

## How Buying Black Can Help in the Illiteracy-Eradication Struggle

By Ozell Sutton, National Chairperson, Assault on Illiteracy Program (AOIP)

A few weeks ago, several of us from the national Assault On Illiteracy Program (AOIP) attended a meeting of Black hair care and beauty aids manufacturers in Palm Springs, California. We were there both to present a formal paper to be delivered at their important workshop and to let them know personally that there was an easily-achievable alternative to their continuous suffering from the severe onslaughts on the part of major White companies who were taking away more and more of the restricted market of these 17 much-needed Black-owned companies.

### The Predicament:

The extent of the devastation heaped upon these hard-working and surely-deserving Black business men and women — along with the Black community as a whole, was revealed in a 2/28/85 article in *The Wall Street Journal*. It reported the sad (to us) statistics of just two White companies (Revlon and Alberto Culver) which, in 1980, drew about 41 percent of all Black dollars spent on hair care products. The sadder fact is that, by the end of 1984, these same two companies had approximately 70 percent of our market. This means that, with just these two companies alone, Blacks voluntarily spend almost four (4) times as much as they do with all seventeen (17) Black-owned hair care companies combined . . . and there is reason to believe that many products of the Black manufacturers are superior.

Even if these figures are somewhat inflated, the picture it paints for the survival and growth of many of these businesses from within Black

America is quite dim. Dollars attracted away and not spent by Black people with Black-owned businesses and Black professionals always means fewer and fewer dollars for jobs and the overall uplifting and viability of our communities as a whole. With dollars fleeing our hands to others, no wonder so many of our communities' business districts look like bombed out war zones.

The need has long been urgent that we find a way to get around this predicament . . . and we were there in Palm Springs to do just that.

### AOIP's Focus:

Many of the leaders of AOIP are educators. As such, we know that no matter how well subject matter is presented in the classroom, a poor or negative image of self and environs (or community) serves as a major roadblock to the desire to learn. To counteract this negative image of our badly-battered communities, we in AOIP have launched a "support Black" or what many call a "Buy Black" campaign. It is designed to educate all of the 15 million consumer/constituents of our more than 80 national Black-led organizations on the need to give priority support to our Black businesses, our Black professionals, our Black organizations, our Black churches and all of our other Black institutions.

### AOIP's Alternative:

We went to Palm Springs to let these Black hair care and beauty aids manufacturers know that we in AOIP needed to assure their success as a means of assuring our own success in motivating our young people to want to learn. Accordingly, we had chosen them as the leading symbol of

Black pride, Black hope and Black inspiration in the business world . . . and, as such, we had focused almost all of our initial "Buy Black" efforts around them.

Also, because they were being threatened so severely, we were there to let them know that our campaign would be all out, relentless and unyielding until all of our 15-million constituents purchased their products in a priority way.

Our conditions for following through long-term on this commitment would be that they join us in a modest way both in demonstrating that each of them, as beneficiaries, were dealing equitably — or in a quid-pro-quo relationship — with the Black community, and in cooperating reasonably with us in AOIP as we planned continuously to move forward with this alternative by helping to guarantee the success of them and of all other Black businesses, Black professionals, etc.

Due to some very unusual circumstances, our carefully-prepared set of remarks, designed for Palm Springs, was not presented there. Nonetheless, most of these manufacturers did get copies . . . and many are responding eagerly to their need to be helped and to their desire to work equitably with us now that they understand our strong motivation for helping them.

### Buying Black

#### Helps Everyone:

Our Black youth desperately need to be able to see our Black-owned businesses and everything else around them in a positive and inspirational way. Yet because they don't feel good about themselves and their environment,

## CHILD WATCH

By Marian Wright Edelman

### What One Church Can Do

For families in Washington, D.C., the Family Life Center of the Shiloh Baptist Church is a place to learn, to play sports, to get together with friends, to discuss problems like teen and single parenthood, even possibly for teens to get a part-time job.

For the rest of us, the Center is an excellent model of what our churches can do to help our families remain physically and emotionally healthy and to provide teens with a positive recreation alternative to the streets. The Center is a \$5 million non-profit facility which was built by the Shiloh Baptist Church. It offers a wide range of recreational facilities for families — including a gymnasium, a jogging track, a weight room, and racquetball courts.

It houses a branch of the Greater Washington Boys and Girls Club, directed by Phil Chenier, former NBA basketball star. The Club provides both cultural and

nearly 50 percent of our adult population has not been enabled — either to read or comprehend past the fourth grade level. Consequently, they are unemployable . . . and often turn out to be serious burdens on all of us.

However, it does not have to be that way. All of us can begin supporting each other and, thereby, provide hope and a desire to learn among all of our people.

You can help yourself and help us overcome illiteracy by "Buying Black." You can begin by reading and taking seriously our AOIP "community-building" messages.

We all need to be supporting Blacks . . . and we all need to be holding Blacks accountable for doing right by all others.

We'd like to hear your reaction. AOIP's address is 410 Central Park West, New York, NY 10025. Our number is (212) 867-0898.

recreational programs after school and on Saturdays, for youth ages seven to seventeen.

The Center has taken on the difficult challenge of teen



pregnancy prevention. Its "first effort toward consciousness-raising," according to Executive Director Angella Current, was a 1984 forum on "Fathering: The Role of the Male in Teenage Sexuality," attended by nearly 100 people, most of them young men between the ages of 12 and 30. This was followed closely by "Youth Values and Family Ties: Coming of Age in an Urban Community," a training conference attended by 200 high school youth, which covered such areas as teen sexuality and how to be a good parent.

Importantly, the second conference was not only

### Rev. Jackson vows work for hostages

The Rev. Jesse Jackson vowed Monday to "negotiate with the devil in hell" if necessary to free U.S. hostages in Lebanon.

But the former Democratic presidential candidate acknowledged his efforts have so far been fruitless and that the possibility of him taking a trip to the region is remote.

"We are prepared to go to Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon, wherever we must go" to seek the release of "our fellow Americans on death

presented for teenagers, but — to a large extent — by teenagers as well. Fifty teenagers served as conference convenors and recorders, and were "part of the conference planning team," according to Current. The program included a lively party featuring a live orchestra, break dancers and a local teen theatre group.

The church and its Center maintain day-to-day contact with teens. The church subsidizes membership in the Center (which costs \$15, no small amount for many impoverished youngsters) for the majority of the 150 youth who now belong.

The Center offers some teens their first chance at employment training. At any given time, about thirty youths are employed in the restaurant and catering business which the Center runs to offset its costs. These youths are so proud of their status that they have formed a club. "The President of the club is in medical school" Current notes with pride.

If you would like to find out more about what your church can do to help build teen self-sufficiency and strengthen family life, write the Family Life Center, Shiloh Baptist Church, 1510 9th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

row somewhere in Lebanon," said Jackson, accompanied by the families of three of the five U.S. hostages in Lebanon.

"We would negotiate with the devil in hell, if we were in hell on fire and burning and the devil was the only one holding a fire hose," Jackson said at a Capitol Hill press conference.

But before going to the region, Jackson wants to use Lebanon's media and public opinion.

"We are now going to cut radio and TV ads making an appeal to the broader community as to who may know the whereabouts of the hostages," said Jackson, who has newspaper ads in Beirut asking for the hostages' freedom.

Jackson called on Arab League nations and Islamic leaders to help the hostages' families or himself visit the captives. He said he has also contacted Iranian leaders — but wouldn't give details.

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