

Editorials

Housing Authority's Dilemma

"But should a city that desperately needs more low-income housing spend almost \$6 million (on housing)...and end up with about 120 fewer units than it had before?" This question was asked in a Charlotte Observer editorial this week in discussing a Housing Authority architect-proposed plan to demolish 10 of 40 buildings in a Piedmont Courts renovation plan. The Observer suggests that "maybe" the architects ought to rethink their plans and find another design plan. We wholeheartedly agree. In fact, we are suggesting categorically that the plan be totally dropped.

We certainly understand the need for increased auto driving areas, parking spaces and open space to reduce residential density levels as suggested by the architect. We agree, too, that such changes may offer tenants a greater sense of pride in their physical environment. However, at a time when funds for additional public housing has been cut off and there are over 2,100 families on the public housing waiting list, we cannot afford these physical improvements at the cost of losing 120 housing units.

We must add that the 2,100 families on the public housing waiting list understates the problem because new applicants have not been accepted in over two years. Secondly, City housing officials report that approximately 13,000 families with annual incomes of \$12,000-\$14,000 are having to spend disproportionate percentages of their incomes on housing. Thirdly, the whole idea of demolishing greatly needed low income housing is inconsistent with the City's commitment to preserving as much of the existing housing stock as possible through restoration and rehabilitation.

Therefore, we strongly urge the Housing Authority to reject the architect's plan and direct him to develop another plan allowing for the retaining of all of Piedmont Courts' residential units.

To repeat, the citizens of Charlotte cannot afford the luxury of seeing \$6 million spent on housing at the cost of a loss of 120 dwelling units. Such an act would be to compound an already near-crisis situation for the thousands of families in desperate need of public housing.

Focusing For The Future

Bathed in spiritual joy and a bright sunshine as clouds rolled back like curtains on a theatrical stage precisely at noon, the Afro-American Cultural Center swung open its doors to the public last Saturday in its new home. Following 10 years of operation in a 605 square foot location in Spirit Square, the 11,000 square foot new home now occupies the renovated old Little Rock AME Zion Church.

Dr. Herman Thomas, chairman emeritus of the Center's board of directors, set the tone for the festive occasion when he said, "Today marks the beginning of a new era in the arts and culture of this city. What we dedicate here today is a living-learning cultural museum. It is indeed a center for everyone...the...Center is a gateway to the culture of black people and a culture shared by people of all colors."

The new 11,000 square foot facility, located in the First Ward Community, was renovated with a half million dollars plus grants from the City of Charlotte and over \$1 million in private donations from individuals, corporations and foundations. The facility has been designed to establish, preserve and promote Afro-American history and culture, of which the building itself has been granted historic site designation.

The Center, directed by a 21-member, biracial board of directors, is an affiliate of the Arts and Science Council. The Center provides classes in dance, music, theater and the visual arts and contains a 180-seat theater and a 300-seat amphitheater.

The question might be asked, what does it really all mean, the pomp and ceremony and life-extension of an old church in an older black neighborhood? It means that a community, a city, and indeed a nation, will have an enlarged storehouse for the

preserving and knowledge-extending studies of unique personalities, situations, ideas, events, and institutions occurring in streams of the human experience.

The Afro-American Culture Center means and represents a way of keeping and expanding the past into the present and for offering some direction to the future. It is the place to find the roots of a particular people and part of the soul of a nation.

The Post salutes the historic opening of the Afro-American Cultural Center and encourages the citizens of our rainbow community to visit and enjoy the rich values, traditions and insights this new community-wide facility has to offer.

Impact On Poverty

Reprinted from the Carolinian
If every group and organization in our local community sponsored a business enterprise, certain important educational and economic objectives could be realized.

One of the major shortcomings of our local communities is the absence of an awareness of economic and business concepts and principles. This lack of awareness then leads to a failure to marshal the resources to rise out of some of the difficulties the community continuously faces.

We are reminded of the retired millionaire attending a civil rights organization's meeting and inquiring when the group was going to discuss business. Because of a negative response, the well-endowed individual simply left his donation and departed.

Not until the business of America becomes the business of our communities-business-will any major impact be made on the poverty and economic status affecting our areas.

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Miller Says:

Tomorrow's Growth: International Standard Of Excellence

By Sherman N. Miller
Special To The Post
When American industry had a captive domestic market they forgot the importance of high quality and competitive pricing to maintaining long-term control of a market. It was easy to say, "Raise the prices instead of wasting large sums of money on new technology or risk losing sales negotiating long-term labor contracts that are fiscally sound." I believe that the socioeconomic restrictions of America's segregation era lulled many black American businesses into a comparable scenario in the black community.

The rapid evolution of the U.S. domestic market into a world market dealt American industry a crippling blow by redefining the rules of the U.S. marketplace. Many mainstream businesses have begun producing high quality products, improving their operations' productivity, and listening to customers to learn their values and needs. As the American dollar depreciates relative to other international currencies these actions will lead to a positive U.S. trade balance in the next 10 years.



Sherman

Nevertheless, this new international business standard of excellence has permanently reshaped America's psyche.

I recently listened to two elderly black chaps at Freeman & Harris Restaurant, Shreveport, LA, rave about the national recognition of this black-owned restaurant. These chaps' enthusiasm left me with a hankering to talk to a mainstream black entrepreneur.

