

AFRICAN INFLUENCE

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Another merchant who sells two African themed merchandise, Jessie Rogers, has owned and operated the African Queen for two years, has seen a steady increase in her business as well.

Rogers credits a greater awareness in the black community for the success of

JACKSON

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of anyone else in the country. We don't have anything to be ashamed of," said Farmer, in Las Vegas for the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers convention.

"Maybe Rev. Jackson wasn't aware of that," Farmer added, "but we're looking forward to updating him."

Jackson has also stated that the automobile industry as a whole has a deplorable record in awarding dealerships to African Americans. He said that of the nation's 22,500 domestic car dealerships, only 500 were owned by blacks, as well as fewer than 50 foreign car dealerships.

One of Jackson's main criticisms of Saturn is that blacks who are potential dealership owners are asked to post at least \$1.3 million, however he feels that this particular rule has not always been enforced for whites.

"African Americans purchase 8 percent of all new vehicles sold, and we are 13 percent of the population," Jackson said. "We deserve a relationship that is fair and reciprocal."

In Memory of Attorney Louis Wiener Jr.

It is with deep sadness that the Sentinel-Voice announces the death of Attorney Louis Wiener Jr. February 6th. Lou a good listener, was a quiet generous man. Many talk of his legal representation of Frank Sinatra, Howard Hughes, Kirk Kerkorian and Bugsy Siegel, but Lou also represented many African Americans during the 40's, 50's and 60's often for little or no money. Wiener was co-owner of Sunbelt Broadcasting Co. the owners of KVBC-TV, Channel 3 locally and five other television stations and two radio stations. Wiener epitomized the term philanthropist, no one will ever know all of the charities and people he helped. Wiener was born in Pittsburgh and moved to Las Vegas with his family in 1931. Wiener was a graduate of Las Vegas High School, University of Nevada, Reno and University of California, Berkeley, Boalt School of Law. At his death Wiener was the senior member of the Clark County Bar having practiced 55 years.

her shop in Nucleus Plaza.

"There are a lot of things that is bringing more blackness out," Rogers said. "It's out culture, period. It's our togetherness ... They are teaching them about it in schools."

She said at first she had to teach as well as sell.

"The education wasn't there, and I helped educate people to the clothes. That was no problem I was pleased to do it," she said.

Over time her customer base have grown steady and includes both locals and tourists.

Woodcarver Joe Walker opened his store, KOFI's of Las Vegas, after traveling to the African countries of Ghana, Mali and Burkina-Faso.

Walker, a former concrete

contractor, said he got interested in studying history after learning little in school.

"They never taught me about the ancient history of Ghana, Mali and Songay," Walker said. "As far as they were concerned my history started with slavery, and I just wasn't satisfied with that."

Walker immersed himself in the study of history and toured Africa for several years following a work-related injury.

"I fell in love with it, and I don't want to do anything else," he said. "It (touring Africa) made me fall in love with the art and culture, and I want to expose other black people to the things that I love."

Walker said a different group

of blacks is beginning to explore their African heritage in the 1990s.

In the 1970s, he said, it was the students and the extremists who wanted to learn about black history, so their concerns were largely ignored by the masses. The 1990s are a different story.

"It seems like the roles have reversed," he said. "Back in the 1960s the movement was sort of superficial. It was rejected by the more educated blacks."

In the 1990s, "the people with serious interest have higher education than those who were interested before," Walker said.

"I think there is more of an appreciation among the more educated blacks. The grass roots, they just haven't had the

exposure," he said.

Local educator Al Gourrier, a coordinator in the Clark County School District Resource Center, said the proliferation of import shops is representative of a new awakening in the black community.

"We are moving rapidly to a time when we are generally accepting the fact that we are now called African-American," he said. "As that consciousness begins to overtake us, there is a need to fill a void that has existed since slavery, and that void is a body of information about the history and the culture of our ancestors of African descent."

Gourrier, who has been instrumental in the development of the Sankofa Community,

a volunteer-staffed African-American history program, said the awakening is only impacting a select few educated black elites.

"It is something that is beginning to be embraced by the elite," he said. "Poor people and people who are unemployed are not going to go into a shop and spend \$500 on an African outfit."

"Yet we see these businesses emerging in our community that sell African artifacts and apparel. I think this is good," Gourrier said. "What it does in a very subtle fashion. It begins to communicate the the acceptance and embracing of our African ancestry by African-Americans of means."

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