

NAACP wants more of us to getting paid

By William Reed

Special to Sentinel-Voice

When you check into a hotel do you look around to note the number of people of color employed there? When you hold your groups' conference, church banquet, business meeting or reunion in a hotel, do you ever ask your hosts, "How many of your employees are African-Americans," or "How many of your suppliers are black?" If asking these kinds of questions before you spend your, and your group's, money at a hotel facility hasn't been a personal practice, now the NAACP is urging you to start.

Under the leadership of Kweisi Mfume, the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization has embarked on an Economic Reciprocity

Inactive to gain more jobs and supplier equality for African-Americans from the nations innkeepers. After a year-long study that revealed blacks spend more than \$4 billion each year on travel and lodging, the NAACP has concluded "the lodging industry has an abysmal record of including African-American in all aspects of its operations." In response of the study, the NAACP now intends to use the collection power of African-American consumers "to enact a plan of industry's employment, franchise programs, vendor relationships, advertising and marketing and philanthropy. If specific hotel chains continue to refuse to give blacks equitable treatment in their revenue disbursement, Mfume

says we need to "withdraw our economic support." After Mfume had been at the helm of the NAACP for a year, many arm-chair pundits criticized his record on civil rights activities. Now that he is on track aggressively pursuing economic development for African-Americans, it will be interesting to see how many blacks will help him in helping us.

Actually, what the NAACP is proposing is doable. The group has found an industry that is vulnerable to African-American's self-affirming actions. The \$4 billion we spent in American's inns can make a difference in the profit, or loss of the entire industry. Since the 1950s hotel and lodging has grown into one of the nation's top industries and is

among the top ten industries for job creation. It's employment rate is growing at a pace twice that of all U.S. industries. Most hotels are earning record profits and all major chains have plans in process for significant growth and building over the next five

workforce. Of the tens of thousands of Days, Hampton and Holiday Inns, Hilton, and Marriott Hotels, black developers build few, and only one black-owned franchise was identified in the NAACP report. The only level of employment in the hotel

Blacks ask hoteliers to "show us mo' money"

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years. However, NAACP reports show African Americans are virtually nonexistent at the officer levels in the industry. In the professional ranks — lawyers, accountants, managers, ect. — we represent less than five percent of the industries

industry the NAACP found where African-Americans were represented on par with our numbers in the available employment pool was in the service worker category. And one category that we can determine even without reports from the NAACP, when have you ever seen a hotel chain advertisement in a black-oriented newspaper?

But the major question surrounding this issue is, "Will African-Americans support the NAACP's initiative and pass by those hotels that have poor records of reciprocity?" Do more than a few of us even care? In addition to the NAACP's half million members, over 55 black-oriented organizations with collective memberships totaling more than nine million have signed on with the NAACP-driven initiative. These organizations who spend over \$200 million annually holding their conventions and other events in hotels, are not commenting, "He can't tell me what to do," like so many of us have said in bringing down black consumer "withdrawals"



WILLIAM REED

before. But, what about the actions of the deacons and deaconess who plan the hundreds of thousands of church banquets and trips? Will they see it as God's work to boycott recalcitrant hotel chains? And, what about those of us who know for sure that ice machines that say, Doubletree Hotels, produce colder ice than any other hotel, and surely has colder ice than a black-owned hotel franchise? Will a broad cross-section of us take the initiative and push this action among friends, church members and social circle until we make it happen?

The NAACP is developing a Consumer Guide to the Hotel Industry that concerned blacks can use as a tool to see which segments of the hotel industry are performing to a level of satisfaction worthy of our patronage. African-American consumers can obtain copies of the guide from the NAACP and begin to employ self-help techniques toward making a difference. No other consumer group spends its money as unfocused as we do. Each of us has the power in our pockets to stop the one-way trade relationship that still leaves us without any room in the inn. The national office of the NAACP is located at 4805 Mt. Hope Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215-3297 (410) 358-8900.

William Reed is publisher of *Who's Who in Black Corporate American*.

Rosewood book surpasses movie version

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson

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It's always risky business making comparisons between a film and the book that it's based on. A film is geared to mass audiences and must convey the story in as simple and entertaining a manner as possible.

Often many of the book's characters and plot details are stripped, and shorn away in the film. That's why some of us walk out of a theater after seeing a movie based on a book we've read and complain that "the book was better."

Unfortunately that's the case with the film *Rosewood*, directed by John Singleton. For while, the film shows us in bloody and horrifying details of the tragedy of the town of *Rosewood*, it doesn't show us the triumph.

That triumph was well documented by Michael D'Orso in his powerful book, "Like Judgment Day." In fact, D'Orso in his subtitle for the book "The Ruin and Redemption of a town called *Rosewood*" practically cries out for the filmmakers to make the victory of the survivors of the violence a principal part of the story.

Singleton certainly knew all of this. He wrote the preface to the paperback edition of the book, but here's what the film shows us.

Rosewood was the mostly black town in western Florida that was virtually obliterated in 1923 following a wild orgy of racial violence.

The violence was touched off by an unsubstantiated rumor that an African-American male had raped a white woman. White vigilante mobs quickly formed and went on a bloody rampage.

When the smoke cleared nearly every black home had been burned to the ground, and perhaps a dozen or more blacks were killed or wounded, while hundreds of men, women and children were sent fleeing in terror into the woods.

The carnage would have been even greater if not for the heroic act of a white train engineer who whisked the terrified blacks hiding in the woods onto his train and spirited them out of the county.

There was also the valiant stand of a small group of whites in a nearby town who confronted the mob at gun point and defended the blacks in their town.

Still, at the time, there was no public outcry against the violence and no arrests were made. It was the type of racially motivated violence that all too often was characteristic of the South during the lynching era in America.

To Singleton's credit, the tragedy and the heroism of blacks and whites is admirably depicted in the film. But he omits the crucial and compelling reason the *Rosewood* story ever made it to the screen in the first place.

The violence ultimately attracted national attention and the *Rosewood* survivors did receive a much belated measure of justice. Here's the story that isn't shown.

In 1982, a reporter for the *St. Petersburg Times* heard tales about the violence and spent months tracking down and interviewing the survivors.

The *Times* then published a lengthy series on the *Rosewood* massacre. The next year CBS News' *Sixty Minutes* did a segment on *Rosewood* based on interviews with the survivors. The brief press

attention set in motion a remarkable series of events.

A handful of the survivors, the descendants of the survivors, and relatives doggedly began a decade long campaign to get the State of Florida to admit that it was legally culpable for failing to protect the lives and property of the black townspeople of *Rosewood* and to compensate the victims. They faced mountainous obstacles.

At first state officials refused to consider their claims, law enforcement agencies refused to investigate, and some blacks even questioned the wisdom of pursuing the case. But the group persisted

against the odds. Their battle ultimately would involve the local and national press, academics, law enforcement agencies, batteries of attorneys, civil rights leaders, local and state political leaders, and the Justice department.

The survivors partly based their case on the precedent set by the U.S. government's apology and payments to Japanese-Americans for slapping them into relocation camps during World War II and the German government's payments to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Their efforts and labor finally paid off in 1994.

(See *Rosewood*, Page 16)

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