I found this opportunity whilst eating at McDonald's Cafeteria (not to be confused with The McDonald's chain) in Charlotte, NC. I discovered the food to be excellent, prices to be extremely courteous. This cafeteria's atmosphere reminded me of the excellent

UNITED COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP...NEEDED NOW

LONG RANGE PLANNING SHOULD FIND BLACK BUSINESSES, PROFESSIONALS AND POLITICIANS TO THE FOREFRONT OF PLANNING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY. IT IS ONLY BY ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CLOUT THAT ETHNIC GROUPS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ADVANCE.

The Controversy Of The Underclass

By Sabrina Johnson
Special To The Post

Many blacks are working out better lives for themselves. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of blacks in the middle class has doubled. Young black men with college educations can anticipate earning just as much as their counterparts. Of America's 10 largest cities, six have black mayors. And "The Cosby Show" is the most popular show on television.

Hence, in the shoes of progress, a second nation has emerged within Black America and white America also. A culture of "have-nots" drifting quickly apart from the basic values of the "haves." Rooted primarily in the country's urban areas; called the Black Underclass.

Amid the uncertainty and controversy of the underclass, approximately one-third of all blacks live in poverty; like poor whites, some hold jobs or use welfare temporarily prior to shifting back to the mainstream. The cure of this black underclass finds itself caged in a continuous cycle of joblessness, broken homes, welfare, drugs, and violence. How many people are involved? Two million to



Sabrina

3.5 million - roughly one-third of all poor blacks.

Some statistics directly incorporated in this core of people as they pertain to youngsters: one in every 24 young black men is murdered; one in four births is to a teenager; one in two lives in poverty; and one in two grows up without a father.

Approximately one in two teens is out of work.

The numbers are not germane to blacks; the 23 million poor whites find themselves experiencing the same problems.

The problems of the black underclass are causing every sector of this country to wonder why, in less than 20 years, the increase has been

tremendous. And while most immigrant groups in the United States - including some blacks - have moved up the economic ladder proportionately blacks have not made the impact they should; especially since the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

Black leadership is fractured on the debate as to why blacks are not succeeding in higher numbers. The old guard places the blame on lingering racism and cramped economic opportunities. They believe the way out is through affirmative action, job training and expanded federal programs. A new breed of bootstraps conservatives believe race is not the critical factor, but that the declining family values and ghetto culture are the central problems. They believe blacks need self-help among themselves.

Adding more to the emotion of the debate is the fact that throughout America, popular political leaders starting from President Reagan to mayors are outwardly questioning the billions of federal funds spent on public assistance, education, income, security and housing for the disadvantaged (black, white, Hispanic, Oriental, everyone).

Reagan believes that federal assistance has created a dependency on welfare. Ironically it is believed that the system is no longer the blame but the responsibility must fall on the shoulders of the poor.

Charles Murray, a senior research fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, points out that it is a mistake to discuss the problems of the underclass and/or family breakdown in terms of black families, black values, black leadership and solutions. And that it is misleading to seek explanations in terms of a national plunge into immorality. Finally, poverty is more a result than a cause of the phenomenon. Truly a contrast to what Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY working in the Johnson administration two decades ago) disclosed in his controversial report on the fall of black family life.

Recently the code of silence in bringing up the issue of black family life was broken. Increasingly, civil rights leaders are addressing the issue of unwed mothers and fatherless families. Jesse Jackson recently said, "There is a general cultural crisis where the basic moral standards of society are dropping..."

treatment I had received at Oriental restaurants whilst traveling through South Asian Pacific countries.

John McDonald's personal story fitted the classic American Dream scenario. He immediately made it clear that he is in the business of selling taste (Old American Traditional and American Heritage Food).

Since I have heard many blacks complain about the haughty manners displayed by some blacks in the service industry, I asked McDonald what he did to prevent bad attitudes from frightening off his business.

John replied, "Tony have one minute for that and that is too long."

He went on to tell me that he never gets uptight. McDonald gave me the impression that he is a non-publicity seeking achiever who is an eternal optimist.

I sought his advice for other black business people who are presently attempting to develop esprit de corps in their workforce.

"Black businessmen need to get closer to Christ to know how to talk to their people," said McDonald.

Although McDonald had revealed himself to be a very religious man who readily

calls upon God for solutions to business problems, he feels that there should be "no fences" restricting his business progress in Mainstream America.

Pet Licenses

The 1987 City animal licenses will go on sale beginning Monday, May 19. All cats and dogs four months of age or older in the city must have a current yearly animal license. Owners whose pets have a current City animal license or an unexpired rabies record will receive a letter telling how they can participate in the mail-in program. If you are a pet owner and do not receive a letter, you may pick up a mail-in envelope at your local veterinarian's office beginning May 12. Mail-in envelopes and renewals will be processed when the animals tags go on sale May 19.

The fees for City animal licenses this year are: \$5 for spayed or neutered cats or dogs and \$20 for fertile cats or dogs. The fine for failure to purchase a license is \$25. To buy a license for \$5, pet owners must provide proof that the animal has been spayed or neutered unless such proof is already indicated on the renewal letter. (Proof is either a signed statement from a veterinarian, receipt for surgery, or proof of a prepaid appointment for surgery at the Humane Society of Charlotte Spay-Neuter Clinic or from a local veterinarian.) Animal owners over 62 years of age whose pet has been spayed or neutered, or has a health exemption may obtain a free license.

For more information about City animal licenses, call the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Shelter at 334-9145.