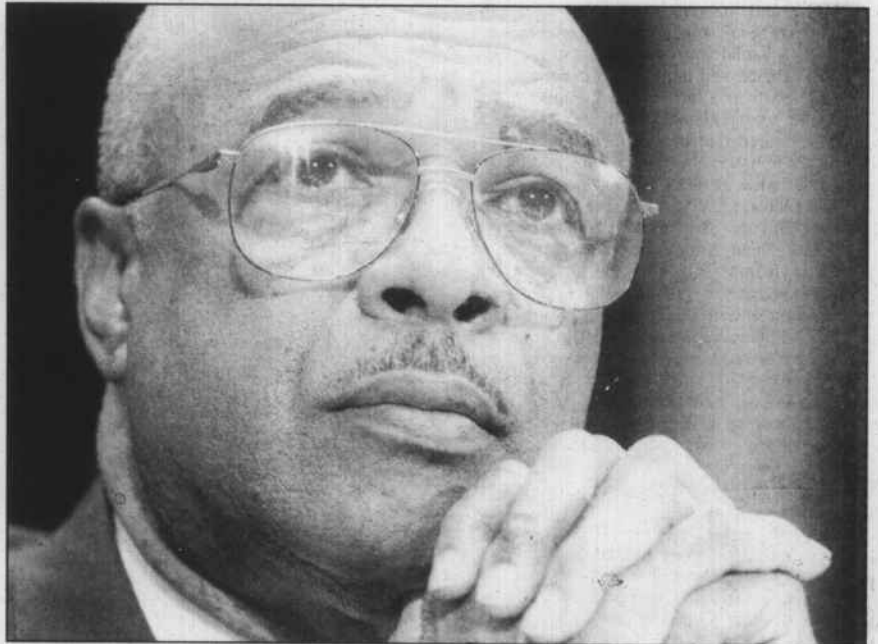
In a country predicated upon the acquisition of wealth, the poor are necessarily regarded with equal parts fear and disgust. After all, they subvert the economic ideal and are always a risk to sack the community. For the good of our cherished economic system, they must be kept at bay.

On this last point, the response has been unified.

When the government began forcing integration in the city, more affluent families were sufficiently alarmed to leave en masse for the suburbs. There was from this mass exodus a logical progression: housing prices in the suburbs skyrocketed, thus ensuring a proper economic boundary between rich and poor, minority and white. Since property taxes have traditionally been used to fund public schools, affluent suburban schools were lavished with resources while urban schools suffered by comparison.

Despite years of busing and other forced integration efforts, the "good school" label in suburban communities continues to artificially inflate housing prices, thus maintaining the economic segregation.

Traditionally, this situation has not been too alarming to America's well-to-do suburbanites because they have the financial resources to choose where their children attend school (either by sending them to private school or moving to a different neighborhood). Meanwhile, poor, urban students, mostly of color, remain trapped in public schools that



Education Secretary Rod Paige will be charged with promoting education nationwide.

are failing to properly educate them. More than two-thirds of urban fourth-graders are unable to read at a "basic level."

The major implication: public schooling in this country remains separate and unequal.

On Wednesday, Feb. 20, 2002, at 10 a.m. that may change. That's when the U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments on the constitutionality of Cleveland's voucher system.

If the program passes constitutional muster, voucher programs will likely replicate across the country. (Currently, such programs are regularly murdered by state legislators due to church/state concerns). The impact could be no less pervasive than a revolution in the public education system.

For starters, vouchers will break apart the public schools system monopoly by giving poor, urban parents more choices as to where their children attend school. That means public schools will be held accountable to the parents, and their children will have a way out of dangerous and dysfunctional inner-city schools.

To get a good understanding of what this will mean to poor, inner-city families, consider the case of The Washington Scholarship Fund, a privately financed voucher program dedicated to providing D.C. area children with school vouchers.

Since the WSF vouchers are awarded by means of a lottery, the program allows an equal comparison between test group and control group. A

three-year analysis of the program by Harvard University found that after just one year in the WSF program, students increased an average of one additional grade level over their public school counterparts. Harvard University also reported increased parental satisfaction with the program and spikes in their children's workload and sense of academic expectations.

"If the initial findings from D.C. hold up over time," observed Harvard researcher Paul Peterson, "scholarships for students beginning in elementary school may help eliminate the black-white test score gap."

That bodes well for poor, urban children, for the voucher movement, for the country. armstrongwilliams.echurchonline.com

The Chronicle
 Online is
 coming soon!!