

BUSINESS EXCHANGE

Black's bridge to the 21st century

By William Reed

The American economy is perking along at a good growth rate as the nation moves toward the year 2000. President Clinton was re-elected primarily on the state of the economy. But a bridge needs to be built into the next century for the Black economy. Black's economy is still in sad shape and unless some major change occurs, African Americans will enter the 21st Century bordering on economic bondage.

While the most visible blacks grumble about curbs on affirmative action and entry-level jobs in white-owned businesses, the economic change we need lies under our collective noses. If we start discussions now on bringing about the reparations due us, by the end of the century each black family in America will have a \$20,000 down payment to tide them over into the 21st Century. Reparations are money, land, scholarships and other goods owed black people in the U.S. for slavery and 100 years of discrimination after slavery. Such payments have been sought by various blacks since the late 19th Century. The most visible group lobbying for just reparations has been the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA).

According to the national co-chairs of N'COBRA, the group does not intend to wait for the Congress to agree to an overall settlement for the nation's crimes. Moving to make good on a promise made before their convention last June, N'COBRA has begun circulating forms to determine black peoples' choices among four reparations down payments. "Our national Board of Directors has agreed to get national support for some or all of a series of down payment requests," says Ms. Johnita Scott of Baton Rouge, LA. She and her co-chair, Hannibal Afrik, point out that the Reparations Study Bill, sponsored by Detroit's 15-term Congressman John Conyers, has been stalled in the House Judiciary Committee for six years. "We are seeking a national black consensus and will campaign for action on this dollar consensus," states Scott.

When N'COBRA conducted its initial nationwide survey, 75 percent of respondents indicated that "a part of reparations should be used, collectively for education and economic development (industry owned together through cooperatives and corporations)." As a result, African Americans are now being asked by N'COBRA if they: 1) Favor a \$10 billion down payment for ten regional educational campuses; 2) support a \$1 billion reparations

down payment, for collective economic development, to be run by Commissioners elected by black communities; 3) support the release of black political prisoners who have not committed heinous crimes, and are drug free, based on decisions of black community parole boards; and 4) support a reparations down payment of \$20,000 for 10 million black families who foreparents where slaves.

If you have feelings about this debt, you can help N'COBRA's National Reparations Demand on Congress to bring legislation and repayments forth by answering any and/or all of the following survey questions, clipping the article and forwarding it to: Dr. Imari Obadele, P.O. Box 75437, Baton Rouge, LA 70874

Education: Do you support a \$10 billion down payment for 10 regional campuses around the country to provide undergraduate education for aspiring blacks, including those without high school diplomas?

Yes No (I want an alternate project) No such payment is needed

Economic Development: Do you support a \$1 billion down payment for an economic development fund to be managed by a national Economic Development Commission, elected by local Commissions?

Yes No (alternate project) No such payment is needed

Personal Reparations: Do you support that black families in the U.S. who can prove a member descended from persons held in slavery receive a reparations down payment of \$20,000; Or present day equivalent of 40-acres and a mule; Or which ever is greater?

Release Prisoners: Do you support release of prisoners who have not committed heinous crimes and have served two years of confinement to enter specified programs and training?

Yes No

Affirm Affirmative Action: Do you feel Affirmative Action is more likely to be granted and prefer Congress to pursue that over reparations?

Yes No

Lump Sum Payment: Do you feel down payments are not necessary and want to speed legislation and receive a lump sum payment

Yes No

Take Action: Are you willing to contact your congress person for reparations?

Yes No

Reparations could be blacks' economic bridge into the 21st Century. If we act like we've been



WILLIAM REED acting for the past generation, many of us will determine we: just don't feel like being bothered; don't want to be associated with N'COBRA kind of people; are fixing to get ready to do it; or don't think blacks qualify for reparations.

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Sojourner Truth which means "itinerant preacher." She achieved freedom, and campaigned in the 1868 presidential election of Ulysses S. Grant.

She demanded her name be placed on the list of voters, but her request was denied. In 1872, she again attempted to vote in the presidential election, but was again turned away. Her most moving speech was made in 1851 at a women's rights conference in Akron, Ohio.

She declared, "Ain't I A Woman" and publicly responded to arguments that women should be denied equal rights on the basis that Jesus Christ was a man, that the sex of Eve who committed the original sin was female, and arguments depicting women lacking intelligence.

The white suffragist did not have the backbone to stand up and answer the charges and tried to persuade the chairwoman not to yield to Truth for fear this illiterate woman's words would be

reported in the news media and hence, the women's rights would be linked to blacks and abolition! Black males also opposed her, fearful that the women's rights movement would imperil black suffrage.

"The entire membership of the NPCBW supports the Woman Suffrage Statue to be raised with the inclusion of Sojourner Truth," Dr. Tucker declared in her letter to the campaign leaders. "To accept anything less would be an affront to our foremothers. We would very much like to meet with you within the next two weeks so that we can work together to ensure that the contribution of Sojourner Truth are not forgotten."

The Suffrage Statue is scheduled to be raised sometime in the late fall. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., bust is the only African-American's presently gracing the Rotunda.

For further information, please contact the NPCBW, Inc. at (202) 338-0880.

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