

# Editorials

## Celebrate 12 Black History Months

Written From  
The Public Post

Black History Month was coming. It would soon begin.

A bright, young, local freelance writer, thinking ahead, had suggested a related story idea about an important, pioneering black businessman to a newspaper editor, and it had been accepted for publication.

Now, the young writer was sitting in the subject's lobby, tape-recorder in hand, waiting to be invited into his office, where she would conduct the interview.

While waiting, she got into a small conversation with one of the businessmen's clients who was sitting nearby. She mentioned that Black History Month was coming soon.

"With the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in January," the man said, "we'll celebrate almost two Black History months this year."

"I think we should celebrate 12 Black History months every year, not just one," the young writer said. "I think Black History is so important we should be studying it and celebrating it every day of the year!"

"The time comes around every year, and we go through the rituals. In February, Black History is served up to us, mostly in bits and pieces, as if a little dab will do us for another year. That's not enough. We know too little about ourselves, and it shows."

The man thought about that for a minute or two, and then he said:

"That's a good point. You're right!"

Black History -- or Afro-American History -- is about information, instruction, knowledge. It is about truth. It is about roots, pride, respect. It is about all that we've been, all that we are, and, by projection, all we will be.

Our history reveals us to be an accomplished people, an intelligent and imaginative people, a progressive, productive, courageous people who, though subjugated at times, have not submitted to the forces of racism, repression, retrogression.

### Black History Makers

When it comes to history, we Black Americans are enormously wealthy. Actually, it is impossible to accurately evaluate that wealth.

Certainly, with all due respect to those who make it, who write it (or otherwise record it), who analyze and or interpret it, teach it, publicize it, promote it, we simply do not properly capitalize on it.

Black History is taught in schools. Tens of thousands of Black History books are available in libraries. Especially during Black History Month, the various communications media expose Black History to people of all races, creeds, and colors, not solely to Afro-Americans.

Black history-makers, like air, are everywhere. With eyes on professional careers, many young members of the race are formally studying their history.

But the shocking fact is that the average Black American knows rather little about his or her history. How little we know often is embarrassing, especially after Caucasian Americans have proven themselves to be more knowledgeable than our own people.

Even in subjects which we more or less take for granted, we aren't that historically sharp overall.

Would you believe that there are many, many young Black males (not to mention young, Black females) who don't know exactly what Jackie Robinson did? Or that January 31 was his birthday? Or that, 40 years ago, come April, he made an invaluable contribution to the progress of his race and the betterment of the entire nation by becoming the first Black athlete to play organized baseball in modern times?

We are a sports loving group. When it comes to sports stars, we are prodigious producers. If we're not going to keep up reasonably well with a super citizen-athlete, what chance, really, does the superstar Black mathematician have?

### Black Role Models

Through all those recent years when we've heard the cry that "young Blacks need more role models," great and glorious Black historical heroes have walked this land almost totally ignored, unhonored, unappreciated. People just didn't care enough to find out who they were.

Historical continuity often was destroyed by the shifting winds of intraracial racism, pettiness, jealousy, unprofessionalism.

Can you believe that, within the past several months, I have heard a Black person who should understand the importance of Black historical heroes vilify the late, incomparable NAACP Executive, Roy Wilkins, and actually suggest, in essence, that he should be discarded... "because he is dead?"

However, the fact that, generally speaking, we Black Americans are lacking in knowledge about our own history often is mentioned in conversations between people who care.

Just as there always have been, there are those--such as dedicated teachers and members of the Our Authors Study Clubs--who constantly attempt to expose Black History to members of the race. But, the point the young, Black writer was making was that much, much more should be done than is being done.

If we're not going to do our utmost to familiarize our people, especially our young, with our history, how can we continue to blame their failures on the lack of such knowledge and the confidence and self-respect its possession would give them?

There's something illogical going on out there. It's like complaining about the "lack of Black role models" and then playing unfunny games in which true role models are ignored or discounted for mini-reasons that don't make sense.

As said, we're enormously wealthy in our history.

Miller Says:

## Black Community Duped By Public Relations Ploy

By Sherman N. Miller  
Special To The Post

Since very few black Republican leaders are counterpoised to the national black Democratic leaders, I do not believe the black community gets objective interpretations of some of the Republican Party programs. I think many times the black community is duped by public relations ploys that purport short-term hope versus blacks accepting long-term Republican Party programs that will yield substantial socioeconomic progress.

I recall quietly chuckling when I heard blacks boasting about being executive directors, directors, and coordinators of social programs. I pitied these people because I knew they were not acquiring readily marketable skills in the economic mainstream. And I came to realize how right my instincts were as I listened to Governor James G. Martin reveal some dishonorable past practices that occurred to blacks in the State of North Carolina.

"In the Department of Commerce we found a situation where my predecessor had established, in effect, what was a symbolic-token Assistant Secretary of



Sherman

Minority Affairs," said Martin. "Had no staff and nobody reported to him. He was an Assistant Secretary that reported to three other people, up to the Deputy Secretary."

