

## Tony Brown's COMMENTS

### Race You Save May Be Your Own!

"It's open. It's finally open. Singletary's PlazaMart is open, and it is beautiful, it is perfect, it is outer space equivalent!" proudly boasted Elizabeth Laney last year in the Columbus Call and Post.

Last week, the Columbus Citizen Journal reported that I was in that Ohio city to lead an effort to save the largest black-owned supermarket in America.

What happened to the symbol of black Columbus' economic recovery in a one-year span? And what make me think that the efforts of the Buy Freedom campaign will be anymore successful than a previous task force or the black ministers who recruited customers, raised \$17,000 in cash and volunteered to bag groceries at the PlazaMart?

In spite of competitive prices, the PlazaMart at its peak of customer activity never did attract enough black people buying enough to gross \$200,000 per week - a breakeven point. On top of that, the mayor of Columbus, Ohio, made sure no rescue money would be made available and the bank seized cash, food stamps and inventory - guaranteeing empty shelves and no future sales.

On the heels of the mayor's and the bank's pressure, the city turned up a white buyer who was willing to take the \$4.1 million superstore off of Rick Singletary's hands for a mere \$500,000, along with a \$6,000 month reduction in rent. Of course, Singletary would keep the store's debts.

To protect himself from all of these suspicious coincidences, Singletary sought the protection of the courts and was given legal protection to reorganize. Currently, the shelves of the PlazaMart are poorly stocked (the bank didn't leave much).

When we hold a Freedom Rally on November 19 at Mershon Auditorium at Ohio State (information: 614-253-4444), the black citizens of Columbus will be given a Freedom Referendum.

Do they want the 130 jobs and the \$25 million a year that this store can keep in black hands in

Columbus? They will, of course, vote to do so. I will tell them 20,000 people will have to sign a pledge to voluntary shop each week for one year at the embattled PlazaMart. We will then ask 3,000 of those in attendance to take 10 pledge cards and return them the following day. Allowing for human error, 20,000 consistent customers will have been recruited.

Other abandoned black merchants in this area will also gain new customers by the infusion

And if 20,000 people a week shop at PlazaMart first, then shop elsewhere for goods not in stock, the store will remain open and the buyers will see better stocked shelves with each visit. "If you spend \$100 a week, spend about \$20 with us. You can still support other black businesses with the Freedom Seal and white supermarkets," explained Rick Singletary.

Singletary knows that 20,000 people spending \$10 a week will make the \$200,000 necessary to hire 130 black people. It could also work if 10,000 people spent an average of \$20 a week.

While blacks in Columbus spend \$2.5 million for food each week, 95 percent goes to non-blacks. Many blacks in Columbus pray for Singletary's PlazaMart while buying from the Arabs, Jews, Chinese, Koreans and Cubans. Which is why you've never seen an Arab, Jewish, Chinese, Korean or Cuban business go bankrupt in a black community.

Blacks only bankrupt black businesses by not buying from them. Blacks also create black unemployment, single parent homes and low IQs by not buying from black businesses.

Rick Singletary knows that he is a national model for black retailers and he does not want his rescue to take sales away from other black businesses. But he is holding on by his fingertips.

Remember, the race you save may be your own.

"Tony Brown's Journal" TV series can be seen on public television Sundays on Channel 42 at 5 p.m. It can also be seen on Channel 58 Sundays at 6:30 p.m. Please consult listings.

### Wind Ensemble To Present Concert

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Wind Ensemble will present its fall concert under the direction of John Harding at 8 p.m. Sunday, November 17, in the Recital Hall of Rowe Creative Arts Building. The program is free and open to the public.

The Wind Ensemble is a scaled-down version of the concert band. The 30 wind and percussion players will present an interesting and varied program including: "Overture on a Southern Hymn" (Wondrous Love); Pergolesi's "Prelude and March;" The Finale from Strauss's

"Death and Transfiguration;" the overture to Wagner's "Die Meistersinger;" selections from "The Wiz;" and two Sousa marches--"The Thunderer" and "The Stars and Stripes Forever." Also planned are some small ensemble works done by groups from within the larger ensemble.

This will be the first official appearance of the UNCC Wind Ensemble under the baton of Harding, who returned to North Carolina this fall from New Mexico State University--where he directed the brass ensemble program and the jazz program. Harding

taught for three years in Las Cruces, three years at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, and 10 years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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