

# A SIGN OF THE

*By Roosevelt Fitzgerald*

Quite a lot has happened in the past several weeks. We've had a reincarnation of the "Fight of the Century" fought, the first time, in 1910 in Reno, Nevada between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries. The modern-day version pitted Holmes against Cooney. Whether the sportswriters and others will admit it or not or whether the average American will own up to the racialness of it is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is: the fight of two weeks ago did have definite color connotations.

While all of the hulla-

baloo was being made surrounding that event, there were other things in the works. One of these significant others would have as meaningful an impact on the economy as did the fight. On top of that, it would involve significantly more people. The fight had been building up for quite some time. On again and off again and repeat. With each postponement the high drama increased. Talk, talk, talk. More and more money. Bets and more bets. Seemed as though it would never end.

The champ was

treated like the challenger customarily is. He wasn't sought out for any endorsements of shaving utensils and thereby did not get to make any of the sideline money. The challenger was constantly placed in positions which enhanced his financial picture. Well, you can't really knock the guy for capitalizing on America's age old racial perceptions. This might well be an example of "perceiving, behaving, becoming." I don't know. I'm not a psychologist or anything like that but more and more it seems more and more clear to me.

So much for the fight — for the moment.

That other event culminated June 20th — Father's Day. The promotion for that big event was initiated a year ago — the day after Father's Day of 1981. All of the big companies started preparing the general public for the full-scale merchandising of one product or another. We were slowly re-convinced that if we did not get our fathers something of great value that we would be perceived as "cheapskates." Who wants to be known as a cheapskate? In more ways than not we were told that what we had just presented our fathers was not good enough. We should start

now (then) to save and get ready to really go all out next year. The choices were numerous. Everything from a suit of clothing to a sit-down lawn mower to a trip abroad was dangled before us. Woe.

Each time we picked up a newspaper or a magazine or slipped on the television, part of what we saw prepared us for the big event. Pages and pages of models "showing off" in either "Alligator" or "Fox" shirts, Jaymar or Haggar slacks, Bostonian or Bally shoes and all of the other goodies which the well-dressed man just could not be without.

Certainly we want our fathers to know that we hold them in high esteem but let's be realistic. We know that they know that we don't have much money. We know that they know that the producers of that "boss hogg" show are not looking for a couple of black guys to try out for the part just like they did not look for any little black girls to try out for "Annie." We know that they know that we've been "scripted" out just like they had been and the same thing will happen to our sons that is happening to us. We know that they know and that "the man" knows that we're scared to risk losing what we

have on the hope that we will get something better. What we don't know, is that we don't have anything worth losing. But, like the generation before and before and before we will say that the "next" generation will have to "deal with it." Did you see the movie Golden Pond? Remember the word that the kid kept saying over and over? That word is quite appropriate in this instance.

So that hard sell was one. I've always been fascinated by those pictures. You know — the ones in the magazines and sale brochures. I especially like the big catalogues from the mail order companies or those slick sheets sent semi-monthly seemingly to everybody in the world — including those of us who do not have jobs. I guess they want to keep us abreast of what the latest fashions are which we cannot afford or the latest prices on cars which we cannot afford or the latest super low price even on Black and Decker variable speed drills which one would think that black people could afford but even that item is beyond our reach. Anyway, even if we had one, what would we drill a hole in? Each other? Forget that.

Those guys in the sales sheets always look so happy and confident of themselves. Everything is perfectly color-coordinated. There are stripes and solids, pastels of every hue, shoes are clean and shining. There are some things which are missing, however. There are no bumps or lumps in any of the pockets so we cannot get a true picture of how those pants would look in real life. Then again — maybe it is best that way since we probably do not have anything to put into any pockets anyway. Oh well, that is just a minor detail. We cannot harp on details too much. Next thing you know we'll think we're ready to complain. We

wouldn't want to do that. We want to maintain our current perception of being "good..." and bear up.

As a person who has always carried a "few" extra pounds, I am always dismayed with those pictures in both newspapers and on television or magazines. All of the models are slim and trim. They look like they've been run off a xerox machine — all the same height, same weight and same marks of distinction. Now don't get me wrong. I don't have anything against slim people. Some of my best friends are slim but, gee whiz sports fans, it seems that at least one out of every ten could appear in a manner and of a size which is not suggestive of an Olympic distance runner or an acute case of tapeworms.

It seems as though Wall Street Advertising whiz kids forget about the strong, silent robust type like myself and maybe a few million others. You know, it is actually offensive being ignored that way. We keep hoping through our lobbyists in Washington, D.C. with "A Weight We Go," that they'll come to their senses and, without any prodding from us hefties, begin to include us "in" instead of "including us out" as they've done in the past. So far we only appear in the "specialty" shops or in those special sales which come out from time to time in the Sunday newspaper's Family Weekly supplement.

Actually, I've given us hope of that ever coming about. Maybe it's a good thing. Maybe it is a subliminal message letting us know that perhaps we should drop a few pounds or we will have to begin to live in nudists camps because they're not going to make any clothes for us anymore. Well, if the mountain won't come to Mohammed then — off we go. You know, losing weight is hard to do. It can be done. It might require a bit of concentra-

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- To assist prospective black entrepreneurs;
- To assist black entrepreneurs establishing new businesses;
- To assist in the expansion, viability and continued growth of the black entrepreneurial community;
- To provide continued business assistance for our membership;
- To provide political educational enrichment for the business community;
- To provide business educational development for our black youths;

Affiliation with the American Chamber of Commerce, National Chamber of Commerce and assist in developing a mechanism for affiliation with the National Black Chamber of Commerce;

To develop and maintain a VIP grouping that will be instrumental in raising funds specifically for this Chamber;

To hold, host or co-host events that will develop income as well as provide visibility for this Chamber, such as:

- An annual Trade Fair
- An annual Banquet/Dinner with prominent speakers
- Six Workshops (types to be announced)
- Publishing of a *Black Business Directory* and a House Raffle

To hold and/or host monthly membership luncheon meetings with a variety of guest speakers;

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