Martin says he gave this same chap a real job. "We took the same man and made him Assistant Secretary for Small Business -- all small business."

Although Martin says he is attempting to move blacks into mainstream jobs he admits that vestiges of the plantation mentality era are still impeding his efforts.

"We do have a Special Assistant for Minority Affairs, because there are still a lot of black citizens who only know how to deal with that kind of office. But we set up a committee of professional executives

"THE TAXPAYERS ARE IN REVOLT. MINORITY UPLIFT WILL JUST HAVE TO WAIT," STATED A NEW YORK LIBERAL POLITICIAN.



Blacks' Destiny In Own Hands

## Selling Personal Tutoring Services

By Sabrina Johnson  
Special To The Post

In the United States the business of educating beyond the public school system is fast becoming a truly competitive world. Colleges and universities realize that their "product" has to be projected in a more positive sense and practical sense than its competitor down the road. Learning centers or "teaching stores" for school-age children is another entity in the education business. They thrive by selling personal tutoring services -- in essence teaching the three R's for profit. And the idea is working.

To attract parents' attention to the learning centers, the stores capitalize on slogans such as "Is your child caught in a failure chain?" or "Give your kids an unfair advantage." Each in its own way is directly geared at parents with the cash and desire to bring a lagging child up to par or to further push a bright child ahead of his or her classmates. For over 15 years appeals like these have been



Sabrina

pulling thousands of children and some adults into private, for profit learning centers, that are quickly spreading across the country.

The Reading Game, Sylvan Learning Corp. and Huntington Learning Centers are three of the most successful in the business. All three firms hire only certified teachers, many who are moonlighting for \$6-\$10 an hour. Not one of the centers permits a pupil to teacher ratio of more than three to one.

The Reading Game made

its jump into multi-outlet tutoring in 1970 with 11 centers in California and expanding that by 70 into six states. The company's top menu item of reading takes in K-12, remedial classes for slow learners and enrichment for fast pace children. The standard fee - \$20-\$25 an hour.

Huntington Learning Centers, Inc. is the smallest of the three major centers. It has been in operation for about nine years. Thirteen teaching centers are centrally located in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York with 37 franchises sold in 11 states. Huntington offers remedial reading and math, and offers coaching for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Its standard fee is \$19-\$22 an hour.

Sylvan Learning Corp. got into the business in 1979 with its first store in suburban Portland. Because of super aggressive franchising, Sylvan has been able to surpass the Reading Game in size. At present, Sylvan has some 211 franchised centers and nine company-owned facilities in 39 states. Sylvan provides math and reading services to all grades; an average cost of \$25 an hour.

The officials of the teaching stores claim that they are doing all the things the schools would do if they could afford it. Officials in public schools agree that the schools cannot match the attention given to three students at a time; many do not hesitate to refer parents to teaching stores.

In addition to the small pupil to teacher ratio, the stores reward the students for good work with tokens that can be traded for goodies in the exchange center, like Walkmans, GoBots and many other fashionable items that appeal to children. One may view this too as a lesson in commerce on a much smaller scale. But the lavish rewards are not the only reason to achieve. Many of the students at the learning store desire or are driven to be rewarded with better grades in school, entrance to more prestigious schools or higher test grades on national tests, they also help children to gain confidence.

Many experts in the field of education are not only concerned with how high the standards and quality of the teaching stores are, but that their prices may be beyond affordable means for many parents.

within the state government ...to broaden the base and get people dealing with blacks out in the leadership positions rather than (through) a pipeline."

Since Lawrence Toliver, VP of Charlotte, NC Chamber of Commerce recently stated that there were not enough black businesses in Charlotte large enough to garner all of the potential business opportunities that exist, I asked Martin if this was a statewide problem.

"I think it's true. It also makes clear that there is a great opportunity for those small businesses that can become somewhat larger."

Yet Martin pointed out that they must closely examine minority businesses for authenticity.

"We are trying to identify those who are not just fronts but solid. Get them into the state contract awards."

Nevertheless, Martin presented a strong case for establishing achievable objectives in minority contract awards instead of deluding the public.

"We set a modest goal - two percent," says Martin. "Initial reactions was Jim Hunt made a goal of five percent, why are we only setting a goal of two percent?"

"My first answer was that he didn't make five percent! He didn't make two percent! He didn't make one percent! He didn't make a one-sixtieth percent!"

Martin offered proof of his commitment towards enfranchising blacks in the economic mainstream. "By setting a modest goal we had a chance of meeting it... showing momentum and positive attitude toward it; building it higher from there. We thought we might get 2-3 percent over the next year, then raise our goal; but instead we are delivering on six percent right now."

Blacks must avoid being duped by those adept at public relations ploys who create short-term black upward mobility mirages. I think Governor Martin offers the national black community plenty of food for thought if they wish to make significant long-term socioeconomic progress in mainstream America. Martin also left me with a recipe for opportunity in the business world.

"Opportunity in the business world is not something you succeed at overnight. You've got to build up a reputation. You've got to build up an organization."

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